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The Dynastic Impulse: Mamluk Husbands, Nomadic Wives, and Family Ambitions in the Early Sultanate

This article is an investigation of the importance of family to the early mam-luks. I contend that mamluk desires to connect with their natal families at times countered the mamluk system itself with its creation of bonds between men who were not genetically related to one another. To begin this work, some years ago I discussed the “Extended Family Impulse,” which I saw as the tendency among politically prominent mam-luks to contact the biological (usually natal) families they had left behind when they entered slavery. One way mam-luks did this was through the slave merchants who had brought them to Cairo, who thereafter brought the families as free persons.¹ In the present article, which is my first attempt at a larger project, I begin to address the related idea of a “Dynastic Impulse” in the period 648–89/1250–90. By “Dynastic Impulse,” I mean the attempts by the first mamluk rulers and their rivals, especially the initial generation of “Bahris,” to attach themselves to existing dynastic families, to create new families, or to do both, in response to political pressures in the early sultanate. Among those who engaged in some form of dynastic impulse were the Bahri mam-luks Baybars, Qalāwūn, and Fāris al-Dīn Aqṭāy; their Turkish ally, the concubine-turned-wife Shajar al-Durr; and their mamluk rival Aybak and his own slave-turned-ruler, Quṭuz.

In many cases, mam-luks tried to achieve their political goals by using strategic marriages. (By contrast, and by virtue of her gender, Shajar al-Durr used somewhat different techniques from those of her male counterparts.) Although some scholars have suggested that mam-luks preferred to wed enslaved women hailing from their own geographic and ethnic backgrounds,² my research suggests that the most prominent early mam-luks used a wider range of marriage strategies. At times, they sought brides from local dynasties. At other times, they married free nomadic women who had recently arrived in the region with their natal families. In either case, husbands and wives together sought to create new dynasties through their children. Although the factionalism of the mamluk system meant that a sultan’s offspring might never actually rule, the

¹ Anne F. Broadbridge, “Sending Home for Mom and Dad: The Extended Family Impulse In Mam-luk Politics,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 15 (2011): 1–18.

² David Ayalon, “Mamlūk: Military Slavery in Egypt and Syria,” reprinted in *Islam and the Abode of War* (Aldershot, 1994), II:16.



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intent of individual sultans and their female partners nevertheless remained focused on dynasty, as seen in clear, specific, and repeated behaviors, meaning not only the marriages themselves, but key symbolic practices around their children. Furthermore, all of these marriages, whether with existing dynasties or new arrivals, created in-law connections between the mamluk and the wife's family, and provided new personnel to contribute to family stability and status. For mamluk sultans in particular, male in-laws were likely to work in the auxiliary wing (*ḥalqah*) of the Egyptian army and support the family from there.

A CENTRAL ASIAN MODEL?

Scholars have theorized about the influence of Islamic family patterns on Mamluk behavior, such as the norm of having up to four wives, (theoretically) unlimited concubines, and children from a range of mothers.³ Given that so many early mamluks and concubines were raised in a Central Asian Turkic cultural milieu, however, it is reasonable to ask whether medieval Turkic views of strategic marriage also influenced behaviors in the sultanate.

Perhaps they did: Current scholarship on Central and East Asian nomadic society has identified a model of strategic marriage based on a partnership between two families. In this model, a wife assumed managerial duties over her own and her husband's property. If she was the senior wife, her children enjoyed higher status than the children of lesser wives or concubines. A wife could provide personnel for her husband's endeavors: her male relatives could work for her husband, and her female relatives could enter the family as additional spouses, managers, and childbearers.⁴

Among those Turkic families whose patterns fit this model, we see the reasonably well-documented royal dynasty of the Khwarazm-Shahs, which slightly predated the Mamluk period. This family included the powerful queen, Terken Khatun, who was a Qangli, Kipchak, or Yemek Turk, and who became the senior wife of the Khwarazm-Shah Sultan Tekish (r. 1172–1200). Terken Khatun's son, Muḥammad (r. 1200–20), succeeded his father, with Terken as Queen Mother. During both her husband's and son's reigns, Terken ran parts of the empire and had her own sources of income. At least four of Terken's male relatives worked in the empire as governors or army commanders, while their male nomadic subjects served in the imperial armies as troops. Terken also found places for several female relatives in the empire, one of whom married Muḥammad and produced Terken's grandson, whom she successfully chose as Muḥammad's heir even though he was relatively young

³David Ayalon, "Mamlūk Military Aristocracy: A Non-Hereditary Nobility," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 10 (1987), 208–9; reprinted in his *Islam and the Abode of War*.

⁴Anne F. Broadbridge, *Women and the Making of the Mongol Empire* (Cambridge, 2018), Chapter 1.



(the oldest son, the famous prince Jalāl al-Dīn, came from a mother unrelated to Terken).⁵ The Khwarazm-Shahs were in no way unique: nearly identical patterns appeared later among the Temūrids, especially with the well-connected and influential queen Gawharshad, senior wife of the Sultan Shāh Rukh (r. 1411–47), who helped her husband run his empire, whose brothers worked for him, and whose actions shaped royal succession.⁶ These Turkic patterns of influential wives and their natal families also resembled those used among the Chinggisid Mongols who dominated the continent.⁷

The point here is that Turkic slaves in the Mamluk Sultanate, both male and female, might have held a common model of partnership in their minds as one possibility for marriage behaviors. Although we cannot read those minds now, we can at least deduce from Mamluk activities that Turkic ideas about family may have shaped the first sultans' choices of wives and influenced the expectations that husbands and wives had for themselves, for one another, and for their mutual offspring.

BAHRI RULERS AND LOCAL DYNASTIES

The Bahri mamluks were a corps of military slaves working for the Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb (r. 637–47/1240–49). They established the Mamluk Sultanate in 648/1250 after the death of their master, al-Ṣāliḥ, in 657/1249, and their own murder of al-Ṣāliḥ's son, Turānshāh, a few months later. After the murder they allied politically with al-Ṣāliḥ's widow, Shajar al-Durr (lit., “tree of pearls,” a slave name), a former concubine and a Turk who shared the Bahris' cultural background and language, and who ruled independently as sultana (*sulṭānah*) for a brief period with Bahri support.⁸ Many Bahris rose to prominence in the early sultanate, including several who became sultans in their own right, among them Baybars (r. 658–76/1260–76), Qalāwūn (r. 678–89/1280–91), and the commander Fāris al-Dīn Aqṭāy, who never ruled. Other seekers of dynastic legitimacy were Aybak al-Turkumānī (r. 648–55/1251–57), who was also a former mamluk but opposed the Bahris energetically, and Aybak's own mamluk, Quṭuz (r. 657–58/1259–60).

Although the Bahris inaugurated what scholars today recognize as a unique political mechanism, they themselves did not have the benefit of scholarly hindsight

⁵Broadbridge, *Women*, 95–100.

⁶Anne F. Broadbridge, “The Temūrids and Their Extra-Dynastic Affairs,” in *The Temūrid Dynasty: A Handbook*, ed. Evrim Binbash and John E. Woods (Leiden, forthcoming).

⁷Broadbridge, *Women*, Chapters 4 and 5.

⁸D. Fairchild Ruggles, *Tree of Pearls: The Extraordinary Architectural Patronage of the 13th-Century Egyptian Slave-Queen Shajar al-Durr* (Oxford, 2020), 68–70.



or knowledge of the sultanate's future longevity. They therefore could not necessarily envision the peculiar system they were creating, and thus simply sought to set up a workable government in the face of political pressure from Egypt, Syria and points east. In terms of legitimacy in particular, some evidence suggests that in fact both the male sultans and the one female sultana tried to adopt a more familiar, near-universal model of justification for rule: the dynasty, meaning various systems of inheritance where eligibility is determined by membership in a specific biological family, rather than the actual one-generation factional Mamluk system that ultimately emerged from their ad hoc efforts.

The dynasties to which they turned to enact this vision were local and familiar. Foremost among these was the Ayyubid dynasty, whose members continued to rule Syria in the 650s/1250s even as the Mamluks established themselves in Egypt. The Bahris' Ayyubid master in Egypt, al-Şāliḥ, provided an example of rule that both his widow and the early Mamluks carefully emulated. The Ayyubid family at large followed earlier Zangid dynastic traditions of male military leadership, active patronage of Muslim scholars, poets, and artists, a strong commitment to the establishment of Islamic public architecture, and an overt recourse to the concept of defensive jihad as justification for military action.⁹ Shajar al-Durr's behavior was shaped by her status in relation to the Ayyubids as a widow and mother, but for early Mamluk men, the most important part of the dynasty was the women of the family—the Ayyubid princesses—who were already intermarrying with their male Ayyubid cousins and with Anatolian Seljuk princes. It was with these women that ambitious Mamluks could seek marriage, with all its dynastic symbolism and the accompanying practical in-law relationships with Ayyubid men.

A distant second was the nascent Lu'lu'id dynasty in Mosul. Their founder, Badr al-Din Lu'lu' (lit., "pearl," another slave name), was a freedman of the Zangid dynasty in Iraq, which he replaced by taking over the city of Mosul as an independent ruler, al-Malik al-Raḥīm, in 629/1232 with caliphal approval.¹⁰ Badr al-Dīn prudently allied himself with the advancing Mongols as early as the 640s/1240s and remained their vassal for decades.¹¹ By the 650s/1250s he had three grown sons and several daughters, the most famous and most marriageable of whom is known here as the Lu'lu'id Lady because her name is unrecorded. After their father's death in

⁹The limitations of space here preclude discussion of these well-known topics.

¹⁰Claude Cahen, "Lu'lu', Badr al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍā'il al-Malik al-Raḥīm," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 5:821.

¹¹He sent ambassadors with a message of submission to the coronations of both Great Khāns Güyük (in 1246) and Möngke (in 1252). Rashīd al-Dīn Ṭabīb, *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's Jami'u't-tawarikh = Compendium of Chronicles: A History of the Mongols*, trans. and annotated Wheeler M. Thackston (Cambridge, 1998–), 392, 398; idem, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*, ed. Muḥammad Rawshan and Muṣṭafá Musavī (Tehran, 1994), 805, 815.



657/1259, Badr al-Dīn's children were far less inclined to maintain his alliance with the Mongols. This fluid situation provided unexpected opportunities for political and marital rapprochements with the Mamluks.

A third dynasty, the Khwarazm-Shahs, demonstrated a powerful draw despite no longer being entirely intact. Although in 1218–23 the Mongols had destroyed the Khwarazm-Shah empire, killed the royal men, and enslaved the royal women, the existence of refugees and survivors—princes, princesses, commanders, soldiers—helped keep the dream of a Khwarazmian royal family alive, even in Mamluk territory. That said, the early Mamluks did not seek connections with the oldest Turkic dynasty in the region, the Anatolian Seljuks, even though some Bahris did flee to the Seljuk court during periods of exile, and even though the Ayyubids had been intermarrying with them for years.¹² The reasons for this are unknown.

Finally, the terrifying Mongol armies arrived in the region in the late 650s/1250s under Chinggis Khān's grandson, Hülegü. Despite their defeat by the Mamluks at the Battle of 'Ayn Jālūt (lit., "Goliath spring") in Ramaḍān 658/September 1260, the Mongols soon settled into the Ilkhanate in Iraq, Iran, Anatolia, Azerbaijan, and Khurasan. Hülegü and his wives and family brought with them the awesome prestige of the newest nomadic dynasty: the Golden Lineage or Chinggisids, but the Mamluks sought no marital connections with them,¹³ instead eagerly marrying into families of non-Chinggisid Mongols and Turks who arrived with Hülegü's armies and then emigrated into the sultanate.

DYNASTY I: THE AYYUBIDS AND SHAJAR AL-DURR

The first person to invoke the Ayyubid heritage was Shajar al-Durr. She was a Turkish slave, first the property of the Abbasid caliph al-Musta'ṣim billāh, who gave her to al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb some time between 633/1236 and 635/1238.¹⁴ With al-Ṣāliḥ, she produced a son, Khalīl, who died very young. Thereafter, al-Ṣāliḥ freed and married her, which was a significant elevation in her status.¹⁵ Shajar

¹²P. M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (London, 1986), 85 (flight to the Seljuks). For an undated marriage between the Ayyubids and the Anatolian Seljuks see Taef El-Azhari, *Queens, Eunuchs and Concubines in Islamic History, 661–1257* (Edinburgh, 2019), 351. For another in 652/1254–55 see Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij al-Kurūb fī Akhbār Banī Ayyūb* (Beirut, 2004), 4:180, 182–83; al-Makīn Ibn al-'Amīd, *Chronique des Ayyoubides, 602–658/1205–6–1259–60*, tr. Anne-Marie Eddé and Françoise Micheau (Paris, 1994), 97–98.

¹³The single attempt came in the 720s/1320s from the sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who wedded a Golden Horde princess. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (Cambridge, 2008), 131–37.

¹⁴Ruggles, *Tree of Pearls*, 19, 103–4.

¹⁵Ibid., 18–19.



al-Durr herself was, therefore, obviously not an Ayyubid by birth, but she used her marriage to and widowhood from al-Ṣāliḥ, as well as her motherhood of Khalīl, to claim the dynasty's legitimacy. When she became sultana in 648/1250, therefore, she employed titles that referred explicitly to them both: "Companion of al-Ṣāliḥ (*al-jihah al-Ṣāliḥīyah*), Mother of the Victorious Prince, Khalīl . . . (*wālidat al-malik al-manṣūr Khalīl*) . . . Wife of al-Ṣāliḥ (*ṣāhibat al-malik al-Ṣāliḥ*)."¹⁶ Shajar al-Durr also appealed to the Ayyubid model of architectural patronage of public buildings: she added a prominent tomb chamber for her husband to the madrasah that he had constructed in the heart of Cairo, then sponsored her own complex—in which her titles figured verbally and pictorially in her mausoleum, and possibly also in the accompanying mosque, madrasah, public bathhouse, and gardens—south of the citadel.¹⁷

Despite her own membership in the Ayyubid dynasty and her appeals to that family's ideas of sovereignty, Shajar al-Durr acted as sole ruler for just under three months (Muḥarram to Rabīʿ II 648/May to July 1250), during which the Ayyubid al-Nāṣir Yūsuf of Aleppo opposed her, first in correspondence and then by capturing Damascus from her Bahri allies.¹⁸ Nor was she supported by the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad, al-Mustaʿsim, whose slave she had once been.¹⁹ After the capture of Damascus, therefore, and despite their apparent respect for Shajar al-Durr herself, the Bahris in Cairo demanded a male sultan who could lead them in battle. Shajar al-Durr abdicated in favor of a mid-level mamluk commander, Aybak al-Turkumānī (r. 648–55/1251–57), though her Bahri allies forced him—after a mere five days—to rule in the name of an Ayyubid puppet, al-Ashraf Mūsá, aged 10. This was a transparent appeal to the symbolic power of the dynasty, and perhaps also an attempt to appease the remaining Ayyubids in Syria. But if so the strategy did not work, since al-Nāṣir Yūsuf of Aleppo then unsuccessfully attacked Egypt.²⁰ Nevertheless, Shajar al-Durr remained the real power behind the throne throughout these rapid political changes, according to the chroniclers, and she continued to issue and sign decrees and make decisions.²¹ At some point between Rabīʿ II 648/July 1250 and

¹⁶Ibid., 30, 72; Paul Balog, *The Coinage of the Mamluk Sultans of Egypt and Syria* (New York, 1952), 51–52; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 4:100.

¹⁷Ruggles, *Tree of Pearls*, 78–88, 94, 97, 111–40; see 123 for the titles and her son; 139 for the visual references to a tree of pearls. Most of her structures have not survived, so her use of her titles and pictorial references to herself can only be verified in her mausoleum.

¹⁸Ibid., 72, 103–4; Holt, *Age*, 84.

¹⁹Ruggles, *Tree of Pearls*, 19, 103–4.

²⁰Holt, *Age*, 84.

²¹Aḥmad al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab*, ed. Saʿīd ʿĀshūr (Cairo, 1985–92), 29:456; Gregorius Bar Hebraeus, *The Chronography of Gregory Abū'l Faraj, the Son of Aaron, the Hebrew Phy-*



Dhū al-Qa‘dah 648/February 1251, she and Aybak married on the condition that he divorce his other wives—including the mother of his son ‘Alī—so that Shajar al-Durr could be his only partner.²²

DYNASTY I: THE AYYUBIDS, FĀRIS AL-DĪN AQTĀY, AND AYBAK

Shajar al-Durr was not alone in trying to claim Ayyubid legitimacy. Another contender for the dynasty’s lustrous prestige was the Bahris’ chief commander, Fāris al-Dīn Aqtāy, who became the first formerly enslaved man to forge a connection to the Ayyubid family through a marriage proposal. This he did by sending a representative in 651/1253 to negotiate with the Ayyubid ruler of Hama, al-Malik al-Muẓaffar, about wedding his daughter. Al-Muẓaffar was amenable to a connection with an important commander in Egypt, and the contract (*nikāh*) was duly performed. The Ayyubid princess bride—whose name is unrecorded—then went from Hama to Damascus, with all appropriate pomp, to wait for her groom.²³

Aqtāy’s strategic marriage must be understood in light of his already considerable political clout: he and his fellow Bahri officer Baybars had been the ones to pressure Aybak, Shajar al-Durr’s new husband, to step down for the 10-year-old Ayyubid puppet after those mere five days as sultan.²⁴ This marriage produced new horizons for Aqtāy. The chroniclers report that his status increased among the Baḥrīyah and other troops after his union with the princess (legally if not yet in person), while the status of Sultan Aybak and his mamluks decreased.²⁵ Aqtāy then handed out largesse to the troops, as a powerful man was expected to do, and finally asked for the city of Alexandria as a grant (*iqṭā‘*) for himself from Aybak.²⁶ Aqtāy also used his new role as an Ayyubid son-in-law to claim the right to royal insignia—perhaps the royal saddle-cover (*ghāshīyah*)—and adopted some kind of royal title for himself, along the lines of an Ayyubid prince.²⁷ Next, he requested that he and his bride (whom he still had not met) move into the Cairo citadel, which, he argued, was her right since her famous Ayyubid

sician, *Commonly Known as Bar Hebraeus*, tr. (from Syriac) A. W. Budge (London, 1932), 455; Bar Hebraeus, *Tārīkh mukhtaṣar al-duwal*, ed. Fr. Anton Salaḥānī (Beirut, 1890), 418; al-Makīn Ibn al-‘Amīd, *Chronique*, 99; Baybars al-Dawādār al-Manṣūrī, *Al-Tuḥfah al-mulūkiyah fī al-dawlah al-turkiyah*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ṣāliḥ Ḥamdān (Cairo, 1987), 26, 27.

²² Al-Makīn Ibn al-‘Amīd, *Chronique*, 89, gives 29 Rabī‘ II 648/31 July 1250, but no other source is as precise on the date. See Ruggles, *Tree of Pearls*, 106–7, and n. 26.

²³ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 29:430.

²⁴ Holt, *Age*, 84.

²⁵ Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-fikrah fī tārikh al-hijrah*, ed. D. S. Richards (Beirut, 1998), 10.

²⁶ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 29:430.

²⁷ Holt, *Age*, 85.



ancestor—Saladin himself—had had it constructed.²⁸ Aybak clearly felt threatened: his response was to summon Aqṭāy to the citadel on a plausible pretext on 3 Shaʿbān 652/18 September 1254 and have him murdered by his mamluk Quṭuz. Aybak then convinced the rioting Bahris below the walls to stand down by showing them Aqṭāy’s decapitated head. Thereafter most of the corps fled to the Ayyubids in Syria or to the Seljuks in Anatolia, while Aybak shipped the Ayyubid child puppet to Damascus and took rule in his own name, albeit with Shajar al-Durr still behind him.²⁹

It is evident that Aybak had a very firm grasp of the symbolic potential of Aqṭāy’s marriage, since next he made overtures to the newly widowed Ayyubid princess for himself, although nothing seems to have come of this.³⁰ He was also negotiating a match with the Luʿluʾid Lady of Mosul by 655/1257.³¹ At least according to the chroniclers, this behavior made Shajar al-Durr angry and fearful, while Aybak himself resented her power over him and the realm, and soon each of them began plotting to assassinate the other.³² Shajar al-Durr struck first, in Rabīʿ I 655/April 1257, by having some mamluks kill Aybak in her presence as he prepared to bathe after his weekly Tuesday polo game.³³ She then tried to find a commander to step into Aybak’s place, but none would do so out of fear of Aybak’s mamluks and of the factionalism set loose by the murder. After two days, Aybak’s fifteen-year-old son by the other woman, ʿAlī, was hastily made sultan by Aybak’s mamluks. Within a week, Shajar al-Durr had disappeared; the next week her corpse was found below the citadel and she was interred in her beautiful tomb.³⁴ Thus ended her innovative engagement with Ayyubid prestige and the symbolic power of the dynasty to which she had been given as a concubine, for which she had produced a son, and into which she had ultimately married.

DYNASTY II: THE LUʿLUʾIDS WITH AYBAK, BAYBARS, AND BILIK

Aybak was not the only one seeking connections to the Luʿluʾid dynasty in Mosul. Quṭuz, his trusted mamluk, also engaged creatively with them, albeit through

²⁸Ibid., 84–85.

²⁹Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 29:430–31.

³⁰Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 39.

³¹Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Tuḥfah*, 39; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 4:194.

³²Al-Makīn Ibn al-ʿAmīd, *Chronique*, 99, also cited in Ruggles, *Tree of Pearls*, 109; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 4:194.

³³Ruggles, *Tree of Pearls*, 109–10.

³⁴Ibid., 110–11; Holt, *Age*, 85. One source claims it was Aybak’s son, ʿAlī, and Aybak’s mamluk, Quṭuz, who killed her. See Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar wa-jāmiʿ al-ghurar*, ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Cairo, 1971), 8:32.



patronage, not marriage; the marriage connections came later. It might not be obvious why anyone would express political interest in the Lu'lu'ids, since Badr al-Din Lu'lu' had been a loyal vassal to the Mongols for years. Worse yet, in late winter 656/1258 he let Mongol forces use a bridge at his city of Mosul to join the attack on Baghdad, then sent his heir, al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā'īl, to participate in the sack in person. Thereafter Hülegü, the Chinggisid prince, made al-Ṣāliḥ marry a Khwarazmian princess living in the Mongols' care, as was common for the Chinggisids, who positioned women from their own or other dynasties as wives and agents in their vassals' households.³⁵ None of this would seem to suggest that the family could be interested in connections to Cairo.

But then in 657/1259 Badr al-Dīn died of old age.³⁶ His offspring's reactions varied. As the new lord of Mosul, al-Ṣāliḥ continued his father's policies by joining the Mongols in their 657/1259 invasion of Anatolia and Syria, and personally commanded an attack on Amid.³⁷ It is unclear whether a second son, al-Mujāhid of Jazīrat Ibn 'Umar, cooperated with the Mongols. The third brother, al-Muẓaffar 'Alī of Sinjar, defected to Cairo and joined Quṭuz, who had now become sultan (r. 657–58/1259–60), and accompanied him to Syria in 658/1260 to fight the Mongols at 'Ayn Jālūt.³⁸ Quṭuz rewarded this third Lu'lu'id prince with the governorship of Aleppo, even though he had also promised that position to the Bahri commander Baybars. Quṭuz further gave the prince a new title, al-Malik al-Sa'id, and asked him to correspond with his brothers in Iraq about Mongol movements.³⁹ Quṭuz's intelligence strategy soon failed, however: in Aleppo this Lu'lu'id botched a response to a new Mongol advance and was imprisoned by the Aleppan commanders for incompetence.⁴⁰

³⁵Broadbridge, *Women*, 107–9, 125–29. For this particular incident see Quṭb al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān* (Hyderabad, 1955), 2:106; Bar Hebraeus, *Mukhtaṣar*, 492, and idem, *Chronography*, 440; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium*, 502, and idem, *Jāmi' al-Tavārikh*, 1025. She was a daughter of Jalāl al-Dīn Khwarazm-Shah. Given that he died in 628/1231 but she married over 20 years later in the 650s/1250s, she is likely to have been raised among the Chinggisids from infancy or early childhood and may have actually been loyal to them, as her later behavior suggested.

³⁶Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Tuḥfah*, 42; Abū Shāmah, *Tarājim rijāl al-qarnayn al-sādis wa-al-sābi' al-ma'rūf bi-al-dhayl 'alā al-rawḍatayn*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid ibn al-Ḥasan al-Kawtharī (Cairo, 1947), 203; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium*, 509, and idem, *Jāmi' al-Tavārikh*, 1040, but in 659/1261; Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 4:245, 247, 261, but in 656/1258 and 657/1259.

³⁷Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium*, 502, and idem, *Jāmi' al-Tavārikh*, 1025–26.

³⁸Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 4:296–97.

³⁹Ibid., 4:296–97; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1:374; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 30:39; also Peter Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century*, tr. P. M. Holt (London, 1992), 95–96.

⁴⁰Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij*, 4:302–4.



Meanwhile, Quṭuz was murdered by a coalition of mamluk commanders, including Baybars, who became the next sultan (r. 658–76/1260–76). Six months later, in summer 659/1261, the other two Lu'lu'id princes, al-Ṣāliḥ of Mosul and al-Mujāhid of Jazīrat Ibn 'Umar, followed their brother by fleeing towards Syria, one after the other.⁴¹ They brought their families, children, retainers, some soldiers, their best-known unmarried sister—the Lu'lu'id Lady—and other sisters.⁴² Al-Ṣāliḥ left his Khwarazmian wife in Mosul, where she behaved true to her position as a Mongol agent by alerting the Mongols of her husband's defection. They immediately sent an army in pursuit, but it failed to intercept him.⁴³

The Lu'lu'ids joined a stream of refugees, arriving in Cairo in summer 659/1261 close behind an Abbasid fugitive that Baybars inaugurated lavishly as the caliph al-Mustanṣir billāh. Thereafter the sultan welcomed the Lu'lu'ids with food, stipends, costly robes, horses, and tack. He assigned them luxurious temporary housing in side-by-side mansions in Cairo and invited the princes to ride and play cavalry games with him.⁴⁴ At their request, Baybars summoned their imprisoned brother from Aleppo to join them. After hosting everyone in Cairo, Baybars outfitted both the new caliph and the Lu'lu'id princes for a return to Iraq, and left with them in Shawwal/September for Syria, from which he saw them off. Baybars later boasted that he spent over a million gold dinars on his guests,⁴⁵ but he did not send enough men with either the princes or the caliph to successfully oppose the Mongols.⁴⁶ Ultimately, the caliph was killed by Mongol forces, while al-Ṣāliḥ suffered a lengthy siege in Mosul, surrendered, and was executed horribly.⁴⁷ The other two brothers—al-Mujāhid of Jazīrat Ibn 'Umar

⁴¹ Ibid., 4:313, 320; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2:106; Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ al-zāhir fī sirat al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz Khuwayṭir (Riyadh, 1976), 114; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 65; Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:81; Abū Shāmah, *Dhayl*, 212–13; Bar Hebraeus, *Mukhtaṣar*, 492, and idem, and *Chronography*, 440; Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium*, 509, and idem, *Jāmi' al-Tavāriḥ*, 1040–41; Thorau, *Lion*, 114–15.

⁴² Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2:156, for the additional sisters.

⁴³ Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium*, 509, and idem, *Jāmi' al-Tavāriḥ*, 1040–41; Bar Hebraeus, *Mukhtaṣar*, 492, and idem, *Chronography*, 440.

⁴⁴ Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2:106; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 30:26.

⁴⁵ Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Tuḥfah*, 47; Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 112.

⁴⁶ Scholars have discussed this poor strategic decision elsewhere. Thorau, *Lion*, 115–16; 'Abd al-'Azīz Khuwayṭir, *Baibars the First: His Endeavours and Achievements* (London, 1978), 36; Holt, *Age*, 92–93.

⁴⁷ Details (sheep's fat, sun, maggots) are in Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium*, 510–11, and idem, *Jāmi' al-Tavāriḥ*, 1043. Otherwise see Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 68; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1:494–95; Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:90.



and al-Muzaffar of Sinjar (aka al-Malik al-Saʿīd of Aleppo)—fled with their remaining dependents back to Baybars in Cairo, where they settled for good.⁴⁸

As for the marital connection, it was agreed during the initial Luʿluʾid visit that the Luʿluʾid Lady, who had previously been considered as a bride for the sultan Aybak, would now marry Baybars’s commander and protégé, a mamluk named Bilik al-Khāzindār. This was arguably a step down for her from Aybak, since Bilik was only an officer, not a ruler. Nevertheless Baybars assured her brothers of his favor for Bilik and described him as being like his own son.⁴⁹ (Also, since her family had become exiles and supplicants, this may have been the best they could do for her.) The sources are not entirely clear on the timing, but the contract (*nikāḥ*) is said to have been signed in Shawwāl 659/September 1261 and featured a lavish party that the Lady’s brothers attended before heading off to Syria and then Iraq. The full celebration then followed in Muḥarram 660/December 1261, by which point Bilik had become the vicegerent in Egypt, the second position after the sultan himself.⁵⁰ Later, however, the family disappeared from historical view after Bilik’s early death.⁵¹

DYNASTY III: THE KHWARAZM-SHAHS AND QUṬUZ

A third appealing dynasty was the ruling house of the Khwarazm-Shah Empire, even though the Mongols had dismembered it in 1218–23. In the 650s/1250s, in rumors in Damascus and Cairo that were reproduced in the Mamluk chronicles, this family became linked to the sultan Quṭuz (r. 657–58/1259–60), the former mamluk of Aybak. As noted above, Quṭuz had helped murder Fāris al-Dīn Aqṭāy for Aybak; then, after Aybak’s own murder in the bath, Quṭuz usurped power from Aybak’s son ʿAlī not long before the Mongols arrived in Syria. Finally, as al-Malik al-Muzaffar, Quṭuz led the Mamluk defeat of the Mongol forces at ʿAyn Jālūt before his assassination at the hands of some of his own commanders.

Two stories circulated about his ancestry. Some Mamluk sources claim that Quṭuz had been owned by a civilian in Damascus before being sold to Aybak. One day, Quṭuz’s first owner slapped him and insulted his parents and grandfather.

⁴⁸ Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2:156.

⁴⁹ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 30:53.

⁵⁰ Ibid. Bilik and the Lady had two daughters together. See Mufaḍḍal Ibn Abī al-Fadāʾil, *Histoire des sultans mamlouks*, ed. and trans. E. Blochet (Paris, 1919–29), 454, albeit naming him as “Bay-sara”; also, Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate, 1250–1382* (London, 1986), 55.

⁵¹ He was allegedly poisoned by Baybars’s senior wife, the Khwarazmīyah, out of fear of him as a rival to her son. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 30:370 (poison); Mufaḍḍal, *Histoire*, 453–54.



Quṭuz wept all day, refused to eat, and would not be consoled. When finally asked by a servant, Ḥajj ‘Alī al-Farrāsh, why he was crying, Quṭuz answered that his family was superior to his owner’s family and did not deserve the insults. When Ḥajj ‘Alī scoffed at Quṭuz as a Turkish slave, unbeliever (*kāfir*), and the son of unbelievers (*kāfirīn*), Quṭuz retorted that not only was he actually a Muslim and son of Muslims, but his family was royalty: he was prince Maḥmūd, the son of Mamdūd, a son of the sister of the Khwarazm-Shah [i.e., Sultan Muḥammad (d. 1220)].⁵² According to this story, Quṭuz’s father had been captured young and sold in the 620s/1220s.⁵³

The second story concerned a North African fortune-teller who met with Quṭuz and a few of his associates during Aybak’s reign. While prognosticating, the fortune-teller declared that a man with a five-letter name, whose father also had a five-letter name, would rule after Aybak, then defeat the Mongols. The fortune-teller was confused by this result, since Quṭuz had only a three-letter name (q-ṭ-z). But Quṭuz cleared up the mystery by explaining that he was really Maḥmūd son of Mamdūd (both of which have five letters in Arabic), and that he would finally avenge his maternal uncle, the Khwarazm-Shah.⁵⁴

Although we are in no position to determine what Quṭuz thought of these rumors, to say nothing of whether there could possibly be a scrap of truth in them, we may at least deduce from the way some chronicles repeated them, while others pointedly did not (probably for ideological reasons),⁵⁵ that they were known in both Egypt and Syria. We also cannot determine whether these stories circulated during Quṭuz’s lifetime or only after his death. Regardless, they illustrate the way yet another heroic warrior was linked, certainly by others and possibly by himself, to a royal dynasty, implying justification of his rule in Egypt, whether during that rule or posthumously.

Furthermore, although it is well known that Baybars, the next real sultan, helped assassinate Quṭuz in Dhū al-Qa‘dah 658/October 1260 and then took over from him,⁵⁶ it is scarcely known at all that Baybars’s own son and heir could

⁵² Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 29:479–80; Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:39–41; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1:368.

⁵³ “He” was captured young; obviously the story only works if it is Quṭuz’s father, “Mamdūd,” who was captured as a child and sold in the 1220s, thus reaching adulthood by, say, the mid-1230s, in time to produce a son, Quṭuz, who himself could be sold as a child or teen in the late 1240s or 1250s.

⁵⁴ Al-Nuwayrī (citing al-Jazarī), *Nihāyah*, 29:480–81; Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:39–40; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1:368–69.

⁵⁵ Note the omission of these stories, which made Quṭuz look like a potentially legitimate ruler, in Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ* (a pro-Baybars text); Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah* (a pro-Qalāwūnid text); Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī Ibn ‘Asākir, *Ḥusn al-manāqib al-sirriyah al-muntaza‘ah min al-sīrah al-Zāhiriyah*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Khuwayṭir (Riyadh, 1989) (pro-Baybars again); and Ibn Wāṣil, *Mufarrij* (pro-Ayyubid). For chronicles that do mention them, see note 49 above.

⁵⁶ Thorau, *Lion*, 79–85; Holt, *Age*, 88–89; Irwin, *Middle East*, 34.



perhaps also have claimed royal Khwarazmian forebears through his mother (see below). Scholars have not yet considered whether the rumors about Quṭuz's ancestry might have influenced Baybars's decision to participate in the murder as a means of eliminating both an actual and ideological rival for himself and his heir. It should be noted that once he became sultan, Baybars not only forbade pilgrimage to Quṭuz's tomb but later had the body moved so the populace could not find it to venerate it, suggesting at the very least that he sought to contain Quṭuz's posthumous reputation.⁵⁷

NEW DYNASTIES: BAYBARS, QALĀWŪN, AND THE IMMIGRANTS

Unlike Shajar al-Durr; unlike those Bahris who tried to harness the symbolic power of the Ayyubid or Lu'lu'id dynasties; unlike even the allegedly royal Quṭuz and the Khwarazm-Shahs, the next Bahris who became sultans—Baybars (r. 658–76/1260–77) and Qalāwūn (r. 678–89/1279–90)—sought marriage partners mostly from among a new population: the immigrants (*wāfidīyah*) who entered the region as refugees fleeing in front of, or escaping from within, Hülegü's Mongol armies. These immigrants included Turks, Kurds, and Mongols who were not from the Chinggisid royal family.

BAYBARS AS A BRIDEGROOM

Baybars was well known in his own time and after as an ambitious ruler, a brilliant military strategist, an able politician, and a pugnacious warrior who made critical contributions to the survival of the sultanate in the face of outside threats, especially from the Mongols.⁵⁸ He was a Kipchak Turk and former mamluk of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, and upon his own ascension to the position of sultan became deeply concerned with his legitimacy, taking active steps to establish and promote himself as a ruler.⁵⁹

Baybars was also a married man, who had five (technically six⁶⁰) wives over the course of his lifetime. Without exception, all of these women were free persons from nomadic populations that emigrated into Syria or Egypt from points north and east: the Khwarazmians in the 640s/1240s, the Shahrazūriyah Kurds

⁵⁷ Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2:29; also see P. M. Holt, "The Position and Power of the Mamluk Sultan," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 38 (1975): 245.

⁵⁸ See Thorau, *Lion*, especially Chapter 3, and Holt, *Age*, 90.

⁵⁹ See Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, Chapter 2, with extensive references in the notes.

⁶⁰ The sixth wife was the third daughter of Karmūn and sister of Qalāwūn's senior wife, Fāṭimah. Baybars married "Fāṭimah's sister," then repudiated her after a very short time. Later "Fāṭimah's sister" married Qalāwūn after Fāṭimah died. See Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 164, 228–29.



in 655/1257–58, and three groups of Mongols in the 660s/1260s.⁶¹ These nomadic women—plus perhaps concubines, although none are clearly recorded⁶²—produced ten children: three boys and seven girls.⁶³ In other words, for his wives Baybars sought out free (not enslaved) women with origins similar to his own.

Baybars's wives	Baybars's children
1. “al-Khwarazmīyah” or Umm al-Malik al-Sa‘īd (name unrecorded)	al-Malik al-Sa‘īd Berke Khān Muḥammad
2. “al-Shahrazūrīyah”	
3. Daughter of Nokia	
4. Daughter of Karāy	
5. Daughter of Tumaji	
6. Daughter of Karmūn	
It is unknown precisely which women were the mothers of Khiḍr, Sülemish, and seven daughters.	

Baybars probably married (1) his first wife, a Khwarazmian Turk of unrecorded name (here called “al-Khwarazmīyah”), in the 640s/1240s or early 650s/1250s. She became his senior wife, which was common in the Turkic societies from which she and Baybars originated for the first woman a man married.⁶⁴ Her status could also have contributed to her seniority: her father was Husām al-Dīn Berke Khān, son of Dawlat Khān al-Khwarazmī al-Yemkī.⁶⁵ Berke Khān was the

⁶¹David Ayalon, “The Wafidiya in the Mamluk Kingdom,” *Islamic Culture* 25 (1951): 89–104.

⁶²One account of Baybars’s role in the murder of Quṭuz has Baybars approaching him on the pretext of requesting a woman from among the Mongol captives from the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt, then kissing his hand to thank him, which allowed him to stab Quṭuz. Although Baybars probably indicated a real woman (to make it believable), we do not know whether he actually acquired her later, or whether she simply provided a convenient pretext to approach Quṭuz. See al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1:371. Other accounts have Baybars interceding on behalf of an unknown person, or asking about the governorate of Aleppo, or being interceded for by the commander Anas in regard to weapons.

⁶³Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 30:368.

⁶⁴On the senior wife in Altaic society in general see Broadbridge, *Women*, 14–18.

⁶⁵There is some confusion over him in the historical sources, where two different Berke/Barakah Khāns appear, both said to be the leader of the Khwarazmian immigrant forces. The earlier sources, including Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 178, and Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī, *Ḥusn*, 137–38, say this man died in 664/1265. But Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī (*Kitāb al-sulūk li-ma‘rifat duwal al-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyādah [Cairo, 1956], 1:324), writing over a hundred years later, puts his death about 20 years earlier at the (second) Khwarazmian-Ayyubid battle in 644/1246.



commander-in-chief of the armies of the last Khwarazm-Shah ruler, Sultan Jalāl al-Dīn (d. 628/1231). Berke's title of "Khān," his father's name of "Dawlat Khān," and his command of a large Khwarazmian unit all implied a connection to the royal family of the Khwarazm-Shahs, perhaps as cousins or a collateral line.⁶⁶ (It also, perhaps, established them later in the sultanate as ideological rivals to the "Khwarazmian royal" mamluk Quṭuz.)

Berke Khān and his forces were living in Diyarbakr by the 630s/1230s, albeit without a ruler to support.⁶⁷ Then the Ayyubid al-Ṣāliḥ invited the Khwarazmians to work for him, and they fought a joint battle with his army against an Ayyubid-Frankish coalition in 642/1244.⁶⁸ The Khwarazmians were incredibly destructive in their victory, however, and were themselves defeated and dispersed by a different Ayyubid coalition in 644/1246.⁶⁹ It was around this time that Baybars entered al-Ṣāliḥ's service.⁷⁰ Later Berke Khān and his son (i.e., Baybars's wife's brother), Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad Bay ([sic], Beg), worked as commanders in the Mamluk armies, probably in the auxiliary troops (*ḥalqah*) where non-mamluks were assigned.⁷¹ It was a typical practice in Central Asian Turkic families to find military positions for a wife's male relatives in her husband's army, and this accords with that practice.⁷²

In 658/1260, al-Khwarazmiyah had the good political and personal fortune to give birth to the oldest of Baybars's sons, whom the happy couple named Berke Khān (after her father?) Muḥammad (perhaps after her brother?) and entitled al-Malik al-Sa'īd (the Joyful King). He became Baybars's publicly acknowledged

⁶⁶See Ayalon, "Wafidiya," 96 and n. 44 (referring to a section of Ibn Shaddād's biography of Baybars that I do not have), identifying him as Berke Khān ibn Dawlat Khān al-Khwarazmī al-Yemkī. The Yemek were a Turkic group identified as possibly that of the Khwarazm-Shah Queen Mother, Terken Khatun, and finding a place for her own relatives as commanders in the armies would have been entirely consistent with practices in that empire. See Broadbridge, *Women*, 96–98.

⁶⁷Holt, *Age*, 66; J. A. Boyle, "Djalāl al-Dīn Khwārazm-Shāh," *EI2*, 2:392–93.

⁶⁸Holt, *Age*, 65–66; Ayalon, "Wafidiya," 94, relying on al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:315, 316–17. Berke Khān allegedly tried to marry the Ayyubid daughter of al-ʿĀdil (d. 625/1227–28), who was also the mother of al-Nāṣir in Aleppo, but he was refused; see Rashīd al-Dīn, *Compendium*, 398, and idem, *Jāmiʿ al-Tavārīkh*, 815. It has also been suggested that Berke Khān did marry a half-sister of al-Ṣāliḥ (on his mother's side), but this marriage has not been widely verified. Ayalon did not mention it. See al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:280.

⁶⁹Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:324; Holt, *Age*, 66.

⁷⁰Thorau, *Lion*, 29.

⁷¹When her son arrested her brother at the very beginning of his own reign, she angrily interceded and he was released and returned to his station within eleven days. See al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 30:373.

⁷²Broadbridge, *Women*, 136–37, 227, 261–63, 265–67.



heir in 662/1264 at the age of about four.⁷³ When Berke Khān (the grandfather) died in Dhū al-Ḥijjah 662/September 1264, he was given a public funeral procession in Cairo. Baybars walked in the procession as sultan, as was appropriate for his father-in-law and the grandfather of the heir. The funeral was also attended by important Mamluk and emigrant Mongol commanders (the latter from the *ḥalqah*), some wearing robes provided by Baybars for the occasion.⁷⁴

A few years later, in 667/1269, Baybars's wife, now known as Umm al-Malik al-Saʿīd (i.e., Mother of the Joyful King), went on the pilgrimage to Mecca with due pomp and splendor.⁷⁵ This kind of public, well-funded journey was a statement to Muslims at home and abroad about Baybars's power as a ruler and as a husband; it also highlighted her status as the senior wife and a mother, since it is unlikely that a childless or junior wife would go on such an expensive, prestigious, and logistically challenging trip. Umm al-Malik al-Saʿīd later displayed the vigor and decisiveness associated with royal women elsewhere in Turkic society when she became an active, important, and controversial political figure during her son's short sultanate in Egypt.⁷⁶

Baybars's second wife (2) "al-Shahrazūrīyah" came from the 3,000-strong immigrant community of Shahrazūrīyah Kurds who fled to Syria from the Kurdish mountains in 655/1257–58 after a battle with Hülegü.⁷⁷ This marriage was more overtly political in nature: the Shahrazūrīs allied themselves with Ayyubid rulers in Syria, just as Baybars did as leader of the Bahris, and the two groups connected in part through the wedding.⁷⁸ There is no evidence, though, that the Shahrazūrī wife bore children; furthermore, Baybars divorced her after becoming sultan in 658/1260.⁷⁹ Thereafter, in 669/1270–71, Baybars imprisoned all the Shahrazūrī

⁷³ Ayalon, "Wafidiya," 96; for making him the heir see Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 203–8.

⁷⁴ Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 178; Shāfiʿ ibn ʿAlī, *Ḥusn*, 137–38, noting that the great Mongol emigrant commanders, including Qalāwūn's father-in-law, Karmūn, attended while wearing robes that Baybars had given them.

⁷⁵ Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 353; note the later connections among women, representation, and (sometimes) waste on the pilgrimage in Tara Stephan, "Waste, Excess, and Obsession in the Mamluk Harem," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 24 (2021): 197–99.

⁷⁶ This will be further developed in the next version of this project. Her dubious renown came from allegedly poisoning her husband's mamluk Bilik, whom she saw as a threat to her son. She also accompanied her son on campaign to Syria in 677/1278. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 30:370 (poison); 385 (campaign); Mufaḍḍal, *Histoire*, 453–54.

⁷⁷ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 29:383 (the battle); Thorau, *Lion*, 62–63; V. Minorsky and C. E. Bosworth, "Shahrazūr," *EI*2, 9:218–19.

⁷⁸ Many Bahris fled Egypt for Syria in 652/1254 after the murder of Fāris al-Dīn Aqṭāy.

⁷⁹ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 30:368.



commanders in the auxiliary forces on rumors of a plot to assassinate his heir from his Turkic first wife (al-Khwarazmīyah/Umm al-Malik al-Saʿīd).⁸⁰

Baybars's other wives (3, 4, 5, 6) were also immigrant nomads, but in this case Mongols who had arrived in the sultanate with their relatives. Three waves came: a group of 200 in late 660/fall 1262;⁸¹ a second group of 1,300 in fall 661/1263,⁸² and finally a third (unnumbered) group in spring 662/1264.⁸³ The second group in particular was composed of subjects of the Jochid Mongols in Central Asia and Russia (i.e., the so-called Golden Horde), who had fled Hülegü's armies after hostility developed between him and their own prince, Berke Khān.⁸⁴ Its leaders included men named Karmūn Āghā, Nokia, Karāy, and many others.⁸⁵ Baybars welcomed each of these three waves personally and oversaw their conversion to Islam.⁸⁶ He gave the leaders land-based stipends (*iqṭāʿs*) and military ranks as commanders (*ṭablahānahs*), in the non-mamluk cavalry units (*ḥalqah*), as well as robes of honor, other gifts, and a place to settle with their families in the al-Lūq area of Cairo.⁸⁷

Then Baybars intermarried extensively with the new arrivals, including (3, 4, 6) daughters of Nokia, Karāy, and (briefly) Karmūn.⁸⁸ At the same time, Qalāwūn, Baybars's colleague and successor, also married a daughter of Karmūn (see below). Thereafter some of these immigrant fathers-in-law participated in Mamluk military endeavors: Karmūn partnered with Qalāwūn to oversee a strategic trench at the siege of Arsūf in spring 663/1265, and was rewarded after its fall with income from half a village.⁸⁹ Although Nokia fell afoul of Baybars and spent time in prison

⁸⁰Ibid., 175; also see Thorau, *Lion*, 231.

⁸¹Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 30:62–64; Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 136–38; Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:91–93; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 89; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1:496–97, 2:156. This group does not appear in Shāfiʿ ibn ʿAlī, Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Tuḥfah*, or Mufaḍḍal.

⁸²Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 30:89; Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 177–180; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1:534, 2:156.

⁸³Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 30:99; Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 198; Shāfiʿ ibn ʿAlī, *Ḥusn*, 159.

⁸⁴Not to be confused with Baybars's father-in-law or his son, both of whom were also Berke Khāns. See also Ayalon's pioneering work in “Wafidiya,” 98.

⁸⁵For the names see especially Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 177–80.

⁸⁶Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 30:89–90; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:501; Ayalon, “Wafidiya,” 98–99, although he had to rely on tricky later sources like al-Maqrīzī, since that is what was available to him in the 1950s.

⁸⁷Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 84; also Ibn Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 180.

⁸⁸For the wives see Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:211; for their father's names see al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 30:89–90; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:501. For Baybars's brief sixth marriage, to the daughter of Karmūn in perhaps the 670s/1270s, see Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 164; she later married Qalāwūn, the widower of her sister Fāṭimah.

⁸⁹He died in Dhū al-Qaʿdah 664/August 1266. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:528, for the trench, 542 for Karmūn's death; see also Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 99. See Thorau, *Lion*, 161–62, on trenches at Arsūf.



in Alexandria, he was released and made a commander of 1,000 under Qalāwūn, whose sons married two of Nokia's daughters (see below).⁹⁰ Karāy's career is mostly unknown, though he seems to have remained loyal to Baybars.⁹¹ At some point Baybars also wedded (5) a daughter of the Mongol commander Tumaji, although it is unclear when she and her father arrived in the sultanate.⁹² Nevertheless, Baybars's senior wife, al-Khwarazmīyah/Umm al-Malik al-Sa'īd, maintained her status as mother of the heir despite these additions to the household and despite the subsequent births of two more sons to Baybars from women other than herself, along with seven daughters.⁹³ In sum, therefore, Baybars had multiple wives, all of whom came into his household as free persons from recent immigrant groups of nomadic origin, most of them Turkic or Mongol.

QALĀWŪN AS A BRIDEGROOM

Qalāwūn's wives	Qalāwūn's children
1. Fāṭimah, daughter of Karmūn	al-Ṣāliḥ 'Alī
2. Q-t-q-tīyah (?)	al-Ashraf Khalīl
3. Ashlūn, daughter of Sektay	al-Nāṣir Muḥammad
4. Daughter of a commander	Aḥmad
5. Fāṭimah's sister, daughter of Karmūn	
The exact mothers of Ghāziyah, Altunmish, and a third daughter are unknown.	

⁹⁰Nokia later died of wounds from the Battle of Homs with the Ilkhan Ghazan in 699/1299. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:888, 905; Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-'Aynī, *'Iqd al-jumān fī tārikh ahl al-zamān*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo, 1992), 4:17.

⁹¹References are scant and at times seem to designate other men named Karāy, including one of Qalāwūn's mamluks. Nevertheless, late historians like al-'Aynī and al-Maqrīzī suggest that the Mongol Karāy was in a group of Zāhirī Bahris and Wāfidī Mongols who rebelled against Qalāwūn in 680/1281 and took refuge in Sahyun with Baybars's old friend, the commander Sunqur al-Ashqar, who had been a captive with the Ilkhanids for some years, and surely spoke Mongolian. All were reconciled to Qalāwūn two days before joining him at the battle of Homs. See al-'Aynī, *'Iqd*, 2:265–66, 271; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:691, 697.

⁹²Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:211.

⁹³The sons were Salamish (aka Sülemish) and Khiḍr, each from a different mother; the daughters' names are unknown, except for Tidhkārbay, who left a building. See Howyda al-Harithy, "Female Patronage of Mamluk Architecture in Cairo," *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 1, no. 2 (1994): 164.



Qalāwūn was another Bahri officer, a Kipchak Turk and former mamluk, a respected and seasoned commander in his own right, a staunch ally to Baybars during his lifetime, but then an ambitious and able sultan who adeptly sidelined Baybars's family and nascent dynasty in order to establish the rule of his own sons. Like Baybars, Qalāwūn married multiple wives; also like Baybars, these were (largely) recent immigrants of nomadic origin who had entered the sultanate with their families.

Foremost in rank, if not first in order, was (1) a daughter of Karmūn [Āghā], who arrived in the second Mongol immigrant wave in fall 661/1263. Her wedding to Qalāwūn in 664/1265–66 was a lavish affair held in the Horse Market and attended by Baybars, who distributed extensive gifts.⁹⁴ As mentioned, Qalāwūn went on to work militarily with his father-in-law at Arsūf. Thereafter the lady was the mother of Qalāwūn's heir, al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ 'Alī. She acquired the Muslim name of Fāṭimah, by which she is known in the historical sources and in reports about her mausoleum and madrasah complex.⁹⁵ After Fāṭimah's death in 683/1284, Qalāwūn married (5) her sister, who was then living in his household as a widow.⁹⁶ Fāṭimah's Sister (as she will be known here) later guided Qalāwūn to choose suitable brides for his son 'Alī (Fāṭimah's child) and for 'Alī's half-brother, al-Ashraf Khalīl.

Meanwhile (2) a different Turkic or Mongol woman, Q-ṭ-q-ṭīyah, seems already to have married Qalāwūn as early as 659/1260–61, but she did not produce his second son, al-Ashraf Khalīl, until after 'Alī's birth, and is otherwise almost entirely unrecorded in the sources or the architectural record. Q-ṭ-q-ṭīyah may therefore have been a lesser personage than Fāṭimah and her sister, and her status and origins are enigmatic.⁹⁷

Then in 681–82/1282–83 Qalāwūn married (3) Ashlūn, the daughter of a Mongol commander named Sektay, the son of Qarajin. They had arrived in Egypt from Anatolia in 674/1275–76 with Sektay's brother (i.e., Ashlūn's uncle), other commanders, and their families. Sektay's and Ashlūn's claims to ancestry were illustrious: They were said to be Besūt Mongols, and Sektay's grandfather, Jighan (or Jayghan), was rumored to have been a weaponskeeper (*silāḥdār*) to Chinggis Khān before going to Anatolia with the Mongol commander Baiju. There, one of Jighan's female relatives had allegedly married the Parvanah, who worked for the Anatolian Seljuks, which—if true—created important in-law connections for the family in its new home. Turbulent politics among the Parvanah, Anatolians,

⁹⁴ Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 102.

⁹⁵ Al-Harithy, "Female Patronage," 156.

⁹⁶ She had previously married Baybars, then the commander Kunduk, before returning to Qalāwūn's household. Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 164.

⁹⁷ Her name appears only in *ibid.*, 71.



and Mongols caused several other Mongol and Turkic families to flee to the Mamluk Sultanate in the 670s/1270s.⁹⁸ Among these were Sektay, his brother, and Ashlūn. Her father had died by the time she reached the age of maturity in 681/1282–83, so her uncle prepared her for her wedding with Qalāwūn. Within a short time Ashlūn became the mother of Qalāwūn's third—and politically most successful—son, the future three-time sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.⁹⁹

Qalāwūn's fifth and final marriage, to (4) the daughter of one of his commanders, was contracted immediately after the deaths of his heir, 'Alī, and daughter, Ghāziyah, in 687/1288. It is to be wondered whether he was motivated at least partly by grief, especially since the marriage ended in divorce soon after this wife—who was badmouthed in one source¹⁰⁰—had produced his fourth son, Aḥmad.¹⁰¹ In total, Qalāwūn had five marriages, most to women of nomadic origin; he also had four sons and three daughters.¹⁰²

AFTER THE MARRIAGES: ESTABLISHING THE HEIR

Once a Bahri sultan married, the next step in establishing a new dynasty was for the senior wife to produce a live son that the sultan could proclaim as his heir.¹⁰³ In the early days of the sultanate this proclamation seemed to happen shortly after news of an invading Ilkhanid force, which was probably not a coincidence. The ceremonies of inheritance may have been meant to leave a clear chain of family authority in case the sultan failed to return from the battle, though we cannot be sure. We can say that the early Mamluks derived these ceremonies from Ayyubid traditions. They included a public procession for the heir through the streets of Cairo, which were decorated for the purpose. The prince was shaded by the royal parasol (*jitr*), accompanied by the atābak (commander of the armies), and preceded by the other commanders, some of whom carried

⁹⁸Ibid., 151–52.

⁹⁹Ibid., 229; Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif al-ayyām wa-al-ʿuṣūr fī sirat al-Malik al-Manṣūr*, ed. Murād Kāmil (Cairo, 1961), 110–11; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:90.

¹⁰⁰Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:156, claiming she was arrogant and her family was composed of social climbers.

¹⁰¹Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 263; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:156, 173, 331.

¹⁰²The sons were: 'Alī, from Fāṭimah; Khalīl, from Q-ṭ-q-ṭīyah; Muḥammad, from Ashlūn; and Aḥmad, from the daughter of Qalāwūn's commander. The daughters, whose mothers are unknown, are one unnamed daughter, Altunmish, and Ghāziyah, who married Baybars's son Berke Khān Muḥammad. See al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:173–74 (inexplicably leaving out Ghāziyah, for whom see al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 30:223); Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 149; also see 102, 229.

¹⁰³Holt, "Position and Power," 238, 239, describing the procedures used by Baybars for his son Berke Khān, and then by Qalāwūn for al-Ṣāliḥ 'Alī and al-Ashraf Khalīl.



the royal saddle-cover (*ghāshīyah*¹⁰⁴). Next came a banquet (for men, but there was surely another for women) and a ceremony in which loyalty was sworn to the heir, all financed, presumably, by significant expenditures. The chancellery produced a diploma of investiture, which was read aloud in the presence of religious and military personnel like judges, scholars, and army commanders in Cairo and Damascus.¹⁰⁵

Thus, for example, in 662/1264, upon hearing that a group of Mongols was arriving in Syria from the Ilkhanate (the previously mentioned third immigrant wave), Baybars designated as heir al-Malik al-Saʿīd Berke Khān Muḥammad, his oldest son (with al-Khwarazmīyah/Umm al-Malik al-Saʿīd). The public procession took place in Cairo on 13 Shawwāl 662/8 August 1264, and the diploma of investiture was read aloud on the 17th/12th.¹⁰⁶ The armies were mustered and reviewed, this last in the presence of Golden Horde envoys (who were in Cairo at the time), and a costly ceremony of investiture followed.¹⁰⁷ Moods relaxed when news arrived that these “invaders” were immigrants seeking peaceful settlement in the sultanate.¹⁰⁸ A month later, in Dhū al-Qaʿdah/September, the prince and the sons of several commanders were circumcised in a lavish ceremony, for which Baybars magnanimously paid.¹⁰⁹ Although the sources do not mention women’s celebrations, we must assume that Berke Khān’s mother was honored as befit her station and that the expenditures were probably comparable.

Twenty years later, in 679/1280, Qalāwūn engaged in almost the same behavior. In his case, when reports arrived of an approaching Ilkhanid army, Qalāwūn established his oldest son, the teenaged al-Ṣāliḥ ʿAlī, as heir on 11 Rajab 679/6 November 1280 with a public procession and diploma of investiture.¹¹⁰ Although this invasion turned out to be just a raid near Aleppo, a year later Qalāwūn rout-

¹⁰⁴Holt, “Position and Power,” 238; 243.

¹⁰⁵Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 203–4; for the protocol see Holt, “Position and Power,” 238.

¹⁰⁶It noted that Berke Khān was a branch of the royal tree represented by Baybars, and promised on Baybars’s behalf that he would bring his son up properly to be a king for the sake of the Islamic community (*ummah*). It also referred explicitly to the idea that only Baybars or his son held or could hold the authority of rule in those lands. Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 203–8; he was the author of the document, and included it in his work.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 205–8.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 209.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, 209, 213–14.

¹¹⁰Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:68; Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:238; Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, 200–3; Shāfiʿ ibn ʿAlī, *Al-Faḍl al-maʿthūr min sīrat al-Malik al-Manṣūr*, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmūrī (Beirut, 1998), 162–63; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 4:46 (the Damascus reading); Holt, “Position and Power,” 239.



ed the Ilkhanids at the Battle of Homs on 14 Rajab 680/29 October 1281.¹¹¹ When ‘Alī died in 687/1288 of illness, Qalāwūn repeated these ceremonies with his second son, al-Ashraf Khalīl, child of the mysterious Q-ṭ-q-ṭīyah.¹¹²

NEGOTIATING FURTHER MARRIAGES

The next step in establishing a dynasty was to make well-publicized, strategic marriages for the younger generation, which Baybars, Qalāwūn, and the royal mothers did. Thus Baybars’s son Berke Khān married Qalāwūn’s daughter Ghāziyah in a lavish wedding on 12 Dhū al-Ḥijjah 674/28 May 1276.¹¹³ The backdrop of the wedding was the pressure of frequent Ilkhanid incursions, followed by Baybars’s victory at the Battle of Abulustayn (Elbistan) a year later (Dhū al-Qa‘dah 675/April 1277). But it also seems likely that Baybars and al-Khwarazmīyah/Umm al-Malik al-Sa‘īd were motivated by the fact that Ghāziyah was a member of the rising Qalāwūnid family. Unfortunately, as we do not know the name of her mother, we cannot be sure of her maternal lineage.

With the exception of Ghāziyah, the Qalāwūnid weddings came after the Battle of Homs in 680/1281. First, Qalāwūn married his third wife, the abovementioned Besūt Mongol Ashlūn (daughter of Sektay and soon-to-be mother of the third son, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad).¹¹⁴ The weddings of Qalāwūn’s two older sons were facilitated by Qalāwūn’s other wife, the Mongol immigrant we are calling Fāṭimah’s Sister. She suggested two daughters of the Mongol commander Nokia as brides, whom she chose for their ethnic origin and because, having emigrated with them twenty years earlier, she knew the family. (Presumably the brides came from a new generation of Nokia’s children, born in Egypt and appropriate in age for the grooms).¹¹⁵ Thus in 681/1281–82, ‘Alī wedded M-b-l-bek (?), and she later produced a son.¹¹⁶ A few months later, in 682/1282–83, ‘Alī’s half brother al-Ashraf Khalīl wedded M-b-l-bek’s sister Urdukin, who became the mother of

¹¹¹Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhānid War, 1260–1281* (Cambridge, 1995), 187–200; Holt, *Age*, 102.

¹¹²Liver disease in al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:159–60; dysentery in Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 263–64, and idem, *Tuḥfah*, 119; Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:282; Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī, *Faḍl*, 164. For the document on Khalīl’s accession see Ibn Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, appendix, p. 246, document 24.

¹¹³Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 30:223–29; Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī, *Ḥusn*, 326, and idem, *Faḍl*, 28–35; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 149, including the document written by Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, and idem, *Tuḥfah*, 83.

¹¹⁴Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 152, 229.

¹¹⁵*Ikhtārāt lil-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ bint Sayf al-Dīn Nūkyā . . . wa-mālat ilayhim li-jinsīyatihim wa-li-annahum wafadū fi waqtin wāḥidin ilá al-diyār al-miṣriyah . . .* Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 229.

¹¹⁶This was al-Manṣūr Mūsá.



two daughters.¹¹⁷ The father of the brides had been imprisoned in Alexandria under Baybars, but under Qalāwūn he was freed, brought to Cairo, welcomed lavishly, and given a grant (*iqṭā'*) and a position as a commander.¹¹⁸

CONCLUSION

Although the early Bahri sultans may have created the complex, faction-infused, single-generation political system that so interests scholars today, I suggest that this was an inadvertent act on their part. Close examination of the historical record instead reveals that they seem to have admired the concept of a traditional dynasty, formed through a combination of marriage and biology. Thus, Mamluks sought partners from among existing dynasties in the region, like the Ayyubids, Lu'lu'ids, and even the remnants of the Khwarazm-Shahs, or from nomadic immigrants whose backgrounds resembled their own. Turkic mamluks may have understood marriage through the lens of a Turkic and Mongolian model characterized by partnership between two families, as is suggested by the way Mamluk sultans employed male in-laws in the auxiliary forces of the sultanate while their wives produced offspring and helped arrange strategic marriages for them. Furthermore, all ambitious parents used ceremonies of rule to reinforce their sons' claims to leadership, in opposition to the actual Mamluk political system. We may call this a Dynastic Impulse on the part of the early Bahris and their partners, and it helps us better understand the early Mamluk mindset, even if it failed more often than it succeeded.

POSTSCRIPT

In addition to what has been covered here in this preliminary article, dynastically-minded Mamluk sultans and royal wives could promote their families with the help of the chancellery officials who wrote explicit statements of dynastic ideology in wedding contracts and diplomas of inheritance of rule. Both parents also expressed themselves and their dynasties by sponsoring the construction of Islamic architecture, particularly buildings for public use like madrasahs, mosques, hospitals, public baths, and Sufi lodges. Finally, while sultans' participation in politics is obvious, it is important to remember that royal wives also politicked for their sons when necessary. As space here is limited, I will take up these topics in subsequent writings.

¹¹⁷ Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 228–29, 232–33; Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, 20, 44; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:91, 99.

¹¹⁸ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:99.



