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Mamluks of Mongol Origin and Their Role in Early Mamluk Political Life

It will come as no surprise to even a casual student of Mamluk history when I state that the Mongols were the major foreign policy concern of the Mamluk Sultanate during its first century of existence, certainly after 1260. Be it the war with the Ilkhanids in Iran and the surrounding countries, or the amicable relations with the Golden Horde, the leadership of the young sultanate devoted much thought and many resources to dealing with the Mongol danger from the east on the one hand, and co-opting the Mongols from the far north on the other. Even after the conclusion of peace with the Ilkhanate in the early 1320s, the Mongols remained a concern for the Mamluks, although perhaps without the same urgency. With the breakup of the Ilkhanid state after 1335, the Mamluks still had to take into account for several decades their relations with different Mongolian rump states on their eastern and northern frontiers. In short, one can scarcely comprehend the history of the early Mamluk Sultanate without considering the impact of its preoccupation with the Mongols.¹

One aspect of Mamluk-Mongol relations is the question of Mongols in the Mamluk army, as soldiers and officers, and once even as a sultan. These could be Mamluks themselves or Mongol tribesmen who came as *wāfidīyah* or *musta'minūn*, i.e., refugees seeking sanctuary in the sultanate. This phenomenon of the *wāfidīyah*, Mongol and otherwise, received attention over half a century ago in a well-known article by the late David Ayalon,² who subsequently touched upon the phenomenon of Mamluks of Mongol origin in his wide-ranging series of papers on the *yāsā*,³ as well as in his article “Mamlūk” in the *Encyclopaedia of*

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¹Some important general comments on Mongol-Mamluk relations are found in David Ayalon, “The Great Yāsa of Chingiz Khān: A Reexamination,” *Studia Islamica*, Part C1, 36 (1972): 117. My own investigations into these relations have been published in *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260–1281* (Cambridge, 1984) and *The Mongols in the Islamic Lands: Studies in the History of the Ilkhanate* (Aldershot, 2007). These studies contain many references to other articles and books on the subject.

²David Ayalon, “The Wafidiya in the Mamluk Kingdom,” *Islamic Culture* (1951): 91–104.

³Ayalon, “The Great Yāsa of Chingiz Khān,” Part C1, 124–28. For the complete series of articles, see *Studia Islamica*, Part A, 33 (1971): 97–140; Part B, 34 (1971): 151–80; Part C1, 36 (1972): 113–58; Part C2 (1973): 107–56.



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Islam.⁴ Recently, Nakamachi Nobutaka⁵ has written an interesting and innovative essay published in *Mamlük Studies Review*, in which the status of the *wāfidiyah* in general, with some emphasis on the Mongol *wāfidiyah*, is reconsidered. I propose in the following article to look mainly at the “Mongol” Mamluks and their role in early Mamluk political life, without neglecting their possible connections with the Mongol *wāfidiyah*. I will end with some comments about the Mongol *wāfidiyah*, particularly in light of Nakamachi’s article.

Finally, one small technical note: in the interest of brevity, in this article I will generally refer to Mamluks of Mongol provenance as Mongol-Mamluks. I hope that this shorthand will not prove confusing.

We have the names of several prominent Mongol-Mamluks who reached the sultanate in various ways. There were probably many more such Mamluks who remained nameless in the sources, reflecting their modest ranks and achievements. This is something that we could expect *a priori*. First, we could imagine that some Mongol youths would be caught up in the trade of young Qipchaq Turks from the realm of the Golden Horde (more about this below). This point has already been made by Ayalon.⁶ Secondly, some young Mongols would have been among the captives from the battles and border warfare between the Mamluk Sultanate and the Ilkhanate, where the Mamluks almost invariably had the upper hand (some prominent examples are given below). Thus, it seems probable that the senior Mongol-Mamluk officers whose names we know were only the tip of an iceberg, made up of lower-ranking Mamluks of Mongol origin.

We are fortunate not to have to remain in the realm of speculation. As early as the reign of Qalawun (678–89/1279–90),⁷ we learn that this sultan purchased 12,000 “Turkish, Mongol, and other Mamluks.”⁸ Of course, this gives us no idea of the relative or absolute size of this contingent of Mongol-Mamluks, but they were certainly significant enough to be mentioned after the Turks. Note that the Circassians, who—as is well known—were bought in large numbers by Qalawun,

⁴David Ayalon, “Mamlük,” *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 6:314; cf. the longer version in *idem, Islam and the Abode of War* (Aldershot, 1994), art. II, 3.

⁵Nakamachi Nobutaka, “The Rank and Status of Military Refugees in the Mamluk Army: A Reconsideration of the *Wāfidiyah*,” *Mamlük Studies Review* 10, no. 1 (2006): 55–81.

⁶Ayalon, “The Great Yāsa,” Pt. C1, 126–27.

⁷In this paper I have striven to render the names of Mamluks and Mongols in a transliteration which I hope best approaches the way they themselves would have pronounced them. Those names which I am unable to provide in this way, I have given in the Arabic transliteration.

⁸Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk*, ed. Q. Zurayk and N. ‘Izz al-Dīn (Beirut, 1939), 8:97 (s.a. 689, as part of the summation of Qalawun’s rule); cited in Ayalon, “The Great Yāsa,” Pt. C1, 124–25.



are not mentioned in this passage.⁹ Baybars al-Mansūrī, in his entry for 699/1299–1300, reports that one of the results of the civil war in the Golden Horde between the Khan Toqta (<Toqtagha) and the army commander Noghai was that many Mamluks and slave girls were brought to the sultanate. We can assume that some of these Mamluks were Mongols.¹⁰

We have some indirect evidence that young Mongols were indeed caught up in this trade of Mamluks: Toqta attacked Genoese settlements in the Crimea in 707/1307–8 for various reasons, including retaliation for the capture of Mongol children (*awlād min al-tātār*) who were then sold to the Muslim countries, referring most probably to Egypt and Syria.¹¹ Even if the Mongol candidates to become Mamluks were not connected to the previously mentioned Toqta-Noghai war, this second passage shows that Mongol children were indeed part of the regular trade in young Mamluks, at least for a certain time.

This appears to have continued well into the eighth/fourteenth century. The mid-fourteenth-century encyclopedist Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umarī has this to say in his chapter on the Golden Horde in the section on the Mongols in *Masālik al-Abṣār*: The Mongols sold their own children on one hand, and on the other hand, the Qipchaqs themselves also kidnapped the children of their Mongol subjugators and sold them to slave-traders.¹² There is no mention of a particular time-frame for this information, and it is unclear if the author is referring to a general phenomenon or to one particular period. Al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442), however, is more specific. He writes that in the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalawun (1310–41), the Mongols of the Golden Horde competed with each other in selling their boys, girls, and relatives to the slave-merchants. The competition was so fierce among

⁹David Ayalon, “The Circassians in the Mamlūk Kingdom,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 69 (1949): 137–38; Linda Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan: The Career of al-Mansūr Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamluk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678–689 A.H./1279–1290 A.D.)* (Stuttgart, 1998), 191–92. I should mention here Robert Irwin’s yet-unpublished paper, “How Circassian Were the Circassian Mamluks?” which was presented in April 2006 in Haifa.

¹⁰Baybars al-Mansūrī, *Al-Tuhfah al-Mulūkiyah fī al-Dawlah al-Turkiyah*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ṣalīḥ Ḥamdān (Beirut, 1407/1987), 159; idem, *Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārikh al-Hijrah*, ed. D. S. Richards (Beirut and Berlin, 1998), 347.

¹¹Baybars al-Mansūrī, *Zubdah*, 399; al-Nuwayri, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab* (Cairo, 1923–97), 27:374. Toqta sent off an army to Kaffa, their headquarters, but the Genoese had advance notice of the attack and fled by boat. Toqta found some solace by expropriating the wealth of their compatriots in Saray.

¹²*Das Mongolische Weltreich: al-‘Umarīs Darstellung der mongolischen Reiche in seinem Werk Masālik al-Abṣār fī'l-mamālik al-amṣār*, ed. and trans. K. Lech, *Asiatische Forschungen* 14 (Wiesbaden, 1968), 72; cited by Ayalon, “Mamlūk,” *EI²*, 314; cf. the longer version of this article in Ayalon, *Islam and the Abode of War*, art. II, 3.



those Mongols that it even marred their internal relations,¹³ although what this means exactly is unclear. Perhaps it refers to some type of disruption of normal social relations, due to the outflow of young people and even depopulation.

Finally, we can note that young Mamluks also arrived, probably sporadically, from the territory of Qaidu (and his Chaghataid allies) in Central Asia. Al-Nuwayrī reports in his section on the Mongols in *Nihāyat al-Arab* that after Qaidu defeated Nomughan, the son of the Great Khan Qubilai, ca. 1276, many women and children were taken captive and were exported by traders to Egypt (perhaps via the territory of the Golden Horde).¹⁴ There are some problems with the description of these events in Central Asia,¹⁵ but as the story of the young mamluks is told *en passant*, we can accept it at face value. It is, however, unclear, how often mamluks came from this region, in what quantities, and how many of them were actually Mongols. Still, some Mongols, it would seem, probably entered the Mamluk army from this relatively far-away region.

We see, then, that young Mongol boys (and girls for that matter) played some part in the trade in Mamluks conducted with the Golden Horde. We are now in a better position to examine the careers of prominent Mongol-Mamluks, and to see whether their advancement and behavior had anything to do with this Mongol-Mamluk milieu. I will begin with a brief review of the senior Mongol-Mamluks of whose name and identity we can be sure. I confess that I may have missed one or more individuals, and additional names will be welcome. The order is roughly chronological.

ZAYN AL-DĪN KITBUGHA AL-MANŞŪRĪ

He was captured as a youth at the first battle of Homs (December 1260) and enrolled in the Mamluk unit of Qalawun,¹⁶ already serving as an officer during his amirate. With Qalawun's death in 1290, Kitbugha also served al-Ashraf Khalil, although he was somewhat estranged from him. After the latter's murder in 1293, he led the Qalawunid "loyalist" forces who fought and defeated the conspirators

¹³ Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma'rīfat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyādah (Cairo, 1934–73), 2:525, cited in Ayalon, "Mamlūk," *Islam and the Abode of War*, art. II, 3.

¹⁴ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 27:354–55.

¹⁵ See the discussion in Michal Biran, *Qaidu and the Rise of the Independent Mongol State in Central Asia* (London, 1997), 62–63.

¹⁶ Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah fī al-Tārīkh* (rpt., Beirut, 1977), 13:338–39; al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfi bi-al-Wafayāt*, ed. H. Ritter et al. (Wiesbaden, 1931–), 24:318; idem, "A'yān," MS Aya Sofya 2967, fol. 47a; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mu'lūk Misr wa-al-Qāhirah* (rpt., Cairo, n.d., of Cairo, 1930–56), 8:55. Cf. al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 29:475, and Ibn al-Ṣuqā'ī, *Tālī Kitāb Wafāyāt al-A'yān*, ed. J. Sublet (Damascus, 1934), 131, who both say he was captured at 'Ayn Jālūt.



led by Baydara. Upon the accession of the boy-king al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, Kitbugha became *nā'ib al-saltanah* and one of the two strongmen of the state, the other being Sanjar al-Shujā'i. Relations soon deteriorated between these two officers, and open fighting broke out in the streets of Cairo. This ended in Kitbugha's victory and his subsequent enthronement (1294). Taking the title al-Malik al-Ādil, he ruled for some two years until deposed by a conspiracy led by Lachin (Lājīn), who replaced him. Kitbugha lived out his life as governor of Sarkhad and then Ḥamāh, dying in 1303. His reign was marked by a famine and the resulting crisis, as well as the arrival of an extremely large group of Mongol *wāfiḍiyah* in early 1296 from the Oirat tribe, from which he himself hailed. See below for how his Mongol affinities affected his policies and actions.¹⁷

SAYF AL-DĪN SALĀR AL-MĀNSŪRĪ

He was captured at the battle of Abulustayn in 1277 and eventually became a Mamluk of Qalawun, although he started off as a Mamluk of his son al-Ṣāliḥ ‘Alī (d. 1288).¹⁸ During the second reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (1299–1309), Salār, the *nā'ib al-saltanah*, was one of the two most powerful amirs, together with Baybars al-Jashnakīr, also a Manṣūrī (albeit of Circassian origin) who enjoyed the support of the Burjīyah. Salār was also an Oirat Mongol and brought over two of his brothers and mother to the sultanate in 1305.¹⁹ After al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's return to power for the third time in 1310, Salār was imprisoned and starved to death. His personal wealth and income were proverbial.²⁰

SAYF AL-DĪN QIPCHAQ (QIBJAQ) AL-MĀNSŪRĪ

He was also captured at the battle of Abulustayn, becoming a Mamluk of Qalawun after first serving his son al-Ṣāliḥ ‘Alī.²¹ As governor of Damascus in Lachin's reign,

¹⁷ Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate 1250–1382* (London, 1986), 85; P. M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (London, 1986), 106–8; al-Ṣafadi, *Al-Wāfi*, 24:318–19 (who calls him al-Mughuli).

¹⁸ Baybars, *Zubdah*, 155; Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 174.

¹⁹ Angus Donal Stewart, *The Armenian Kingdom and the Mamluks: War and Diplomacy during the Reigns of Het'um II (1289–1307)* (Leiden, 2001), 166, and n. 446. See Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmi' al-Ghurar*, ed. H. R. Roemer (Cairo, 1960), 9:131; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 385.

²⁰ Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages*, 70, 86, 92; Holt, *The Age of the Crusades*, 110–12; Ibn al-Suqā'i, *Tāli Kitāb Wafāyat al-A'yān (wa-kāna jīnsuhu min al-tatār)*; al-Kutubī, *Fawāt al-Wafāyat*, ed. 'A. M. Mu'awwad and 'A. A. 'Abd al-Mawhūd (Beirut, 2000/1421), 1:468–73 (wa-huwa min al-tatār al-ūyṛātīyah).

²¹ Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 155; Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 174. Another Mongol who is mentioned as being captured at this time (Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*) and also becoming a Mamluk is Sayf al-Dīn Jāwurshī, about whom nothing else is known.



he fled to the Mongol court of Iran. There he found his father (named Toghril) and brothers, who held prominent positions at court. Qipchaq was awarded the governorship of Hamadān, although it is doubtful that he actually took it up. He accompanied Ghazan on his successful campaign into Syria in 1299–1300. After the Mongol occupation of Damascus, he was appointed the Mongol governor of Syria, but in the aftermath of Ghazan's withdrawal from the city (followed by the retreat of the remaining Mongol troops), Qipchaq returned to the Mamluk fold. He was pardoned and was awarded the governorships of Shawbak and then Ḥamāh, dying in 1310.²² According to al-Ṣafadī, “He spoke and wrote excellent Mongolian” (*wa-yujid al-kalām wa-al-khatṭ bi-al-lughah al-mughuliyah*), and had been the scribe (*kātib*) to Ḥasan Taqu, one of the *noyans* of the Mongols. His father had also been one of the leading scribes among the Mongols. Qipchaq said about the Mongolian language, comparing it to Arabic: “Like with you, there is proper and improper speech, so with us.”²³

SAYF AL-DĪN AYTAMISH/UTAMISH AL-NAṢIRI

Originally a Mamluk of al-Ashraf Khalil, then of al-Naṣir Muḥammad, Aytamish first comes to our notice as a trusted envoy of the latter during his exile in Karak (1309–10). He was named governor of Karak when al-Naṣir Muḥammad left to regain the throne, remaining in this position until 1311. Subsequently, Aytamish became a loyal member of the sultan's inner circle, although never rising above the rank of an amir of forty; in this capacity he fulfilled a number of missions. Probably the height of his career was the series of embassies he led to the court of the Ilkhan Abū Sa‘id, both during the peace negotiations that led to the treaty of 1323 and the subsequent years. Al-Ṣafadī writes that he traveled to the Ilkhanate with his personal contingent (*tulb*) and musical band (*tablkhānah*), but I assume that if this was the case it was only in the aftermath of the peace treaty. Aytamish spoke and wrote Mongolian, and knew the customs of the Mongols (*ādāb al-mughuli*). “He judged in the house of the sultan among the *khaṣṣākiyah* according to the *yāsāq* that Chinggis Khan established. He knew the biography of Chinggis Khan, explained it, and reviewed it. He was acquainted with the branches of the Mongols and their roots, and he knew by heart their histories and events.” Aytamish answered letters in Mongolian for the sultan.²⁴ He died in Ṣafad in

²²Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages*, 99–101, 105–6; Holt, *The Age of the Crusades*, 110–11, 113; Reuven Amitai, “The Mongol Occupation of Damascus in 1300: A Study of Mamluk Loyalties,” in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, ed. Amalia Levanoni and Michael Winter (Leiden, 2004), 21–41, esp. 22–25.

²³Al-Ṣafadī, *Al-Wāfi*, 24:178.

²⁴In Aytamish's absence, he was replaced by the sultan's maternal uncle, Tayirbughā, who is mentioned at the end of this article.



737/1336, having received the governorship there a few months earlier, the previous incumbent being his brother Ariqtay (see below).²⁵

SAYF AL-DĪN ARIQTAY

Ariqtay may have been the brother of the above-mentioned Aytamish (although it is probably more likely that this “brotherhood” (*ukhūwah*)²⁶ was metaphorical). Aytamish was buried in Ariqtay’s *turbah*, near the “external” mosque (referring, it would seem, to the mosque outside of the citadel, in Șafad).²⁷ Early in al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s third term he became *jāmdār*. For over twenty years Ariqtay was governor of Șafad, replaced in 1336 by Aytamish. In the post-al-Nāṣir Muḥammad period, Ariqtay had an illustrious career until his death in 750/1349.²⁸ Al-Şafadī notes that both Aytamish and Ariqtay spoke Turkish and Qipchaqi fluently (*wa-humā fi lisān al-turk wa-al-qibjāqi faṣīḥān*). The latter term must refer to Mongolian, clearly that of the Golden Horde.²⁹

SAYF AL-DĪN ALMALIK³⁰

He was captured by the Mamluks at Abulustayn in 1277³¹ and thus was presumably a Mongol, around the relatively advanced age of 20. Although originally bought by Qalawun, he was given to his son-in-law, Berke Khan, who thereupon gave him to Küvendik (who became *nā’ib al-salṭanah* after Berke’s accession); the exact chronology is not clear. Eventually Almalik became the Mamluk of Qalawun’s

²⁵ Al-Şafadī, *Al-Wāfi*, 9:440; Ayalon, “The Great Yāsa,” Pt. C2, 131–45; Donald P. Little, “Notes on Aitamiš, A Mongol Mamlūk,” in *Der islamischen Welt zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, ed. Ulrich Haarmann and P. Bachmann (Wiesbaden, 1979), 387–401; Reuven Amitai, “A Mongol Governor of al-Karak in Jordan?: A Re-examination of an Old Document in Mongolian and Arabic,” forthcoming in *Zentralasiatische Studien*.

²⁶ See the important and succinct discussion of this term (although mainly referring to a later period) in Jo Van Steenbergen, *Order Out of Chaos: Patronage, Conflict and Mamluk Socio-Political Culture, 1341–1382* (Leiden, 2006), 86–88. See also David Ayalon, *L’esclavage du mamelouk*, Oriental Notes and Studies, no. 1 (Jerusalem, 1951), 36–37.

²⁷ On this site, see H. Taragan, “Doors that Open Meanings: Baybars’s Red Mosque at Safed,” in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, ed. Winter and Levanoni, 3–20.

²⁸ Al-Şafadī, *Al-Wāfi*, 8:361, 9:440; for a discussion of their “brotherhood,” see Ayalon, “The Great Yāsa,” Pt. C2, 138. For a different reading of the line about the languages, see *ibid.*, 137.

²⁹ For Qipchaqi language as a synonym for Mongolian language, see Ayalon, “The Great Yāsa,” Pt. C1, 133.

³⁰ For the vocalization of this name, see the editor’s comments in his biography in al-Şafadī, *Al-Wāfi*, 9:372, note.

³¹ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalāni, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah fi A‘yān al-Mi‘ah al-Thāminah* (Hyderabad, 1392–96/1972–76), 1:489.



son al-Ṣāliḥ ‘Alī.³² During the time of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s second exile in Karak (1309–10), Almalik played an important role as an intermediary between him and the amirs in Cairo, and by 1312, two years after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s return to the sultanate, he was promoted to the rank of an amir of one hundred. Throughout al-Nāṣir’s long reign he played an important role, as he did in the confused years after his death. He was arrested and executed in 1346, at the ripe old age of 90.³³

We have thus a list of six prominent Mamluk officers, one who even became sultan, of Mongol origin. In four cases, they joined the Mamluk ranks as a result of being taken captive in battle. The way that the apparent brothers Aytamish and Ariqtay came to the sultanate is unknown: the slave trade and captivity are possibilities; if the former, then it is more feasible that they came from the Golden Horde and not from the Ilkhanate. The fact that they are said to know “Qipchaqi” (i.e., in this case, the Mongolian of the Golden Horde) indicates this also. Kitbugha and Salār are explicitly reported to have been Oirat Mongols, while the fluency of Qipchaq, Aytamish, and Ariqtay in Mongolian clearly indicates a Mongol provenance. Qipchaq is cited by al-Ṣafadī as using the first person plural when referring to the Mongolian language, so there is no doubt of his origins. Only Almalik may be of doubtful Mongolian birth: he was captured in the battle of Abulustayn, but it is conceivable that he may have hailed from among the Turkish troops who served the Mongols. Lacking clear evidence of this, I will continue to include him among the Mongol-Mamluks.

One personality who has not been included in this list is Küvendik³⁴ al-Sāqī, to whom some scholars have attributed a Mongol origin.³⁵ He had become *nā’ib al-saltanah* of his old friend al-Sa‘id Berke Khan in 1277 after the death of Bilik al-Khaznadār and the short incumbency of Āqsunqur al-Fāriqān. Subsequently, he played an important role in the deposition of Berke Khan. Later, Küvendik was accused of leading a conspiracy against Qalawun (including corresponding with the Franks) and was executed by drowning in Lake Tiberias in May 1281.³⁶

³²Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:723.

³³For his biography, see Joseph Drory, “Aal-Malik [sic] and His Inscription,” *Cathedra* 117 (2005): 75–80 [in Hebrew].

³⁴Various transliterations of this name are given by scholars. According to G. Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish* (Oxford, 1972), 690, *küven-* means “to be happy, pleased,” “to rejoice” in Qipchaq.

³⁵Holt, *The Age of the Crusades*, 99; Irwin, *The Middle East*, 62. Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan*, 189, also implies that Küvendik was a Mongol.

³⁶Cf. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades*, 102: “Küvendik . . . was accused of heading a conspiracy of Mamluks of Mongol origin.” See also Irwin, *The Middle East*, 71; Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan*, 188–89. Cf. Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 186: the conspirators were composed mainly of



I confess, however, that I have not found clear evidence of Küvendik's Mongol origins. For example, in his death-notice in Ibn al-Furāt's chronicle (s.a. 681), there is no mention of his so-called Mongol provenance.³⁷ Given his particular, albeit short-lived, prominence, as well as the especially important role he played in the higher politics of the time, the matter of Küvendik's origins is perhaps not an insignificant point, and it involves more than just increasing our list from six to seven senior officers of Mongol heritage.

In order to facilitate the continuation of our investigation, and to provide some basis for comparison, let us look at the data for the leading Mongol *wāfidīyah*, i.e., those Mongols who left the territory of the Ilkhanate for various reasons, seeking refuge with the Mamluks. As I mentioned above, this subject was initially discussed systematically by Ayalon, and recently by Nakamachi Nobutaka. I must commend the latter for his exhaustive and comprehensive research, which culminates in his detailed and impressive list of 28 officers in the Mamluk army of *wāfidī* origin. This list can be divided into two parts: those who reached their greatest prominence before the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalawun (1310–41), and those—including some who had arrived earlier—who became senior officers (i.e., “amirs of one hundred/commanders of one thousand”) later. I will briefly look at a few from the former category, while I will address the latter group at the end of this article. I should add that Nakamachi's meticulous work greatly facilitates a comparison of Mongol-Mamluk and Mongol *wāfidī* senior amirs.

The list contains thirteen individuals whose careers peaked before 1310 (nos. 1–11, 16–17 in Nakamachi's list). I am disregarding at this point those Mongol *wāfidīyah* who may have arrived before 1310 but were important only afterwards. Three of these were members of the Rum Seljuq elite (nos. 8, 9, and 11), and thus are not relevant to our discussion. Of the ten Mongols, I will mention the four most prominent; nos. 16 and 17 were leaders of the Oirat *wāfidīyah* who came in 1295 but were both eliminated by 1300. Perhaps the most important of these is Sayf al-Dīn Noghai/Nūkāy³⁸ al-Tatārī (no. 4 in Nakamachi's list), who came over in the group of Mongol deserters in 661/1263. He was arrested by Baybars, but later released and made an amir of one hundred by Qalawun. Noghai was killed

Ẓāhirīyah (i.e., the mamluks of Baybars). The Mongol *wāfidīyah* were evidently part of the group, but not its main component (see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:685–86, for how the *wāfidīyah* fled with coconspirators Aytamish al-Sā‘idī and others to Sunqur al-Ashqar in north Syria). In any event, there does not seem to be any justification in seeing the involvement of “Mamluks of Mongol origin.”

³⁷ Ibn al- Furāt, *Tārikh al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk*, 7:239.

³⁸ Significantly, perhaps, not a Turkish name, but a Mongolian one (< *noghai*, “dog”). The other *wāfidīyah* at this time also have Mongol names.



in the battle of Wādī al-Khaznadār in 699/1300. He is the only *wāfidī* of this period to reach unequivocally the highest rank in the Mamluk hierarchy.³⁹ Yet, in spite of his high title and the fact that his three daughters married very well (one even wedding Baybars), Noghai apparently was not a member of the inner circle of sultanic intimates or one of the truly senior amirs, for he is hardly mentioned in the ongoing machinations that characterized the Sultanate in the 1290s. For that matter, in spite of having been appointed an amir of one hundred, he is not mentioned in the Mamluk order of battle at Wādī al-Khaznadār,⁴⁰ showing perhaps that he was not one of the more important amirs of one hundred, or perhaps that he had been demoted at some point.

Nakamachi suggests that Sayf al-Dīn Siraghan Āghā (no. 1 on his list), the leader of the first wave of Mongol *wāfidīyah* in 660/1262,⁴¹ also received a commission of one hundred, based on the evidence given by Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s *Rawd*, where it is written that Baybars “commissioned their leaders with [officer ranks] of one hundred horses and less.”⁴² I have written that the evidence for these appointments was “mere hyperbole.”⁴³ Nakamachi demurs, writing “there is no logical reason for denying this appointment itself.”⁴⁴ Well, I will stick to my guns: our friend Siraghan never appears again in the detailed records for the reign of Baybars, neither as an amir of one hundred nor in any other capacity, except to receive part of a village in the environs of Caesarea and Arsūf as *milk* in 1265.⁴⁵ One could wonder what kind of amir of one hundred he was that he is never mentioned in the sources during this period of incessant warfare. I have devoted some space to questioning Nakamachi’s analysis of Siraghan’s rank, since this directly impinges upon his analysis of the role and importance of the early Mongol *wāfidīyah*. I therefore see no reason to call into doubt Ayalon’s statement: “Baybars’ reign is also marked by the absence of a single appointment [of a *wāfidī*]

³⁹Nakamachi, “Military Refugees,” 77. The fact that al-Yūnīnī (in Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography*, 72, cited in Nakamachi, “Military Refugees,” 75) refers to him as a “Zāhirī” should not be given too much importance. This single attribution does not turn Noghai (spelled here Nukayh) into a mamluk of al-Zāhir Baybars, as implied by Nakamachi in note 104.

⁴⁰See Reuven Amitai, “Whither the Ilkhanid Army? Ghazan’s First Campaign into Syria (1299–1300),” in *Warfare in Inner Asian History*, ed. N. Di Cosmo (Leiden, 2002), 239–41.

⁴¹Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawd al-Zāhir fi Sirat al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Khuwaytir (Riyadh, 1396/1976), 180, when describing the second wave of Mongol *wāfidīyah*, states that Saraghan Āghā was the commander of the previous wave, i.e., the one that arrived in 660/1262.

⁴²Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawd*, 138.

⁴³Reuven Amitai-Preiss, “The Mamluk Officer Class during the Reign of Sultan Baybars,” in *War and Society in the Eastern Mediterranean, 7th–15th Centuries*, ed. Y. Lev (Leiden, 1997), 286.

⁴⁴Nakamachi, “Military Refugees,” 65.

⁴⁵Amitai-Preiss, “The Mamluk Officer Class,” 295 (no. 21). See note 96 for the vocalization of this name.



to the rank of Amir of One Hundred,”⁴⁶ as Nakamachi does.

Another important *wāfidī* Mongol personality was Sayf al-Dīn Geremün (no. 2 in Nakamachi’s list, vocalized as Karmūn) al-Tatārī, who led the second group of Mongol *wāfidīyah* in 661/1263. He played noteworthy roles in the campaigns against Arsūf (1265) and Ṣafad (1266), but never seems to have risen above the rank of amir of forty.⁴⁷ We should also mention Sögetei (no. 10 in Nakamachi’s list), who arrived from Rum (although he was a Mongol) in 675/1276 during the confused events preceding Baybars’s campaign to Anatolia that culminated in the battle of Abulustayn. While his daughter Ashlun was married to Qalawun, and gave birth to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, we know nothing of Sögetei’s eventual career. In the end, he was not destined for a senior role in Mamluk military and political life.

It appears that for the Sultanate’s first half century or so, the *wāfidīyah* and their leaders, while perhaps of some importance from the perspective of military manpower and contributing something to the social and even political life of the ruling elite drawn from the military society, were on the whole far from the seats of power. I agree somewhat with Nakamachi that perhaps the lines between Mamluk society and the *wāfidī* grandees were not cut and dried,⁴⁸ but at the same time the latter did not have true entrée into the higher circles of the Sultanate, and it was clear where the monopoly of power lay. It will be interesting, however, to see how the *wāfidīyah* and the amirs drawn from them could be integrated into the political aspirations and activities of the senior Mongol-Mamluks. This will be examined below.

Let us look at the above-mentioned handful of senior Mongol-Mamluks who became movers and shakers of Mamluk politics at the beginning of the 1290s, and what role their Mongol origin played in their activities. Although three of these amirs are at the nexus of power from 1290 onward, all had been senior amirs already under Sultan Qalawun, perhaps even obtaining their first commissions while he was still an officer (albeit one of the leading officers under Baybars and his immediate successors).⁴⁹ The first to gain prominence was Kitbugha al-Manṣūrī, whose Mongol political connections have already been noted by several scholars and have been alluded to above. Because of his Mongol affinities, Kitbugha—then the *nā’ib al-saltanah* in the short first reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad—was in

⁴⁶Ayalon, “Wafidiya,” 99.

⁴⁷Amitai-Preiss, “The Mamluk Officer Class,” 296 (no. 30); idem, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 108–9; Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawd*, 236; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mir’āt al-Zamān* (Hyderabad, 1954–61), 2:337–38; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm*, 7:138–39.

⁴⁸Nakamachi, “Military Refugees,” 75–76.

⁴⁹See Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 176–77, for a list of some forty Manṣūris who were in Qalawun’s service while he was still an amir.



693/1293 given important information on Sanjar al-Shujā'ī's plans against him by the amir Sayf al-Dīn Qunghur/Qunqur, who had arrived with the *wāfidiyah* during the reign of Baybars, and "was of Kitbugha's race" (*wa-huwa min jins kitbughā*). In spite of the fact that several of his sons were in al-Shujā'ī's service and he himself was among his associates, he gave the intelligence to Kitbugha because of a feeling of ethnic solidarity (*jinsīyah*). This information prevented Kitbugha from being ambushed and enabled him to organize his forces and eventually to defeat his rival.⁵⁰ During the actual fighting, among the forces that joined Kitbugha's side were Mongol *wāfidiyah*, and it is possible that mutual feelings of ethnic solidarity played a role here.⁵¹

A few months later, Kitbugha had deposed the boy-sultan, and he took the throne as al-Malik al-Ādil. One of the important events of his reign was the arrival of some 10,000 (sometimes given as 18,000) *wāfidiyah* of the Mongol Oirat tribe, which happened to be the same group from which Kitbugha himself hailed. Both 10,000 and 18,000 are enormous numbers, in relation to previous waves of Mongol refugees and to the total size of the Mamluk army. Again, this event has received some attention by scholars, from Ayalon onward. The reasons for the massive influx of these Mongol deserters will not concern us, but it has mostly to do with events in the Ilkhanate and the rise of Ghazan to its throne. Ironically, but perhaps not completely surprisingly, these refugees to the Sultanate had yet to be touched by the growing Islamization of the Mongols in the Ilkhanate; their pagan customs caused some averse comments in the Sultanate. As is well known, Kitbugha gave them a warm welcome, it would seem *inter alia* because of their common origin, but also since he appears to have believed that they would provide a bulwark against his opponents, not the least because of ethnic solidarity. The opposite was achieved: his inordinate support of this group and their leaders only contributed to the growing alienation of a significant number of senior and middle ranking amirs from him. This in turn developed into the *coup d'état* led by Lachin in 1296, who in turn purged some of the Oirat officers.⁵²

This is not the last that we are to hear of the Oirats. In the fall of 1299,

⁵⁰ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:798–79 (who also mentions one of Qunghur's sons, Jāwurjī); *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Mamlükensultane*, ed. K. Zetterstéen (Leiden, 1919), 29; Ibn Taghribirdi, *Al-Nujūm*, 8:42 (the two last mentioned cited by Donald P. Little, *An Introduction to Mamluk Historiography* [Wiesbaden, 1970], 126, who also cites al-Jazārī, "Jawāhir al-Sulūk fi al-Khulafā' al-Mulūk," Bibliothèque Nationale [Paris] MS Ar. 6379, fols. 215–16, which I was unable to inspect). Nakamachi does not mention Qunghur in his list.

⁵¹ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:800.

⁵² For the arrival of the Oirats, see Ayalon, "Wafidiya," 99–100; for the importance of Kitbugha's pro-Oirat policy in his deposition, see *ibid.*, 91. In both places, abundant sources are cited. See also Nakamachi, "Military Refugees," 59, 65, 79–80.



having entered Palestine on the way to confront the Mongols under Ghazan in the campaign that culminated in the battle of Wādī al-Khaznadar, Oirats in the Mamluk army launched a rebellion under their leader Ulus (rehabilitated since the above-mentioned purge), ostensibly to put their “kinsman” Kitbugha back on the throne. We have here, then, another apparent expression of “ethnic solidarity.” This rebellion was put down and Ulus and other leaders were executed. This incident certainly did not contribute to either the preparedness or the morale of the Mamluk army, and it was one of the reasons behind their defeat at the battle north of Homs at the end of the year.⁵³

In short, the whole long episode of Kitbugha and the Oirats, lasting some seven years, is a clear example of the apparent role of ethnic solidarity, in this case of an Oirat Mongol variety, in Mamluk politics. Without this Mongol connection, we can scarcely understand Kitbugha’s rise to power, his sultanate, his fall, and the ill-fated attempt to reinstate him (apparently without his knowledge or connivance). The role of ethnic solidarity—I prefer this to the older expression “racial solidarity,” and not only because of the discredited political connotations—in Mamluk politics has been noted by several modern scholars,⁵⁴ “because”—as Donald Little has stated in a different context—“of the importance of ethnic affiliation in the complex system of Mamluk loyalties that provided cohesion to the Mamluk state.”⁵⁵

However, I do not want to go overboard by attributing too much importance to ethnic solidarity in the Sultanate’s politics, at least among senior Mamluks of Mongol origin. There is nowhere else anything similar to the story of Kitbugha and the Oirats, either in its intensity and duration or with regard to its basic nature, elsewhere in the annals of early Mamluk history. Let us look at the stories of Salār and Qipchaq for illustrations of this point.

Salār, it should be remembered, was also of Oirat origin, and yet we see little evidence of ethnic solidarity on his part, neither *vis-à-vis* Kitbugha nor the Oirat *wāfidiyah*. We find him rising to some prominence early in the reign of Lachin, so he does not appear to have been a protégée or ally of the Oirat Kitbugha.⁵⁶ Both al-Kutubī and al-Şafadī note that Salār and Lachin were very close friends, and Salār was named *ustādār* when the new sultan reached Cairo.⁵⁷ Lachin, it should be

⁵³ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:883; Ayalon, “Wafidiya,” 100; Irwin, *The Middle East*, 100; Amitai, “Whither the Mongol Army?” 227.

⁵⁴ Irwin, *The Middle East*, 92; Holt, *The Age of the Crusades*, 110; Little, *Introduction*, 126; Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan*, 117, 189.

⁵⁵ Donald P. Little, review of *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century*, by Peter Thorau, trans. P. M. Holt, in *Journal of Semitic Studies* 38, no. 2 (1993): 342.

⁵⁶ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:822.

⁵⁷ Al-Şafadī, *Al-Wāfi*, 24:178–79; al-Kutubī, *Fawāt*, 1:468.



remembered, was apparently of Greek origin, so it is clear that “ethnic solidarity” played little role when Salār threw in his lot with Lachin and abandoned Kitbugha. For that matter, his friendship with Lachin did not stop Salār from participating in the conspiracy against him that resulted in his assassination and replacement by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalawun (his second reign).⁵⁸ Other considerations besides ethnic solidarity and friendship played a role in Salār’s political calculations. Certainly the former was not a factor when Salār helped to lead the resistance to the attempted Oirat putsch in 1299 in Palestine.⁵⁹ Interestingly enough, the late Peter M. Holt describes Salār as later leading the “Turkish” faction as opposed to the Circassian “Burji” faction headed by Baybars al-Jashnakir.⁶⁰ This may well be the case, although further research is needed to establish the ethnic component of this rivalry and the larger political struggles of the second reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. I do not believe one should infer “ethnic solidarity” from the arrival of a couple hundred Mongols around 705/1305, who included the mother and two brothers of Salār himself. If anything, we have here a clear and interesting example of family solidarity, showing that contact with kin could be maintained for almost three decades over long distances and a distinctly hostile frontier.⁶¹

Mongolian family reunions are also seen in the story of Qipchaq al-Manṣūrī from the end of the 1290s. But first, some background: Qipchaq was part of the group of senior amirs who acclaimed Lachin sultan in 1296.⁶² Whatever ethnic solidarity he might have had with Kitbugha was soon forgotten in the aftermath of his deposition. Qipchaq was appointed governor of Damascus by the new sultan, but relations soon soured, not the least because of the increasing power of the *nā’ib al-saltanah* Mengü-Temür. Realizing that he was soon to be arrested, Qipchaq and some other amirs, along with their mamluks, fled the Sultanate in 1298 for the Ilkhanate. They were warmly welcomed at Ghazan’s court. Qipchaq was reunited with his father (called in the Mamluk sources a *silāḥdār*) and his brothers, married to a Mongol lady, and given the governorship of Ḥamadan. At the end of 1299, he and his ex-Mamluk comrades joined Ghazan in his campaign into Syria, were

⁵⁸ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:856.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 1:883–84; Stewart, *The Armenian Kingdom*, 166. Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 330, does not mention the role of Salār or any other amirs in putting down this rebellion.

⁶⁰ Holt, *Age of the Crusades*, 110; cf. Irwin, *The Middle East*, 92, who writes that Salār was supported by the aging Ṣāliḥī and Zāhirī amirs, “as well as Mongols who favoured Salar because he was a Mongol.” It is unclear to me to which Mongols he is referring: the remnants of earlier *wāfidiyah* or unknown Mongol-Mamluks (regular troopers or amirs); he was certainly no friend of the Oirats. In any event, I am not sure that this Mongol support really existed.

⁶¹ Besides the references in note 19 above, see Irwin, *The Middle East*, 101; Little, *Introduction*, 8, 16–17.

⁶² Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:822.



present at the Mongol victory at Wādī al-Khaznadār, and advanced with the triumphant Ilkhan to Damascus. Qipchaq was appointed titular “Mongol” governor of the city (and perhaps beyond) but seems to have exercised little authority beyond facilitating the collection of taxes and other tribute, mediating with the local notables, and trying to restrain some of the excesses of Mongol troops and to moderate demands from the local population. When the Mongols withdrew in the spring of 1300, instead of returning with them to the east, he traveled to the south, meeting the Mamluk leadership that was making its way from Egypt to Syria. His submission and excuses were accepted and he was permitted back in the Mamluk fold, although he never returned to his high position.⁶³

I will summarize what I wrote in an article published in the volume edited by Michael Winter and Amalia Levanoni in 2004.⁶⁴ Qipchaq had every reason to return with the retreating Mongols and end his days in honorable retirement, surrounded by family, enjoying a comfortable sinecure, and speaking his mother tongue. Qipchaq rejected all that, evidently motivated more by his Mamluk loyalties, developed since his youth. This, to my mind, shows the limits of Mongol ethnic solidarity in general, as well as the ultimate loyalty of mamluks of Mongol provenance.

I should mention an apparently apocryphal story found in some later sources, such as Ibn al-Furāt.⁶⁵ In the death notice of Qalawun (s.a. 689), it is told how much the sultan liked Qipchaq, but that he did not permit him to go to Syria (it is not clear if his intention was just to travel to Syria or to be appointed to a governorship or other office there) because he was afraid that he would flee to the Mongols and cause trouble. When Lachin became sultan, however, he made him governor of Damascus. Later, Qipchaq indeed fled to the Mongols and truly caused trouble when he instigated Ghazan’s campaign to Syria. Personally, I have my doubts regarding the reliability of this anecdote, and to my mind it is likely that had Qipchaq never been compelled to take his trip to the east, this story would have never circulated. In any case, let us remember the next development, not related in the story: Qipchaq abandoned the Mongols to rejoin the Mamluks.

Robert Irwin has written: “[S]entiments of racial solidarity were inextricably involved in the struggle for political power between what may be termed the inner and the outer elites of the Mamluk armies.”⁶⁶ I certainly agree with him, but I have tried to show above that we should be careful about seeing Mongol ethnic

⁶³This is a summary of a somewhat detailed discussion, with references in Amitai, “The Mongol Occupation of Damascus,” 22–26, 32–35, 37–40. I have found no evidence to support the statement in Irwin, *The Middle East*, 91, that Qipchaq fled to the Ilkhanate with other “Mongol mamluks.”

⁶⁴Reuven Amitai, “The Mongol Occupation of Damascus,” 21–41.

⁶⁵Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk*, 8:94–95.

⁶⁶Irwin, *The Middle East*, 92.



solidarity being a determinant factor every time the paths of two Mongol-Mamluks crossed, one of them came across some Mongol *wāfidīyah*, or the opportunity to flee to the Mongol enemy arose. Other determinants, including *khushdāshīyah* solidarity, loyalty to patron and sultan, and fidelity to Islam as they understood it, let alone rational decisions based on practical advantage, were still the dominant bases for political behavior among Mamluk officers and probably their inferiors as well.

In order to further explore the role of ethnic solidarity in Mamluk politics in a more general sense, I suggest that at least three further matters must be taken into consideration in future research. The first is the more theoretical question of ethnicity and national feeling in pre-modern societies around the world, not the least in the Middle East and Central Asia. As far as I am aware, we do not have comprehensive discussions of Turkish and Mongolian ethnic feelings in the period of the Mamluk Sultanate.⁶⁷ Without a study of how thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Mongols saw themselves as an ethnic collective of some type, hopefully free of modern anachronism, nationally inspired or otherwise, it is impossible to analyze fully the sense of ethnic solidarity among Mamluks and *wāfidīyah* of Mongol provenance in the Sultanate.

Secondly, we need more case studies of possible expressions of ethnic solidarity among other groups in the military society of the Sultanate, starting perhaps with the Circassians.⁶⁸ Are some groups more prone to ethnic-based solidarity than others? How often is this expressed? Is the solidarity among some groups more powerful than others? In short, in order to study comprehensively ethnicity and its role in Mamluk politics, we first need a series of case studies, which will provide a proper empirical basis for comparison and generalization.

Thirdly, we would gain a fuller picture were we to take into account the gender aspect of this story, not the least the role of the daughters of Mongol *wāfidī*

⁶⁷For some examples of ethnic solidarity, or at least affinity, between various groups of Turks in the Middle East in the eleventh century, see David Ayalon, "Aspects of the Mamlük Phenomenon: The Importance of the Mamlük Institution," *Der Islam* 53, no. 2 (1976): 210–11; for expressions of Turkish-Mongol solidarity, see idem, "The European-Asiatic Steppe: A Major Reservoir of Power for the Islamic World," in *Proceedings of the 25th Congress of Orientalists (Moscow 1960)* (Moscow, 1963), 2:48–49. Both articles were reprinted in idem, *The Mamlük Society* (London, 1979), articles Xa and VIII, respectively.

⁶⁸See, however, some preliminary comments in Van Steenbergen, *Order Out of Chaos*, 92–94, who also cites some other relevant comments in other studies. (I was unable to obtain what appears to be an important study by M. Chapoutet-Remadi, "Liens propres et identités séparées chez les Mamelouks bahrides," in *Valeur et distance: Identités et sociétés en Egypte*, ed. C. Décobert [Paris, 2000], 175–88.) Here I should note again Robert Irwin's provocative paper on the problems of studying the Circassians in the Sultanate, delivered in Haifa in 2006; see note 9 above.



amirs, as wives of the sultan and senior amirs.⁶⁹ Thus, the biographer of Baybars mentions five wives of the sultan, three of whom were the daughters of Mongol *wāfidī* amirs.⁷⁰ Qalawun also took some daughters of Mongol *wāfidī* as wives, including al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's mother, and married a few to his sons.⁷¹ A full-fledged study of the gender and family aspects of higher Mamluk politics carried out with a sensitivity to ethnic networks and origins would certainly prove useful to a comprehensive discussion of the role of ethnicity and ethnic solidarity in Mamluk politics.

Before concluding, I would like to go back to the *wāfidī* amirs discussed by Nakamachi, this time looking at those from the post-1310 period, both those who arrived after this date and those who reached prominence only at this time. There are fifteen amirs in this category (nos. 12–28, minus nos. 16–17, who were the Oirat leaders who came in 1295 and by 1300 were dead). One of these was a Rum Seljuq officer who arrived in the Sultanate in 1276 (no. 12), two were descendants of another of these officers (nos. 13 and 14), and one was the mamluk of a Rumi amir (no. 15). Of the remainder, seven can be defined as Mongols (nos. 18–24). Three of these (nos. 20, 23, 24: Badr al-Dīn Jankālī ibn al-Bābā, Sayf al-Dīn Tayirbugha, and Temürtash, though the last for only a few months) indeed became amirs of one hundred between the years 1310 and 1341. This is noteworthy when compared to the fifty-year period before, although this is far from a *wāfidī* revolution (even with three other non-Mongol *wāfidīyah* who received this position, nos. 25, 26, and 28, the last in Damascus). Still, it is worth analyzing this development. To what can we attribute it? Nakamachi says that in al-Nāṣir's third reign, "the centralization of power was achieved, and the sultan no longer needed to depend on strong units of military refugees. He could advance his favorite retainers whether they were sultan's mamluks or not. Therefore, in this phase, several highly advanced *wāfidī* amirs emerged from *wāfidīyah* groups which had only a small number of personnel or which had collapsed and completely dissolved."⁷²

⁶⁹See the relevant comments in Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan*, 116–18; and for a later period: Van Steenbergen, *Order Out of Chaos*, 82–85, esp. 82, n. 117, for other relevant studies.

⁷⁰Ibn Shaddād al-Ḥalabī, *Tārikh al-Malik al-Ζāhir*, ed. A. Ḥuṭayṭ (Wiesbaden, 1404/1983), 233.

⁷¹Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan*, 116–18; P. M. Holt, "An-Nasir Muhammed b. Qalawun (684–741/1285–1341): His Ancestry, Kindred, and Affinity," in *Proceedings of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd International Colloquium, Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, ed. U. Vermeulen and D. De Smet (Leuven, 1995), 313–24.

⁷²Nakamachi, "Military Refugees," 75. I plan to discuss in a future paper some of the conclusions from this article, which, while being thought-provoking, are perhaps a bit far-fetched. For example, I am not convinced that early sultans had a need for "strong units of military refugees," and I am not sure that they existed.



Frankly, I do not concur with this explanation. I think that rather the answer is to be found in the nature of al-Nāṣir's personality, the nature of his rule, and the relations between him and his senior amirs. As has been pointed out briefly by Ayalon⁷³ and in greater detail by Amalia Levanoni,⁷⁴ al-Nāṣir Muḥammad wrought many changes in the way mamluks were educated and the whole military system was run. It should then not come as a surprise when we discern such a large presence of senior *wāfidī* amirs. At the same time, like his predecessors, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had built up a large unit of royal mamluks and surrounded himself with a large group of senior amirs from this formation. Yet, he remained fundamentally suspicious of all those around him, even from the group of his oldest personal mamluks. The fate of Tankiz in 1340 is a case in point. Robert Irwin has written that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was "a little paranoid in his treatment of those he had chosen."⁷⁵ This appraisal seems to me to be an understatement, and the picture drawn should be much starker. It could well be that the cultivation of a few *wāfidī* amirs, two of whom were Mongols, was designed to counterbalance the sultan's own mamluks and to prevent the concentration of too much power within one group. Since al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had already eliminated most of the veteran amirs from the Manṣūriyah early in his reign,⁷⁶ he had no natural group with which he could balance his own mamluks, and thus he also favored *inter alia* two of the *wāfidī* amirs.

As far as I know, there was no extraordinary connection between these *wāfidī* amirs and the Mongol-Mamluks that we named above (Aytamish, Ariqtay, and Almalik), although Tayirbughā on occasion assisted Aytamish with translation work in Mongolian. Moreover, for all of their pride in their Mongol cultural heritage, and in Aytamish's case, ongoing direct contact with a Mongol regime, there is no indication that these Mongol-Mamluk amirs ever acted politically on the basis of ethnic solidarity.

Individual and group identities and their impact on political action can be fluid and multifarious, and the possibility of multiple identities existing concurrently cannot be discounted. When we deal with the Mongol identity of certain Mamluk amirs and its influence on politics, we should be wary of unbalanced attention to certain evidence and drawing too broad conclusions on the basis of one or two examples.

⁷³See, e.g., David Ayalon, "The Auxiliary Forces of the Mamlūk Sultanate," *Der Islam* 65 (1988): 33–35.

⁷⁴Amalia Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn (1310–1341)* (Leiden, 1995).

⁷⁵Irwin, *The Middle East*, 121.

⁷⁶Reuven Amitai, "The Remaking of the Military Elite of Mamlūk Egypt by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad B. Qalāwūn," *Studia Islamica* 72 (1990): 145–63.



POSTSCRIPT

As this article was going to press, I came upon the following relevant passage from Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umari’s *Al-Ta’rif bi-al-Muṣṭalaḥ al-Sharīf*:⁷⁷

The form of correspondence to [Özbeg Khan of the Golden Horde]—if it is written in Arabic—is [the same] form as written to the ruler of Iran [i.e., the Ilkhan], as has been mentioned. But most of the time it is written in Mongolian (bi-al-mughulī), for which is responsible Aytamish al-Muhammadī, Tayirbugha al-Nāṣirī, Arighadliq (?) the translator (*al-tarjumān*), and Qūṣūn al-Sāqī.

Aytamish and Tayirbugha are of course mentioned above. Arighadliq⁷⁸ may not have been a mamluk, given the nickname *al-tarjumān*. At this point he remains unidentified. Qūṣūn al-Sāqī is the famous amir who rose to prominence progressively towards the end of al-Nāṣir Muhammad’s third reign, briefly becoming the most powerful amir immediately after his patron’s death.⁷⁹ I perhaps should have included Qūṣūn in my discussion above, due to his apparent Mongol origin, but his activities were connected mainly to a later period than the focus of this paper. I would like to note, however, that Qūṣūn’s erstwhile protégé, Bashtak, had become his main enemy, in spite of the latter also hailing from the Golden Horde, and perhaps being of Mongol provenance as well.⁸⁰ This is another occurrence where ethnic solidarity among mamluks of seemingly Mongol origin is not evident.

⁷⁷ Ed. M. H. Shams al-Din (Beirut, 1408/1988), 70. See also al-Qalqashandī, *Šubḥ al-A’shá*, ed. M. H. Shams al-Din (Beirut, 1407/1987), 7:316–17; Little, “Notes on Aitamiš,” 393.

⁷⁸ The vocalization of the last three letters remains uncertain. I am grateful to Prof. Marcel Erdal (University of Frankfurt), who suggested to me in a private correspondence that this name might be composed of *arīq* (“pure”) and *adlıq* (“having a name”); see Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish*, 32–33, 213.

⁷⁹ For him, see Jo Van Steenbergen, “The Amir Qawsun, Statesman or Courtier? (720–741 AH/1320–1341 AD),” in *Proceedings of the 6th, 7th and 8th International Colloquium, Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, ed. U. Vermeulen and J. Van Steenbergen (Leuven, 2001), 449–66. The vocalization of Qūṣūn is preferred over the frequently found Qawsūn, as the word apparently derives from the Mongolian *qusu[n]* (modern *xus*), “birch tree”; F. D. Lessing, *Mongolian-English Dictionary* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960), 991.

⁸⁰ Al-Şafadi, *Al-Wāfi*, 10:132–34; Van Steenbergen, “The Amir Qawsun,” 460–63.

