Mighty to the End: Utilizing Military Models to Study the Structure, Composition, and Effectiveness of the Mamlûk Army

by

Adam Ali

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations

University of Toronto

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the structure, composition, and effectiveness of the Mamlūk army through the use of two military models, the Diversified Army Model and the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model, that dominated its organization between 1250 CE and 1517 CE. The Diversified Army Model was the dominant form of military organization in the polities of the Muslim world prior to the rise of the Mamlūk sultanate. The Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model came into existence in the late Ayyūbid period during the reign of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb (r. 1240-1249 CE) and continued to dominate the military organization of the Mamlūk sultanate until the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 1310-1340 CE), when the Diversified army Model once again came to the fore. This period has often been viewed as one of major change or a turning point by several historians. However, there was a return to the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model under several Circassian sultans and by the latter half of the sixteenth century, there was a merging of the two military models. The current study thus argues that the Mamlūk army was constantly in a state of change and that the reign of every sultan, not only that of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, was a turning point for the military.

Despite the transformations and changes in the structure and composition of the Mamlūk army, it remained a formidable force throughout the entire Mamlūk period. Through their training, the mamlūks became exceptional horsemen and proficient in the use of a variety of melee and ranged weapons. Furthermore, the slow promotion of officers (with a few exceptions), ensured that the men who rose up the ranks were seasoned and experienced soldiers. It was often from among these officers that a new sultan emerged. Finally, the Mamlūk army’s excellent track record on the battlefield demonstrates its enduring strength. This strength is signified by the
fact that the sultanate’s force’s remained militarily effective and largely undefeated between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. The instances in which the Mamluks suffered military defeats are few and far apart and until the Ottoman conquest of 1517 CE they quickly recovered from such setbacks.
For my wife Maryam and son Aydeen
Acknowledgments

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I was very happy to have Professor Virginia Aksan of McMaster University as my internal reader. Her positive attitude, encouragement, and sound advice helped to improve the thesis and broaden its horizons. Professor Aksan’s advice was especially helpful in broadening the scope of the study to include a section on the Ottomans highlighting the continuities and changes from the Mamlūk period after 1517 CE.
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### Periodical Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEMI</td>
<td>Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSOAS</td>
<td>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASS</td>
<td>Canadian-American Slavic Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSS</td>
<td>Comparative Studies in Society and History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOP</td>
<td>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HJAS</td>
<td>Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>Islamic Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEJ</td>
<td>Israel Exploration Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHR</td>
<td>The International History Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IJMES</td>
<td>International Journal of Middle East Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran JBPS</td>
<td>Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS</td>
<td>Iranian Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAOS</td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JESHO</td>
<td>Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JIH</td>
<td>The Journal of Interdisciplinary History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPOS</td>
<td>Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRAS</td>
<td>The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSAI</td>
<td>Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JSS</td>
<td>Jewish Social Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>JWH</td>
<td>Journal of World History</td>
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<tr>
<td>MSR</td>
<td>Mamluk Studies Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>NMS</td>
<td>Nottingham Medieval Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCEH</td>
<td>Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REI</td>
<td>Revue des Études Islamiques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RUSS REV</td>
<td>Russian Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Russ Hist</td>
<td>Russian History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speculum</td>
<td>Speculum-A Journal of Medieval Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WZKM</td>
<td>Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes</td>
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Introduction

One of the defining characteristics of the Mamlūk sultanate is that it was a military regime that presided over a society organized around the military elite that ruled it. It is therefore difficult not to mention the army, and the political, social, and economic effects it had on the sultanate in any major study concerning the Mamlūk period (1250-1517 CE). A considerable amount of research on this era has been done over the last few decades. Not surprisingly, much of the energy in this field has been dedicated to studying the Mamlūk army to the extent that even those studies that do not focus on Mamlūk military history discuss the army to a certain degree. However, recent scholarship has moved toward focusing on microhistories, socio-political histories, and has emphasized the importance of social networks and the importance of examining society as a whole beyond the Mamlūk elite.

Studies on the military history of the Mamlūk period focus on themes and topics such as: the formative period of the sultanate and the army, the organization and composition of the military, the Mamlūk’s wars against various foes, and the deterioration of the army and the fall of the military regime it supported. This study aims to examine the changes in the structure of the Mamlūk military and to reevaluate the effects that these shifts had on the training, discipline, loyalty, and military effectiveness of the Mamlūk army. This investigation of the structure of the Mamlūk sultanate’s army was prompted by a significant body of scholarship that argues that there was a military deterioration in the Mamlūk sultanate, especially by the late Circassian period when, according to some historians, the army had become diminished to a mere shadow of what it had been under the early sultans.¹

¹ A number of historians studying Mamlūk history argue that the mamlūk amīrs and those who formed the rank and file of the army were poorly trained, less martial, lacking in vigor, and less loyal and reliable than those who had formed the armies of the early Mamlūk sultanate. Such arguments can be found in the works of David Ayalon who states that “the foundations and principles of the Mamluk military system began to crumble,” which resulted in the loosening up of discipline in the ranks, destructive factionalism, and a general “neglect of military duty” by the mamlūks, especially the sultans’ Royal Mamlūks. When describing the sultans’ Royal Mamlūks in the later periods of the sultanate, he says that “their military training was most ineffective, and they were lacking in warlike spirit.” See David Ayalon, “Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army I,” BSOAS 15, 3 (1953), 211. Ayalon’s views on the army and its decline are supported and echoed by scholars such as Carl Petry, Reuven Amitai-Preiss, Amalia Levanoni, and James Waterson among others. In fact, Levanoni argues that the military decline of the sultanate began as early as the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 1310-1341 CE). See Amalia Levanoni, A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn (1310-1341) (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1. If this is true, it means that the power and efficiency of the Mamlūk army, and by extension the whole regime, was
The discarding of “traditional norms” by the mamlûks with regard to military training and organization has been interpreted by several historians as a sign of the weakening of the Mamlûk army. I, however, will argue that the Mamlûk army, contrary to some claims, remained a powerful military force throughout the entire Mamlûk period and that the amīrs of the officer corps and the rank and file mamlûks were still a formidable force in the field even at the time of the Ottoman conquest. To prove this point, I will examine the Mamlûk army in both the early and late stages of the sultanate and compare its structure, composition, and effectiveness in the field during the various periods.

At this point it is important to introduce, discuss, and explain two key concepts that will be used in this study. These are: the Diversified Army Model and the Ṣāliḥî Mamlûk Model. These models, central to this study, are used to identify the forms of military organization and the structures of the armies of the Muslim world prior to the rise of the Mamlûk regime, the army of the early Mamlûk sultanate, and the military of the Circassian period. The Diversified Army Model and the Ṣāliḥî Mamlûk Model both serve as models solely for the purpose of describing the military organization of the armies of the pre-modern Muslim world. One may ask whether such models really existed. And if they did, what evidence is there to support this assertion? These ideas are present in the sources, but they are not designated as such. In the following paragraphs I will elaborate on their meaning and how they will be used here.

For the purposes of this study I have devised the term the “Diversified Army Model” to refer to a specific aspect of the military organization of the Muslim world from the period of the early Arab conquests up to the late Ayyûbid era. This model went through a formative stage during the time of the early conquests under the Rāshidūn caliphs (632-661 CE) and the Umayyads (661-750 CE) but reached its maturity under the ‘Abbāsids (750-1258 CE) and the autonomous and semi-autonomous regional dynasties that emerged throughout the Muslim world when the caliphate started to fragment in the ninth century. The major characteristic of this constantly waning for two hundred and seven years out of its two hundred and sixty-seven year existence. It is difficult to uphold the idea that the military of the Mamlûk sultanate was continuously deteriorating for over two centuries, as it survived the Timurid invasion and was victorious in a war against the Ottomans in the late fifteenth century. The relevant modern scholarship will be discussed in detail Chapter 1 see pages 16-80.
model was that the army was composed of several groups that could be classified as ethnic, religious, socio-military, class-based, or interest-based groups.\(^2\) Having such diversified armies enabled the ruler to maintain control over the various factions, ethnic, and religious groups in the military by playing them off against one another and by maintaining a balance in the army so that no single entity emerged as more powerful than the others. Having a diversified military also afforded the ruler an army composed of soldiers with a wide variety of specializations and skills, which made such forces effective when they operated in different environments and terrains.\(^3\)

There is much evidence to prove that the Diversified Army Model was the basis upon which the militaries of the Muslim world were organized and structured (to varying degrees and levels of success) during the pre-Mamlūk era. The Arabic primary sources abound with detailed descriptions of the armies of the Muslim world in their accounts of the wars and battles of the period of the caliphates.\(^4\) These descriptions confirm the diversity of the units that formed most of the armies of the Muslim polities prior to the rise of the Mamlūk regime. It must be noted that the term “Diversified Army Model” is a concept used in this study that encompasses the idea of the diverse militaries of the medieval Muslim world. Furthermore, although the importance of diversity in the army is emphasized in several primary sources, this idea is not presented as a model in those texts as it is in this study. Additionally, the ideas and practices encompassed in the Diversified Army Model varied greatly in practice throughout the Muslim world and enjoyed varying degrees of success under different dynasties and in different regions.\(^5\)

The chronicles, universal histories, and other primary accounts show the practical application of the Diversified Army Model. They do not, however, indicate whether rulers and

\(^2\) The members of an interest group may not necessarily be of the same ethnicity (as was the case with the Mamlūk regime and the sub-factions that formed the army) but were loyal to and supported each other because they had shared socio-political and economic interests. For a more thorough discussion of the concept of factions see Robert Irwin, “Factions in Medieval Egypt,” \textit{JRAŠ} 2 (1986), 228-230.

\(^3\) This model was not exclusive to the Muslim world and can be observed in the militaries of several empires and kingdoms that both preceded Islam and coexisted with the Caliphate and the Islamic polities that emerged after its fall. A more thorough discussion of the employment of this military model by various ancient, medieval, and early modern polities will be presented in Chapter 3 see pages 117-123.

\(^4\) These sources are comprised mainly of universal histories, chronicles, biographical works, and short treatises and essays such as those written by al-Balādhurī, al-Jāḥiz, al-Ṭabarī, al-Mas'ūdī, Ibn Shaddād, and Ibn al-Athīr; these works, among others, will be discussed in detail in Chapter 1.

\(^5\) The successes and failures of the Diversified Army Model will be discussed further in Chapter 4 see pages 167-205.
Military commanders implemented military diversification consciously and following a prescribed model. Whether it was conscious or not, it seems that there was a practical tendency toward this model during the pre-modern period both in the Muslim world and in other areas to utilize the skills and harness the martial energies of different peoples from various regions and to use these groups to create a dependable and controllable army. This tendency toward the Diversified Army Model was more pronounced when polities and empires grew very large and encompassed vast territories with diverse peoples within their boundaries. On the other hand, works from the “advice literature” genre provide evidence to show that there may have been a conscious theoretical understanding of this military model, at least among some of the rulers and scholars of the Mamlūk and pre-Mamlūk periods. One of the themes covered in these works is the establishment of a strong army composed of several ethnic or interest groups that kept each other in check, thus enabling the ruler to maintain control over his army and, by extension, his realm. Within this genre, certain works of Persian advice literature, also known as mirrors for princes (*naṣīḥat nāmeh*), provide the most in-depth and detailed theoretical models for an efficient army based on several groups. Nevertheless, this type of military organization is not given a label in these works and there is no formal rule or set of principles for the implementation of this model that has been laid out in these texts. For this reason, we will see throughout several examples given in this study that the Diversified Army Model presented itself in various forms in the pre-Mamlūk polities of the Muslim world depending on geographic location, area encompassed by the polity, and the rulers.

A means of military organization, which I have described in this study as the “Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model,” emerged during the reign of the last Ayyūbid ruler, al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb (r. 1240-1249 CE), who abandoned or broke with the Diversified Army Model and created an army that heavily favored mamlūks in both numbers and opportunities to rise in the ranks.⁶ Al-Ṣāliḥ’s mamlūks represent an interest group, because even though the majority of them were Kipchak Turks, there were other ethnicities present within their ranks. They identified themselves as Ṣāliḥiyya and as mamlūks. This self-identification becomes more apparent with time as other mamlūk interest groups, such as Baybars’s Ṣāḥiriyya, emerged. It must be stated

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⁶ Al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s break with the Diversified Army Model will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4 see pages 205-208.
here that the “Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model,” as I use it, is not synonymous, with and should not be misconstrued, as another term for the institution of military slavery, also known as the “mamlūk institution,” in the Muslim world. The “mamlūk institution” was the military institution through which slaves were acquired, educated, trained, and used as professional soldiers as described in the primary sources and discussed by historians of Islamic military history, from Spain to Central Asia, between the eighth and nineteenth centuries. The Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model, on the other hand, is a phenomenon exclusive to the Mamlūk sultanate of Egypt and Syria while the institution of military slavery, the mamlūk institution, was a prominent part of this military model.

The Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model can be viewed as an anomaly in the military history of the Islamic world. It came into existence when al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb created an army in which the mamlūk element was disproportionately large and powerful. It was, however, the extraordinary military and political circumstances of the mid-thirteenth century that enabled the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model to fully take root and flourish. At this time the Muslim world was threatened from the east by the advancing Mongols, who were, as yet, undefeated in the field. The Crusaders were also still very active in the Levant, and new crusades were still being launched from Europe with Egypt as their main target. Al-Ṣāliḥ’s mamlūks were able to defeat both of these enemies and thus presented themselves and were seen as the defenders and saviors of Islam.

It was the martial prowess and efficiency of these mamlūks that stopped the Mongol and Crusader advances and legitimized them as the new rulers of Egypt and Syria. However, these enemies, especially the Mongols, continued to be a threat to the existence of the fledgling Mamlūk regime for several decades after its establishment. Thus, the new rulers had to maintain the type of army that could effectively deal with such foes. Therefore, the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model was continued in the early years of the sultanate, based upon al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s military practices and organization, which predominantly depended on and utilized mamlūk troops. The composition of the whole army shifted to represent this mamlūk element more heavily than any other ethnic, religious, or socio-military interest group. Thus, the army that was created during

7 Al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s military policies were based on negative experiences with his army prior to his ascent to the position of sultan see pages 205-208.

al-Ṣāliḥ’s reign and in the early years of the Mamlūk sultanate clearly broke with the Diversified Army Model. It is true that the mamlūks themselves were of various ethnic backgrounds (the largest group being recruits of Kipchak origin in the early period and the Circassians in the later period), but for the most part their loyalties were based more on camaraderie, solidarity, and intense loyalty (khushdāshiyya)\(^9\) rather than ethnicity,\(^10\) and thus represented the interests of their socio-military class.

It is clear from both the primary and secondary sources that the Śāliḥī Mamlūk Model, even though it bore no such label, did exist in the early periods of the sultanate. The primary sources’ descriptions of the Mamlūk army, its organization, its composition, and the way it operated clearly show that there was a form of military organization other than the Diversified Army Model in place. Furthermore, several scholars in the field of Mamlūk studies are also aware that a different system for the organization of the military was in place. For example, Ayalon calls it the “Mamlūk military society” and the “Mamlūk military system;”\(^11\) Levanoni refers to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad as discarding and undermining “Mamlūk traditions” and “traditional norms” during his reign;\(^12\) Amitai-Preiss calls it both the “Mamlūk society” and the “Mamlūk institution;”\(^13\) while others have not given it any labels while equating it with the mamlūk military slave institution that was already in place.

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\(^9\) For a good example of this phenomenon of mamlūk loyalty to one’s comrades as opposed to loyalty to one’s ethnic group see Reuven Amitai-Preiss, “The Mongol Occupation of Damascus in 1300: A Study of Mamluk Loyalties,” in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, eds. Michael Winter and Amalia Levanoni (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 21-44.


\(^12\) Levanoni, *Turning Point*, 30.

\(^13\) Reuven Amitai-Preiss, “The Rise and Fall of the Mamluk Institution: A Summary of David Ayalon's Works,” in *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization in Honour of Professor David Ayalon*, ed. Moshe Sharon (Leiden: Brill,
The political and military situation in the Mamlūk sultanate changed during the early fourteenth century CE. At this point, neither the Crusaders nor the Mongols posed a threat to the Mamlūks. The emergency that prompted the establishment of the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model no longer existed. Some historians of the Mamlūk period state that it was during this period that some of the sultans broke with Mamlūk practices and traditions and reformed and reorganized the army.\(^{14}\) It is these changes and others that occurred later that caused the weakening of the Mamlūk army according to these historians. In this study I will argue that this “break” with the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model was in fact a pragmatic return to a more controllable army resembling that described in the concept of the Diversified Army Model,\(^ {15}\) and that this change cannot be classified as a “break” with tradition for two reasons. First, the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model was established and implemented very quickly and only lasted a few decades. It, therefore, cannot be considered a “tradition.”\(^ {16}\) The Mamlūks could not break with a tradition that never existed. Secondly, the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model was itself a break with the Diversified Army Model. This return to an older military tradition cannot therefore be viewed as a “break” with mamlūk traditions, but rather should be seen as a reversion to an older one. The changes introduced by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad can also be viewed as being necessary because by his reign the number of major mamlūk factions had increased and each one of these units formed its own interest group.\(^ {17}\) Furthermore, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was not a mamlūk and he needed to bring other non-Mamlūk elements upon which he could depend for support against some of the powerful mamlūk amīrs and their factions. Lastly, the reforms of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign were not permanent and during much of the subsequent period the Mamlūk army went through a series of changes,

\(^{15}\) It is as yet unclear whether this attempt at returning to something resembling the Diversified Army Model was a conscious one on the part of the mamlūk sultans or if they were innovating in their own right. Nevertheless, this reversion indicates that these rulers were aware of the fact that they could better control their army if it was composed of several weaker groups rather than strong faction(s) that could impose their will upon the ruler.
\(^{16}\) The term “tradition” implies something (in this case a military system/form of organization) that has been established for a long period of time and handed down over many generations.
\(^{17}\) These factions were the groups of Royal Mamlūks who had passed into the service of al-Nāṣir and included the remnants of the Ṣāliḥiyīya (mamlūks of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb), Zāhiriyīya (Mamlūks of al-Ẓāhir Baybars), the Manṣūriyyīya (mamlūks of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn), and the Ashrafiyyīya (mamlūks of al-Ashraf Khalīl).
some focusing more on the diversification and others more on the “mamlūkization” of the army, based on both internal and external political and military factors. During this time, the state of the Mamlūk army fluctuated in its emphasis on one or the other of the two above-mentioned models and often embodied a combination of the two. This combination of the Diversified Army Model and the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model is also unique to the Mamlūk period up to this point in the military history of the Muslim world and can be seen in a different light as a “mamlūkized” version of the Diversified Army Model. In this Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model the rank and file and the officer corps of the military were still composed predominantly of mamlūks, but the passage of time and the reigns of several sultans resulted in the formation of several interest groups within the Mamlūk army. These groups competed with and were often pitted against one another by the rulers. However, in most cases they formed a unified front against existential external and internal threats to their regime. I will demonstrate in the coming chapters that the few military setbacks suffered by the Mamlūks and the final conquest of their regime by the Ottomans in 1516-1517 CE was as a result of factional strife within the army during critical points in their history. Moreover, it should not automatically be assumed that these continuous transformations had a negative effect on the Mamlūk army. When they made changes to the army, successful sultans acted with the intention of safeguarding their throne and effectively neutralizing both internal and external threats to their realms.

I will also examine the transformation of the Mamlūk army in light of the military organization and practices of those regimes that preceded the Mamlūk sultanate. Thus, I will argue that the discarding of the “traditional norms” in Mamlūk military organization and practices is not indicative of the beginnings of a military downturn, but rather of a reversion (of sorts) to the “traditional norms” of earlier militaries. This is an important point because much of the scholarship on the Mamlūks has become separated from that which has been done on the preceding periods. Mamlūk history is, therefore, viewed as an isolated entity. A more thorough

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18 For an explanation of this military model see pages 136-137.
19 The nature of this “reversion” will be discussed in more detail below.
20 The exception here is the comparison drawn between the Mamlūks and the Ayyūbids. Several studies have compared the armies of the Mamlūks and the Ayyūbids (namely those conducted by David Ayalon and Stephen Humphreys). But I intend to go farther back in order to establish links between the military practices of the Mamlūks, the caliphates, and those semi-autonomous and autonomous dynasties that ruled the Muslim world prior to the establishment of the Mamlūk sultanate.
examination of the Mamlūk army and the militaries of the caliphates, Muslim principalities, and polities that existed before the Mamlūk sultanate can shed light on the decisions made by sultans such as al-Nāṣir Muḥammad regarding the army. Furthermore, although this study does not focus on Ottoman military history, it does open up possibilities of pushing the boundaries of Mamlūk military history beyond the period of the Mamlūk regime in Egypt and Syria and to create further connections with studies on the Ottomans. Was Mamlūk military organization unique? Did some aspects of the above-mentioned models transfer into the Ottoman army? If so, to what degree? And to what extent did these influences come from the Mamlūks? This question is especially pertinent regarding the Diversified Army Model, which was prominent in the militaries of the premodern world. 21 Due to the scope and focus of this thesis some of these questions cannot be answered here. However, I hope that this study will launch an initiative towards research that breaks down the boundaries between the studies on the Mamlūk period and those preceding and following it.

Lastly, what makes the history of the Mamlūk sultanate and its army unique and interesting is the fact that no sultan was able to successfully establish an effective ruling dynasty. Several sultans attempted to ensure the succession of their sons after their death. However, in most cases these sons were quickly deposed by a powerful amīr who seized the throne for himself. Al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn was able to establish a dynasty of sorts, but most of the scions of his house were either deposed or served as the puppets of the great magnates of the realm (with the exceptions of Qalāwūn himself and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad). 22 Thus, it can be argued that every successful ruler of the Mamlūk sultanate created a whole new patrimonial household and ruling apparatus to support him in his reign. In essence every new sultan was a state/polity builder. 23

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21 See Chapter 3 pages 117-123.

22 For more details on the scions of the House of Qalāwūn as political puppets see Frédéric Bauden, “The Sons of al-Nāṣir Muhammad and the Politics of Puppets: Where Did It All Start?” MSR 13 (2009): 53-81. Henning Sievert also discusses the failure to establish a dynastic succession in the Mamlūk period and labels the Qalāwūnid sultans “shadow sultans” who were similar to the “shadow caliphs.” See Henning Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel im Mamlukensultanat: Historische und Historiographische Untersuchungen zu Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsī und Ibn Tağribirdī (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2003), 85-86.

23 “State building” within the context of this study will be defined and discussed in detail in Chapter 3 see pages 137-166.
In the Mamlūk sultanate a new ruler could not depend on the Royal Mamlūks of his predecessors. Rather, he had to purge them and replace the high ranking officers, governors, and officials at court with his own mamlūks and followers in order to create a new power structure to prop up his own position. Such practices became more intense and more frequent as time passed because new sultans in the later periods of the sultanate had to contend with larger numbers of mamlūks and factions that had served their predecessors. This practice of state building in the upper echelons of Mamlūk political and military society, in addition to the external political and military threats faced by the Mamlūks, explains why the army went through several changes throughout the existence of the sultanate. The Mamlūk military was constantly recreated and reinvented based on the two military models described above, as the situation dictated. These changes occurred with the accession of every successful and long-ruling sultan, but were more pronounced when there were greater shifts in the regional balance of power. Thus, we see that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad made changes to his military and patrimonial household by discarding the “traditions” of his predecessors and increasing his dependence on non-mamlūks or fast-tracking his own mamlūks through their training. This sultan acted this way because he was no longer obliged to focus on the Mongols and the Crusader States, which ceased to be major threats, and was able to exert his energies on consolidating power against his internal foes. In other words the practical need for the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model was no longer there after the threat posed by the Ilkhānids had subsided. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, maintaining the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model became increasingly difficult with the passage of time and the emergence of multiple factions within the Mamlūk group itself. Thus, we see the merging of the two military models to form the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model mentioned earlier. There were points during the Circassian period when the military of the Mamlūk regime was very similar to the army of the early period. For instance, we can observe that during the reigns of some of the Circassian Mamlūk sultans such as Barqūq (r. 1382-1389 CE and 1390-1399 CE), Qāytbāy (r. 1468-1496 CE), and Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī (r. 1501-1516 CE) there was a strong return to armies that more closely resembled the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model to face powerful external foes such as Timur and

24 For a discussion of the idea of the Mamlūk sultanate being in constant flux and transformation see Jo Van Steenbergen, “Appearances of Dawla and Political Order in late medieval Syro-Egypt. The state, social theory, and the political history of the Cairo Sultanate (thirteenth-sixteenth centuries),” in History and Society during the Mamluk Period (1250-1517): Studies of the Annemarie Schimmel Research College II, ed. Stephan Connermann (Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2016), 51-86.
the Ottomans. Thus, the idea of the continuous dwindling of the power and effectiveness of the Mamlūk army after the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad cannot be maintained, because even though this sultan did discard the “traditional norms,” many subsequent rulers reinstated them when they were needed. The quality and efficiency of the Mamlūk army as an elite, professional fighting force was, therefore, maintained throughout the existence of the sultanate.

Based on the fact that every successful sultan had to create a new ruling apparatus and patrimonial household, every strong ruler was a state builder. Thus, every accession and reign of a notable mamlūk sultan can be viewed as a turning point for the Mamlūk sultanate. Several scholars of Mamlūk history have recognized al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign as a turning point and have interpreted it, and the changes that it wrought in the organization of the army, as having an overall permanent negative effect on its military efficiency. Thus, the notion of the downfall of the Mamlūk military stems from the interpretations of the policies of a single ruler without taking into account the temporary and circumstantial nature of his decisions and actions. These structural changes did not affect the overall quality, efficiency, fighting capability, or strength of the Mamlūk army, which continued to be an excellent military force even as the sultanate was drawing its final breaths.

The Diversified Army Model and the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model are similar regarding the centrality of the concept of a successful ruler creating a strong patrimonial household and ruling apparatus in both of these models. Authors of advice literature such as the Seljūk wazīr Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 1092 CE) and the Ziyārid ruler Kāy Kāvūs b. Iskandar (r. 1050-1087 CE) heavily emphasize not only how armies should be organized and maintained, and of what groups they should consist, but also counsel the establishment of a strong and reliable patrimonial household, largely based on the military. Throughout the period of the Mamlūk sultanate, this concept was also very much alive because, as mentioned above, the sultan tended to break down the ruling apparatuses of his predecessors and to replace them with individuals and groups from among his own mamlūks and retinue. This retinue started to come into existence from the time when the sultan was still a junior amīr. He continued to build it and expand it throughout his ascent to the sultanate and until his death. The main problem with this system was that these retinues that had become the ruling apparatus of the regime were usually loyal only to their creator and patron, and thus, after his death, were either purged by the new sultan, or one of the former sultan’s
retinue members seized power and created his own patrimonial household, usually at the expense of his comrades and the other factions that were involved in the power politics of the sultanate.

This study is focused on the military history of the Mamlūk sultanate. It does not presume to present a new theory on the decline and eventual fall of the Mamlūk regime or to comment on the decline paradigm, a topic that is currently under heavy scrutiny by several historians of the Mamlūk era. In fact, as other studies have shown, there are a multitude of factors that must be considered, including internal and external politics, the society on all its levels, the economy, as well as the military. Thus, this study cannot and does not intend to comment on the demise of the Mamlūks and their final conquest by the Ottomans. In fact, the current work is purely limited to studying the Mamlūk army, its organization, structure, composition, and effectiveness, and its progression throughout the period of the sultanate’s existence. I am aware that it is not possible to study the Mamlūk army in complete isolation from society and politics, nevertheless heavier emphasis will be placed on discussing the structure of the military and its effectiveness throughout the period. It will argue that the Mamlūk army, despite going through structural changes based on both the Diversified Army Model and the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model, did not deteriorate or lose its effectiveness on the field to the extent that some scholars have indicated, but rather constantly transformed itself through the policies of every successful ruler. It continued to be a formidable force to the very last moments of the sultanate’s existence. Its track record on the battlefield, both in the early and late periods, is a testament to the consistent might of the Mamlūk army throughout the whole period of its existence.

The current study is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter is the review of the relevant literature on Mamlūk military history. I will first outline some of the most recent scholarship on the Mamlūk period in general and specifically some important work done on challenging the decline paradigm in Mamlūk history. Although this study does not focus on this very broad theme, the discussion of the military and its continued effectiveness throughout the existence of the Mamlūk regime fits into the larger picture that some historians have started to discuss. I will then review some of the main research conducted on the Mamlūks with regard to their army and their military history. Many of these works were composed decades ago. The current study is important, pertinent, and offers new insights on the military history of the Mamlūk sultanate because there are no recent comprehensive studies on the Mamlūk army.
I will then present a historiographical review of the most important primary sources in second chapter. This section is especially important because I will use sources from several different time periods to show the development of the Diversified Army Model and the transition to the Šāliḥī Mamluk Model during the thirteenth century. In addition to presenting the primary sources, this section will also indicate their usefulness.

In the third chapter I will discuss key ideas and concepts in detail and define some terms to clarify their meaning with regard to this study. This chapter will elaborate on both the Diversified Army Model and the Šāliḥī Mamlūk Model. It will also differentiate the Šāliḥī Mamlūk Model from the already established institution of military slavery. In this chapter I will also discuss some theories and ideas on the creation of patrimonial households in general and in the Mamlūk context as well as the process of state building in the Mamlūk sultanate. Finally, I will discuss the Mamlūk sultanate as a military patronage state.

In the fourth chapter I will investigate the development and implementation of the Diversified Army Model from the period of the early Arab conquests to the Ayyūbid dynasty. I will trace the development of this model until its maturation, which occurred during the ‘Abbāsid era. Furthermore, I will also show that the ‘Abbāsid army, which was heavily based on mainly pre-Islamic Iranian ideas, became a model that was followed by most of the autonomous and semi-autonomous polities that emerged as the caliphate started to fragment in the ninth century. This chapter will also discuss the initial break with the Diversified Army Model by al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb and the reasons for and the steps he took to create his new army, which was the basis upon which the Šāliḥī Mamlūk Model was built.

Chapter five will examine the Mamlūk army during the early periods of the sultanate. It will show that during the early period of the Mamlūk sultanate, a new military system, distinct from the Diversified Army Model, was established and became the basis upon which the army was built and organized. This new military organization did away with the principle of an army composed of different groups (ethnic, religious, and socio-military interest groups) of equal strength that was easily controlled by the ruler who played them off against one another. Here, I
will discuss the organization of the Mamlūk army and its performance in the field. This section will show that the Mamlūks’ new army was composed primarily of mamlūks. It will not only trace the development of the Šālihi Mamlūk Model, but also show that the early Mamlūk army was a formidable fighting force, arguably one of the best, if not the best, in the world at this time. I will argue here that it was in fact the critical threat posed to the existence of the sultanate by external foes that forced the rulers to maintain this army in this form, but that as soon as this threat disappeared, the mamlūk sultans (such as al-Nāṣir Muḥammad) either consciously or subconsciously reverted to a form of military organization similar to the Diversified Army Model to keep their armies under control. However, as mentioned earlier, there were several factors that led to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s changes. Furthermore, there was a fluctuation between the two military models throughout the later period of the sultanate, which depended on the state building practices of the reigning sultan and on the political and military situation in the region.

Chapter six will focus on a discussion of the break with the Šālihi Mamlūk Model most noted by historians of the Mamlūk period, which occurred during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s third reign. I will examine the shift in the military and political situation in the region at this time to show that it was the disappearance of external threats, in addition to this ruler’s personal experiences with a powerful and unruly military during his first two reigns, that prompted him to change the internal policies regarding the organization of the army resulting in a reversion to the Diversified Army Model. I also hope to clarify whether or not al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and subsequent sultans were consciously aware of this military tradition and the practices of the previous caliphates, sultanates, and polities or whether he was trying to “innovate” in his own right as a state builder to create a patrimonial household and an army that he could control. In either case, this sultan’s choices show a natural tendency towards the seemingly more controllable army of the Diversified Army Model.

In the seventh chapter I will examine the Mamlūk army in the Circassian period of the sultanate. I will draw a comparison between the army during the Circassian era and its earlier

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25 A review of the Mamlūk army’s performance here is necessary in order to compare it to the Mamlūk military of the Circassian period.

26 A parallel can be drawn here with al-Šāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb, who broke with the Diversified Army Model due to his experiences at the hands of disloyal followers.
counterpart with respect to its composition, organization, and efficiency. To successfully accomplish this task, I will have to examine the performance of the late Mamlūk army in the field against its external enemies, because the best measure of an army is its performance in war. Through this examination I intend to show that the Mamlūk army continued to be a powerful military force, citing its military efficiency during campaigns and battles throughout the Mamlūk period to prove this point. Furthermore, I will also show that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign was not the only “turning point” in the military history of the Mamlūk army, because during the Circassian period there were some sultans who did not continue al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s “break with Mamlūk traditions,” but rather organized and trained their army along lines resembling the military of the early sultans of the Mamlūk regime.
Chapter 1

Review of the Literature

1.1 New Approaches

Before reviewing the research that has been done on Mamlūk military history I will first examine some of the most recent scholarship in the field of Mamlūk studies. Although the historians discussed in this section do not specifically focus on the Mamlūk army, their works are important because they emphasize the need to view Mamlūk history, especially the Circassian period, from a different perspective. The general theme that permeates these works is the idea that Mamlūk history should not be viewed as having a linear progression. Furthermore, there is a strong argument made in all of these studies against the decline paradigm, which was introduced and championed by scholars such as David Ayalon. Rather than focus on “decline” the new generation of Mamlūk historians argue that the sultanate went through a series of changes that did not necessarily have a negative effect on the sultanate as exemplified by the Mamlūk regimes longevity.

1.11 Jo Van Steenbergen

Jo Van Steenbergen has produced a number of works in which he argues that new approaches are needed to better understand Mamlūk history, especially the fifteenth century. He particularly argues against the traditional view that the Mamlūk sultanate “exhibited an exceptional form of military slavery that defined the state and the political system, the corruption of which led to a long decline in the 15th century, culminating with the Ottoman conquest in 1516–17.” In two recent interconnected articles, which he co-authored with Patrick Wing, and Kristoff D’hulster, entitled The Mamlukization of the Mamluk Sultanate? State Formation and

the History of Fifteenth Century Egypt and Syria: Part I and Part II, 28 Van Steenbergen’s aim is “to offer a new perspective on the history of late medieval Egypt and Syria.” 29

In Part I Van Steenbergen examines the scholarship in the field of Mamlūk political history, particularly that of the fifteenth century. The author states that there are two “general and interrelated” trends in the field: the traditional view and the more recent challenge to this traditional view. 30 The article goes on to discuss both of these approaches in detail and outlines some of the important contributors to these perspectives.

The section on the traditional view begins with a summary of its main aspects. Van Steenbergen states that, according to this approach, military slaves or mamlūks seized power and formed an elite class in Egypt and Syria in the mid-thirteenth century. They monopolized power in this region to the exclusion of all other groups until 1517. 31 As a result, the author states that proponents of the traditional view argue that the sultanate was underwent an abrupt “Mamlūkization” in the thirteenth century and that after this point all aspects of the sultanate are given the designation “Mamlūk” without distinction. He goes on to distinguish the three uses of the term for various concepts, namely, with the lower case “m” to refer to the slave soldiers who served the rulers and the elites. The usage of the term with the upper case “M” refers to the various groups and factions that composed the upper echelons of the regime. Lastly the “Mamlūk period” is a designation for the era between 1250-1517 CE when Egypt and Syria were dominated by several ethnic groups, 32 dynastic dispensations, 33 and political power networks. 34

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32 Prominent among these were the Kipchak Turks and the Circassians. See Van Steenbergen, “Mamlukization Part I,” 550.

33 This type of dominance was most common during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when members of the royal households of the Ṣālihīds, Qalāwūnīds, and Barqūqīds rose to hold the reins of power. See Van Steenbergen, “Mamlukization Part I,” 550.
The author argues that omitting these categories has made it seem as though military slavery was the preeminent characteristic of this period.\textsuperscript{35}

The article then discusses the works and contributions of the late David Ayalon, to the field of Mamlûk history and the founder of the traditional view in this field. Ayalon’s main ideas are summarized and include the concept of the “Mamlûk System,” the relationships within the ruling elite, and the decline paradigm. This last point followed the normative approach that describes the peaking of the sultanate at an early stage and a long decline due to breaks with the traditional thirteenth century ideals of the “Mamlûk System.” Other causes for this decline, as put forth by Ayalon, included the lack of discipline within the mamlûk soldiery, a downturn in the economy and the industry, shortages of precious metals, plague, factional infighting, and environmental factors. Thus, the first few decades of the sultanate are often seen as the classical age and the golden standard, from which deviations have been interpreted as “corruption and decadence.”\textsuperscript{36} Van Steenbergen argues at the end of this section that the notion of a continuous decline through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries cannot be accepted because this means that the “Mamlûk System” as defined by Ayalon did not function for most of the Mamlûk period.\textsuperscript{37}

The second half of this article discusses the new approaches taken more recently to the study of the Mamlûk sultanate. These studies have been focused more on microhistories that examine the interactions between groups and individuals and “their access to power, wealth, and ideas,” broadening the scope of the field to include groups that fall outside the umbrella of the Mamlûk ruling elite.\textsuperscript{38} Furthermore, Van Steenbergen argues that the fifteenth century should not

\textsuperscript{34} According to Van Steenbergen this form of dominance was prevalent during the fifteenth century during which mamlûk factions dominated the political scene in Egypt and Syria. See Van Steenbergen, “Mamlukization Part I,” 550.
\textsuperscript{36} Van Steenbergen, “Mamlukization Part I,” 550-551.
\textsuperscript{38} Van Steenbergen, “Mamlukization Part I,” 551.
be viewed as a period of linear decline, but rather as one of profound social and political changes.\textsuperscript{39}

Van Steenbergen next discusses three broad themes under which the recent research on fifteenth century Mamlūk history can be categorized. These are: the breakdown of order, networks and factionalism, and centralization/decentralization. In the first category the scholarship indicates that the situation had changed by the fifteenth century. There was widespread corruption and criminality within the ruling class, a blurring of the roles played by the “men of the sword” and the “men of the pen,” and the more active participation of rank and file mamlūks and commoners (‘āmma) in both the political and social affairs of the sultanate.\textsuperscript{40} The second theme highlights the growth of a body of work focused on the importance of recognizing the complexity of factions and power networks in the Mamlūk sultanate. These networks cut across social and institutional divisions and the competition between these groups for resources and influence. The article highlights the fact that such factional struggles were not only more prevalent during the fifteenth century, but also that they were an important means through which the political elite interacted with one another.\textsuperscript{41} Lastly, the theme of centralization/decentralization has also come under scrutiny. Some recent studies, according to the author, have stated that by the fifteenth century central control (i.e. that of the sultan, his household, and his administrative machinery) over land had declined after having reached a peak during the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. On the other hand, the role of sultans in economic affairs was on the rise, with the sultans of the Circassian period expanding their role in the political economy of the sultanate.\textsuperscript{42} Part I concludes with a statement that, according to the research and work produced over the last few decades, the fifteenth century should be viewed as a period of social and political transformation and not as one of decline. However, Van Steenbergen argues that despite the fact that most scholars no longer refer to the fifteenth century as a period of decline, “there remains a need to replace the decline paradigm with a more useful conceptual framework.” He ends the article with a lead into Part II by suggesting that the

\textsuperscript{39} Van Steenbergen, “Mamlukization Part I,” 551.
\textsuperscript{40} Van Steenbergen, “Mamlukization Part I,” 552.
\textsuperscript{41} Van Steenbergen, “Mamlukization Part I,”551-552.
\textsuperscript{42} Van Steenbergen, “Mamlukization Part I,” 553-554
“Mamlûkization” of the sultanate was not a sudden occurrence that took place in the mid-thirteenth century, but a long process that saw the rise of a new political order in the fifteenth century.\(^{43}\)

In Part II of “The Mamlukization of the Mamluk Sultanate?” Van Steenbergen argues that a slow process of state formation that resulted in the Mamlûkization of the sultanate in the fifteenth century took place. Special attention is paid to relations between factions, the rulers, and the subjects.\(^{44}\) The article states that, unlike the history of late medieval Europe, there is a lack of research in the area of political change and state formation for the Mamlûk period.\(^{45}\) Although inroads into this area have been made by historians such as Winslow Clifford and Michael Chamberlain, neither of these scholars offers a “useful model of change.”\(^{46}\) Furthermore, another problem with studying change in the Mamlûk sultanate in the fifteenth century is the inability to view this change without equating it to a crisis or a cause that resulted in the Ottoman conquest.\(^{47}\) The author then discusses the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, who worked on the transformation of the “bureaucratic state” from the “dynastic state” in the European context. Van Steenbergen also draws on parallels between Bourdieu’s ideas and those of Ibn Khaldûn.\(^{48}\) He states that these models can be used to reconstruct “governmental growth” between the aforementioned dynastic and bureaucratic states.\(^{49}\)

Although Van Steenbergen states that it is too early to make any conclusive statements, as has been done in European historiography, regarding state formation, growth, and structural violence in the Mamlûk context in the fifteenth century, he sets out three propositions that may inform an early hypothesis on this subject. The first of these propositions is that the models of political and governmental growth mentioned earlier in the article can be applied to the Mamlûk case. The second proposition states that these models help with studying the central authorities of

\(^{44}\) Van Steenbergen, “Mamlukization Part II,” 561.
\(^{46}\) Van Steenbergen, “Mamlukization Part II,” 562.
\(^{47}\) Van Steenbergen, “Mamlukization Part II,” 562.
\(^{49}\) Van Steenbergen, “Mamlukization Part II,” 564.
the sultanate, but neglect those on the periphery and their relations with the center. The third proposition concerns state formation and the longevity of the sultanate. Here the author argues that although there seems to be a structural continuity throughout the period, in fact it “was a messy business with many ups and downs.” Thus, by the fifteenth century the sultanate was different to what it had been previously due to these changes. The hypothesis the author presents is that after 1412 CE, with the dissolution of the Barqûqid dynasty there was a change from a dynastic pattern that transcended the authority of the household of the individual sultan and the dynasty. According to Van Steenbergen “the household of the ruler became gradually the locus of a concentration of power and resources, which gave rise to a state consciousness, and a commitment on the part of those who participated in the political order not to a particular princely household, but to the notion of the political order itself.” Thus, “Mamlûkization” is described as this emergence of a new political order around a new Mamlûk “narrative of legitimacy and distinction, and requiring the (bureaucratic) services of new agents and agencies for its reproduction.” The author cites Ulrich Haarmann, who first introduced the term “Mamlûkization” as the process through which the non-mamlûk elites lost their power over time to the benefit of the sultan and his mamlûks. Van Steenbergen also argues that the position of the sultan was also “Mamlûkized.” He states that prior to 1412 CE the succession of the sons of sultans to the throne occurred frequently. On the other hand, after 1412 CE this position was occupied by mamlûks to the exclusion of the sons of previous sultans. Thus, “Mamlûkization” can be seen as the emergence of a new central state with a new coercive bureaucracy. This non-dynastic hegemony with the loyalties of the elite no longer focused on the sultan’s household, but rather on the institutional order that had emerged.

The ideas in the above mentioned papers are developed further by Van Steenbergen in his essay “Appearances of Dawla and Political Order in late medieval Syro-Egypt. The state, social

50 Van Steenbergen, “Mamlukization Part II,” 564.
theory and the political history of the Cairo Sultanate (thirteenth-sixteenth centuries).” 55 In this essay the author calls for a move beyond the traditional view of the patrimonial structure within which much of the scholarship on Mamlūk socio-political history has been conducted. He praises Clifford and Chamberlain for their contributions, which focus on “patronage and negotiation or competition as key social practices for their understandings of socio-political and cultural organization.” 56 However, he emphasizes the need to move beyond these frameworks, which still operate within the traditional idea of the patrimonial state. 57

Van Steenbergen moves on to present a detailed discussion of the term *dawla* in the Mamlūk context. He first presents a summary of the general historical understanding of this term from the Weberian definitions “that tend to align the state with concentrations of violence and legitimacy and issues of territoriality” 58 to meaning a “turn” or term of rule. 59 He then discusses *Dawlat al-Atrāk* and the meaning behind this label in great detail. He states that this term gives the impression that there was one transcendental and continuous political order from the inception of the Mamlūk sultanate to its fall in 1517 CE. 60 Van Steenbergen also introduces the idea of microcosmic *dawlas* within the *Dawlat al-Atrāk*, i.e. the Mamlūk sultanate. He argues that every ruling sultan had a *dawla* and that there were as many *dawlas* as there were sultans. 61 He asserts that the accession to the throne (or its usurpation by) each new sultan brought about a substantial change in the socio-political dynamics at the center of power and its relations with its various peripheries. He states that in this case the *dawla* “refers to a social construction, which


61 Van Steenbergen, “Appearances of Dawla,” 63. This is similar in a way to the idea presented in this study that every sultan was a state builder.
was built around a relational core of individual agents that preceded its own historical appearance as a *dawla*.”

Van Steenbergen then discusses the various approaches taken by recent historians in their attempts to analyze social and political order in the Mamlūk regime. He discusses Chamberlain’s ideas on the importance of the warrior household and its relationship with the center and its “strategies of social reproduction,” which are, in some ways, similar Timothy Mitchell’s ideas. The author argues that the “correlation of social practice, disciplinary power and the state as a set of structural effects therefore shows a valid and valuable way forward for the integration of late medieval and modern discourses of power as well as Chamberlain’s pivotal thinking into one alternative model.” Van Steenbergen takes these models to the next level in his argument that there existed points during the Mamlūk period, when there was a strong competition among the households of the amīrs, civil elite, and the sultan and his entourage for resources, and other periods at “regular historical intervals” during which a more singular political authority was able to integrate all of these “politically relevant social groups and communities from a wide variety of local contexts into the appearance of one structural whole of, simultaneously, a particular sultan’s *dawla* and the Dawlat al-Atrāk.” He argues that this was the case when long ruling and successful sultans whose reigns encompassed military successes, charismatic authority, and longevity were in power as exemplified with al-Ẓāhir Baybars I (r. 1260-1277 CE), al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (r. 1279-1290 CE), al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 1310-1341), Barqūq (r. 1382-1399 CE), al-Ashraf Barsbāy (r. 1422-1438 CE), al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq (r. 1438-1453 CE), al-Ashraf Qāytbāy (r. 1468-1496) and Qanṣūh al-Ghawrī (r. 1501-1516 CE). Thus, he argues that, in the cases when

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64 For a detailed discussion of the similarities and differences between Mitchell and Chamberlain’s ideas see Van Steenbergen, “Appearances of Dawla,” 68.


such authority was exhibited, the sultan’s agents reproduced the sultan’s order to the effect that they became that order and the ruler disappeared from sight.\textsuperscript{68}

The article argues that in addition to the dynastic aspirations of succession there was another structural effect and mode of succession, which was tanistry. This mode of succession through the usurpation of power by the most able member of the ruling clan (or in this case elite socio-military class) was as common as dynastic succession in the Circassian period and gives the Mamlūk sultanate its “one generational” image.\textsuperscript{69} Van Steenbergen differentiates between those sultans whose reigns were short and can be defined as unsuccessful and their more successful counterparts. He explains that in the case of the former their failure stemmed from their inability “to accomplish their own political orders.” Whereas in the case of the latter group, he states that “more successful practical arrangements of integration, segmentation and reproduction enabled these rulers and their entourages to steer the local circulation of power in particular monopolizing ways.”\textsuperscript{70}

Van Steenbergen concludes the article by proposing an alternative model for understanding the political organization of the Mamlūk sultanate in the fifteenth century. He argues that this model is “one of sultanic order.” He states that there was a process of constant change in the creation of the state during this era through “constantly changing practices of social reproduction, elite integration and political distinction, in contexts that range between multipolar and unipolar social organization at and around Cairo’s court and its military elites.”\textsuperscript{71} He also differentiates between the early and late periods of the Mamlūk regime by stating that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the process of integration, succession, and contacts between the various groups and factions were “dynastically connected.” On the other hand, during the fifteenth century “the ongoing practical process of elite reproduction, integration, segmentation, and fragmentation thus happened increasingly in a context in which the absence of any dynastic appearances created room for alternative symbolic narratives that could produce the

\textsuperscript{68} Van Steenbergen, “Appearances of Dawla,” 74-75.
\textsuperscript{69} Van Steenbergen, “Appearances of Dawla,” 75-76.
\textsuperscript{70} Van Steenbergen, “Appearances of Dawla,” 77.
\textsuperscript{71} Van Steenbergen, “Appearances of Dawla,” 78.
structuring boundaries of political order, social distinction and legitimate sovereignty in the *Dawlat al- Atrāk.*”

In addition to his work on redefining the way in which the socio-political relations between the center, the peripheries, and the various social and military groups of the Mamlūk sultanate should viewed and his challenge to the decline paradigm that, in the past, has been widely accepted, Van Steenbergen also sheds light on the politics and internal struggles in the Mamlūk sultanate during the fourteenth century. “On the Brink of a New Era? Yalburghā al-Khāṣṣakī (d. 1366) and the Yalburghāwīyah,” focuses on the great amīr Yalburghā al-‘Umarī and his mamlūks, from among whom emerged the founder of the Circassian sultanate. It discusses the zenith of Yalburghā’s career, his treatment and promotion of his mamlūks, and the role of the various groups of mamlūks within the Yalburghāwīya and the events that led to their master’s decline and death. “Mamluk Elite on the Eve of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s Death (1341): A Look behind the Scenes of Mamluk Politics,” is similar in tone to Amitai Preiss’s article “The Remaking of the Military Elite of Mamluk Egypt by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn,” but it examines the elite at al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s death in 1341 CE rather than in 1313 CE. He concludes that the elite at this point was anything but uniform and was composed of men from a wide variety of backgrounds. “The Mamluk Sultanate as Military Patronage State: Household Politics and the Case of the Qalāwūnid Bayt (1279-1382)” focuses on power politics during the Qalāwūnid period and argues the existence of a “military patronage state” through which the households of the sultanate built up their political and social support. This concept of the Mamlūk political order as a “military patronage state” was first defined by Marshall Hodgson

75 For a discussion of Amitai-Preiss’s work see pages 54-59.
and later refined by Michael Chamberlain. These historians apply this model to all the Turco-Mongol polities of the medieval period.\(^{77}\)

1.12 Amina Elbendary

Amina Elbendary’s recently published monograph *Crowds and Sultans: Urban Protest in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria*\(^{78}\) also approaches mamlūk history from a fresh perspective. In this book the author attempts to examine the history of fifteenth century Egypt and Syria from the perspective of the commoners (‘āmma) or the non-elite, especially those of the urban centers. She argues that rather than going through a linear decline during the fifteenth century, the Mamlūk sultanate went through economic crises and political transformations that led to changes in both the internal and external balances of power.\(^{79}\) She also argues that these changes led to some groups benefitting and gaining more access to power and recourses, while others were disadvantaged. These transformations left groups such as the urban non-elite in a position to renegotiate their positions and access to power with the elites.\(^{80}\) Elbendary also states that the non-elite were actively involved, through urban protests, in the transformations that were occurring during the fifteenth century.\(^{81}\)

Elbendary also discusses the decline paradigm in her book. She argues that rather than viewing the fifteenth century as one of decline, one should look at it as a time of dynamic changes “with both ups and downs.”\(^{82}\) She points to the economic crises of the fifteenth century as the main contributor to the prominence of the decline paradigm, until very recently, in the field of Mamlūk history. Elbendary states that “in explaining the fifteenth-century crisis, modern

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\(^{78}\) Amina Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans: Urban Protest in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria* (Cairo: The American University of Cairo Press, 2015).

\(^{79}\) Elbendary, *Crowds*, 1-2.

\(^{80}\) Elbendary, *Crowds*, 2.

\(^{81}\) Elbendary, *Crowds*, 2.

\(^{82}\) Elbendary, *Crowds*, 1, 5.
historians fall roughly within two main schools.\textsuperscript{83} The first of these schools emphasizes the internal factors for the decline of the Mamlûk sultanate.\textsuperscript{84} The author mentions E. Ashtor, Sato Tsugitaka, and Carl Petry as falling within this school. She summarizes their arguments which state that the decline during the fifteenth century was caused by government monopolies, taxes, corruption, technological stagnation, natural disasters, mismanagement of resources, and hoarding assets.\textsuperscript{85} On the other hand, the second school attributes the decline of the Mamlûk regime to “changes in the world economy.”\textsuperscript{86} Elbendary names Janet Abu Lughod and Immanuel Wallerstein in this second school. Wallerstein states that sugar production declined in the entire Eastern Mediterranean because it was unable to compete with the sugar that was being produced in the Americas. Abu Lughod attributes the economic decline to the aggressive trading policies of Italian city states such as Venice which dumped large amounts of fabrics into the markets and forced Egypt and Syria into becoming exporters of raw cotton rather than fabrics and textiles. She also adds that the plague epidemics and Timur’s invasion during the early fifteenth century aggravated the situation.\textsuperscript{87}

Elbendary’s monograph argues that the actions taken by the ruling sultans were often a result of pressures they felt from the non-elite classes. She states that corruption, bribery, sale of offices, and monopolization became regular occurrences, which led to the institutionalization of such practices and the decentralization of the state, through the state’s loss over a part of its coercive powers through its weakened control over its agents.\textsuperscript{88} This decentralization limited the rulers in their attempts to restructure the institutions of the sultanate. Thus, the sultan, although still the dominant power in the sultanate, had to share power with other groups and allowed “room for other members of society to participate.”\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{83} Elbendary, \textit{Crowds}, 8.
\textsuperscript{84} Elbendary, \textit{Crowds}, 8.
\textsuperscript{85} For a detailed discussion of these points see Elbendary, \textit{Crowds}, 8-10.
\textsuperscript{86} Elbendary, \textit{Crowds}, 11
\textsuperscript{87} Elbendary, \textit{Crowds}, 11.
\textsuperscript{88} Elbendary, \textit{Crowds}, 12.
\textsuperscript{89} Elbendary, \textit{Crowds}, 12.
While *Crowds and Sultans* challenges the linear decline paradigm during the fifteenth century, it deals with the Mamlūk military in a very cursory and rudimentary manner and focuses heavily on economic and social history, especially the role played by commoners and members of the urban non-elite classes. In here section “Structure of the Army,” Elbendary echoes some of the traditional ideas regarding the deterioration and the loss of military effectiveness of the mamlūks. She states that the army’s composition changed with the rise to prominence of the Circassian element at the expense of the Turks.\(^{90}\) The author also states that the balance of power between the sultans and the amīrs also shifted in favor of the sultans as a consequence of the greater portion of the agricultural revenues, the basis of the *iqṭā‘* system and the source of the amīrs’ income, being weighted more heavily in favor of the sultan.\(^{91}\) She also argues that the time spent training new mamlūks was decreased, which led to less disciplined, unassimilated, and inefficient soldiers.\(^{92}\) Although *Crowds and Sultans* makes headway in reinterpreting the history of the fifteenth century in Egypt and Syria, especially challenging the notion of linear decline, it deals with the Mamlūk military in a very cursory and rudimentary manner. In fact, it conforms to the traditional views on the army and its poor state during this period of Mamlūk history.

Amina Elbendary is also the author of an article entitled “The Sultan, The Tyrant, and The Hero: Changing Medieval Perceptions of al-Ẓāhir Baybars.”\(^{93}\) This article is a comparison of the various views and images presented on Baybars I by the several sources that describe his reign and which tend to “emphasize different aspects of his personality and legacy and to ignore others.”\(^{94}\) Elbendary categorizes these into those sources that present him as an ideal sultan (written during his reign), those that present him as a villain and a tyrant (those written in the fourteenth century, specifically during the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad), and those that highlight both positive and negative aspects of his personality and his reign (those written in the later

\(^{90}\) Elbendary, *Crowds*, 41.

\(^{91}\) Elbendary, *Crowds*, 42.

\(^{92}\) Elbendary, *Crowds*, 42.


\(^{94}\) Elbendary, “Sultan,” 141.
period of the Mamlûk era).\textsuperscript{95} Although Elbendary places little emphasis on Baybars’ military career in this article, she does refer to his occasional severity and the lengths to which he went to discipline his subordinates and to secure his reign.\textsuperscript{96} These actions are also examined in the current study as part of the comparison between the disciplinary measures taken and punishments meted out for unruliness, rebellion, treason, and insubordination during the early and late periods of Mamlûk history.

1.13 Julien Loiseau

Julien Loiseau’s book \textit{Les Mamelouks XIIIe-XVIe Siècle: Une Expérience du Pouvoir dans l’Islam Médiéval}\textsuperscript{97} is a comprehensive socio-political history of the Mamlûk sultanate. The author states that recent studies on the Mamlûk period have heavily integrated the mamlûks into the society in which they lived. They are no longer seen as a separate entity, a foreign military element entrenched in their barracks. They imprinted themselves so heavily onto the societies that they ruled that it is more important to view the whole society as “mamlûk,” rather than only naming the period as such because the Mamlûks were the ruling class at this time.\textsuperscript{98} This integration into their socio-political environment, argues Loiseau, has made the Mamlûks “a collateral victim” in the sense that they have lost their “color” and some of their “edge,” their very essence that made them unique and that distinguished them from the rest of society. Thus, the author states that the aim of his book is to re-sharpen the history of the Mamlûks and to highlight the unique experience of power they wielded and incarnated from generation to generation between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{99}

Loiseau’s monograph is divided into six chapters through which he examines some important themes that bring the mamlûks back to the center of Mamlûk history. Chapter one reviews the history of the slave, the routes through which slaves were brought to Egypt and Syria, and the intermediaries of this commercial activity. Chapter two discusses the acquisition

\textsuperscript{95} Elbendary, “Sultan,” 141-142.
\textsuperscript{96} See Elbendary, “Sultan,” 146-150.
\textsuperscript{98} Loiseau, \textit{Les Mamelouks}, 21-22.
of young mamlūks, their education, their training, and their integration into their master’s household. Chapter three elucidates the centrality and dominance of the mamlūk element in the armed forces of the sultanate, which allowed them to dominate their territories and sometimes to heavily exploit them and to choose varying political solutions in order to maintain their hegemony. Chapter four examines the collective identity of the mamlūks and the originality of their military tradition. It argues that the mamlūks were able to acclimatize over time to ensure their survival, especially through the integration of new ethnicities into their ranks. Chapter five outlines the urban nature of Mamlūk society and how the city created the perfect environment for them to thrive. The urban environment also brought them into close contact with non-mamlūks and created a metropolitan society which they reshaped around the mansions and palaces that the high ranking amīrs built in Cairo. Chapter six discusses the adoption of Egypt and Syria as a new home by the mamlūks and their sedentarization in these lands, where they founded families and households through which they hoped to pass on their legacies (especially the ruling households of the sultans).100

In what follows, I will highlight some of the points in this monograph that are relevant to the current study. When referring to the army, Loiseau heavily emphasizes the importance of the military society and the integration of the young mamlūk into this society through his master’s household. As a member of the household the young mamlūk became a part of his master’s family. During this time an important relationship was formed between the mamlūk and his patron. Another important link of fraternity, the khushdāshiyya, developed among the mamlūks who served in the same household, which, according to Loiseau, formed a powerful logic of integration within the military society.101 Loiseau argues that this idea of the family went beyond social relations with the father figure as the head of the household. He states that the idea of the “house” (bayt) was central to the mamlūk family. Here Loiseau refers both to the family and the physical building in the city, which was central to the family. It was the place where the mamlūks were raised and with which they became intimately familiar; the place to which they

100 Loiseau, Les Mamelouks, 24.
101 Loiseau, Les Mamelouks, 76.
gravitated, a center of social construction. It was the center to which all the members of the household, men and women, and those associated with it gravitated.\textsuperscript{102}

Regarding the army and the training of the mamlūks, Loiseau argues that they always formed an elite corps of the sultanate. He states that the mamlūk regiments, from the simplest soldier to the highest ranking amīrs (including the sultan), were definitely the most important part of the military. In fact, he states that they formed the very substance of the sultan’s \textit{dawla} both as the servants of his reign and active members of the “state.”\textsuperscript{103} The mamlūks were trained to be elite cavalry units that were augmented by units of infantrymen and tribal auxiliaries.\textsuperscript{104} Through the \textit{furūsiyya} exercises that familiarized them with the equestrian arts and the use of various weapons the mamlūks were honed into an elite fighting machine. Mock battles between the mamlūks of different barracks (\textit{ṭabaqa}) fostered a healthy competition among the Royal mamlūks and strengthened the bonds of comradeship between groups of mamlūks housed in the same barracks. Such exercises were, according to the author, conducted throughout the entire mamlūk period. The abandonment of the hippodromes at the turn of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, where these exercises were conducted during the early period, does not seem to have had any long-term consequences on the quality of the training of the mamlūks. Loiseau argues that this abandonment of the hippodromes indicated an economic downturn. However, he states that these military exercises continued to be practiced in Cairo in the Citadel or in the desert. He quotes Ibn Taghrī Birdī who praised the mamlūks trained in Cairo a quarter century after the bankruptcies of Barqūq’s reign, which did not detract from their training and who did not distinguish them from their illustrious predecessors.\textsuperscript{105}

The last important point is the idea of decline and how Loiseau deals with it in his monograph. Loiseau argues that the sultanate did not necessarily decline but went through a series of transformations, evolutions, and cycles. He uses Ibn Khaldūn’s theory of the \textit{dawla} or cycle for a ruling regime, which according to Ibn Khaldūn, lasts three generations from its

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{102} Loiseau, \textit{Les Mamelouks}, 68-69.
  \item \textsuperscript{103} Loiseau, \textit{Les Mamelouks}, 89-90.
  \item \textsuperscript{104} Loiseau, \textit{Les Mamelouks}, 85-86.
  \item \textsuperscript{105} Loiseau, \textit{Les Mamelouks}, 87.
\end{itemize}
inception to its decline. Therefore, Loiseau recognizes a number of cycles based on royal households that ruled the sultanate between the thirteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The first of these *dawlas* was that of the Bahri sultans up to the fall of the house of Qalawun in 1382 CE. This *dawla* includes the sultans from the royal household of al-Salih Ayyub, followed by the mamluks and descendants of Qalawun (one of al-Salihs mamluks). This *dawla* reached its apogee under al-Nasir Muhammad, who temporarily changed the military society by allowing non-mamluks to access the highest military offices. Loiseau argues that the inability of the great amir Qawsun to seize the sultanate after al-Nasir Muhammads death led to the reinstating of a Qalawunid on the throne. He argues that the impotence of the amirs to decide upon one of their number to rule is not enough to explain the longevity of Qalawunid rule. Loiseau asserts that it was during al-Nasir Muhammadss reign that the power of the amirs was eroded through his cadastral survey (*rawk*), which redistributed the revenues from the land in favor of the sultan and his royal household. Furthermore, the loyalty of the army was transformed to the memory of al-Nasir Muhammadss father, Qalawun, under the effect of the demilitarization of the amiral hierarchy.

Loiseau argues that although al-Nasirss changes led to a decline of the first *dawla* with the collapse of the Qalawunids, by the end of the fourteenth century the regime had recovered its military identity under a new *dawla*. This *dawla* was established by Barquq, who had been one of the great amir Yalbugh al-Umaris mamluks. He was thus the first mamluk to rise to the throne who was not a member of either the Sabi or Qalawunid royal households that had ruled the sultanate to that date. Barquq re-mamlukized and re-militarized the sultanate and restored the authority of the sultan. Furthermore, Shaykh (r. 1412-1421 CE), Barsbay (r. 1422-1438 CE), Jaqmaq (r. 1438-1453 CE), and Inal (r. 1453-1461 CE) were four of the sultans with long and successful reigns who followed Barquq. They were all Barquqs mamluks and members of his royal household, and thus were a continuation of the *dawla* that he founded. Barquq was able to usher in his *dawla* by consolidating his power and importing fresh mamluks to supplant the now corrupted and de-militarized old regime and forming a new *‘asabiyya* (extreme solidarity) that

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108 Loiseau, *Les Mamelouks*, 96-97, 139-140.
gave the sultanate a new breath of life. In fact, the regime would have probably collapsed after the assassination of Yalbughā al-‘Umarī and the fall of the Qalāwūnids had it not been for the actions taken by Barqūq in establishing a new royal house and a renewal of the regime that was once again identified by the army and the mamlūks in particular.109 The military character of the sultanate and the prominence of the army is further exemplified after the rise of Barqūq due to the fact that although the individual sultans attempted to establish genealogical dynasties, they all failed. It was the amīrs who rose to seize the sultanate from the sons of sultans, particularly the holders of the office of atābak (the commander of the army). The sultanate was regarded, once again, as a military responsibility due to new external military threats similar to those faced by the Mamlūks during the thirteenth century. The sultanate was regarded as a military responsibility and thus it was in the order of things that a mamlūk should become the sultan.110

The third dawla was inaugurated by Qanṣūh al-Ghawrī, whose reign reignited a new ʿašabiyya, that of the Ashrafiyya mamlūks of Qaytbāy. However, this dawla pitted the demands of the sultan’s khushdāshiyya against his own mamlūks which left the memory of a greedy ruler with his contemporaries.111 This competition between the factions, namely the royal household and those of the amīrs reached its destructive zenith during this sultan’s reign, which resulted in the catastrophic outcome of the battle of Marj Dābiq. However, this struggle between the oligarchy of amīrs and the autocratic sultans was an ongoing one that permeated Mamlūk history with the amīrs sometimes reducing sultans to the point of impotency and others when the sultans were able to exert their will upon them and to increase their personal power through elevating their household in the center at the expense of the other households.112

Loiseau’s monograph provides a new analytical re-examination of Mamlūk history, with a focus on the mamlūks themselves and their roles in politics, the military, and society. He presents a picture of continuous change and transformation as the mamlūks adapted to their new surroundings and to the political and military challenges they faced. The author thus argues that

110 Loiseau, Les Mamelouks, 111.
111 Loiseau, Les Mamelouks, 135.
112 Loiseau, Les Mamelouks, 108-109, 135. Loiseau also uses statistics on the number of mosques built by the amīrs to exemplify the erosion of the power of the amīrs. See Loiseau, Les Mamelouks, 103-105.
rather than a singular decline, Mamlūk history should be viewed as a series of *dawlas* that followed one another. His ideas on the re-militarization of the mamlūk sultanate after its de-militarization (and decline) after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign strongly agree with some of the core concepts upon which the current study is attempting to shed light through the examination of the structure of the Mamlūk military through the Diversified Army Model and the Şāliḥi Mamlūk Model.

### 1.14 Henning Sievert

Henning Sievert’s *Der Herrscherwechsel im Mamlukensultanat: Historische und Historiographische Untersuchungen zu Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsī und Ibn Tağrībirdī* focuses on the sociopolitical situation in the Mamlūk sultanate during the fifteenth century by examining succession and the transfer of power during this period. He uses Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsī’s *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Ashraf Qāytbāy* as his primary source to study this phenomenon. This work is dedicated to Qāytbāy and his reign. However, Sievert states that there is a special focus in this text on the problem of succession and the transfer of power after the death of a sultan. This is a controversial topic, especially regarding the Mamlūk sultanate due to the fact that the principle of hereditary succession was abandoned by the Mamlūks, without replacing it with a formalized process for the transition of power. Thus, he states that the most important crisis in the realm of the Mamlūks was the conflicts that continuously recurred over the succession to the throne. With this theme in mind Sievert asks and sets out to answer the following question: how does a ruler legitimize himself and his rule? Although this book focuses on the years between the death of al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh and the accession of Qāytbāy, the author hopes that his work’s methodological considerations may be used to develop a model that can be used more broadly.

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114 Sievert, *Der Herrscherwechsel*, 1-2.

115 Sievert, *Der Herrscherwechsel*, 2.

116 Sievert, *Der Herrscherwechsel*, 1.

He also uses a number of other contemporary sources, such as Ibn Taghrī Birdī’s histories, to present a broader picture of the sociopolitical situation during the fifteenth century.\footnote{Sievert, \textit{Der Herrscherwechsel}, 4. For a discussion of the sources he uses and their authors see Sievert, \textit{Der Herrscherwechsel}, 5-7.}

Sievert first discusses the contents of the \textit{Tārīkh} which outlines Qāйтbāy’s early reign and the reigns of his successful predecessors. Abū Ḥāmid first gives a brief summary of the reigns of the Ayyūbid and Kipchak sultans before discussing the reigns of Qāйтbāy’s immediate predecessors, such as Barsbāy and Ināl. He extolls Barsbāy’s campaigns against Cyprus, the first conquests carried out in a century, and bemoans the ending of the naval campaigns during the reigns of subsequent rulers.\footnote{Sievert, \textit{Der Herrscherwechsel}, 35.} The reality on the ground was that the Mamlūk sultans were still portrayed as the defenders of Islam. Yet, rather than focusing on expansion, they sought to maintain the status quo. The reason for this reluctance to undertake expansionist adventures was the fact that the mamlūks, who were trained over long periods of time, were too precious to expend on such undertakings. This led to a policy that favored peaceful coexistence rather than expansionist wars.\footnote{Sievert, \textit{Der Herrscherwechsel}, 35.} This approach contrasted greatly with that of the Ottomans who sought legitimacy through waging \textit{jihād} against the Christians and who put themselves on the map especially after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 CE, thus forcing the Mamlūks to accept them as an equal power.\footnote{Sievert, \textit{Der Herrscherwechsel}, 36.}

Sievert argues that the long war and multiple defeats against Shāh Suwār, the rebellious vassal, led to the Mamlūks losing prestige. He questions at this point whether the Mamlūk sultanate was still a superpower in the region.\footnote{Sievert, \textit{Der Herrscherwechsel}, 36.} He states that the unpleasant details of the military campaigns against this rebel are not discussed by Abū Ḥāmid, who instead focuses of the financial expenses and the composition of the forces deployed during the campaigns and the sultan’s resoluteness in restoring order.\footnote{Sievert, \textit{Der Herrscherwechsel}, 36.} He mentions that Qāýtbāy always refused to negotiate with Shāh Suwār. If the sultan had opted to negotiate with Shāh Suwār, it would have meant that he
acknowledged him as an equal. The Tārīkh depicts Qāytbāy an exemplary ruler and the successor of other such sovereigns, such as Barsbāy. For example, Qāytbāy’s battle against Shāh Suwār’s rebellion, an “evil” and disruptive force, is compared to Barsbāy’s struggles against rebellious amīrs upon his accession to the throne. In this way, Abū Ḥāmid not only lauds the subject of his work, but also presents previous rulers as examples. Thus, this source could be viewed as a form of advice literature. The author, furthermore, presents Qāytbāy as having continued Barsbāy’s legacy. This sultan had started his career as one of Barsbāy’s mamlūks. These rulers, in the eyes of Abū Ḥāmid, reestablished the military traditions of the Mamlūk sultanate.

Sievert addresses the idea of decline that older studies on the Mamlūk period have put forward, especially for the Circassian period. He argues that had the Mamlūk sultanate been in a constant state of decline, then it would not have been able to maintain itself and survive for 250 years. He says that the factional struggles and the succession crises that plagued this era give the impression of a weakened and declining sultanate. However, Sievert argues that these succession struggles were a result of the very fabric of Mamlūk society and a part of multiple cycles of Mamlūk politics. Other scholars have blamed the economic decline of the Circassian period on the political instability that these conflicts created. However, Sievert argues that there were no links between this economic decline and the actions of the elites and the government. He states that it was a series of droughts and plagues that damaged crops and decimated up to one third of the population of Egypt and Syria that had the greater impact on the weakening of the

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124 Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 36.
125 Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 38.
126 Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 48-51.
127 Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 39-40. For more on the descriptions of the biographies of Qāytbāy’s predecessors see Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 40-44.
128 Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 38-39.
129 Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 2.
130 Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 4.
economy. Yet, despite his stance against the idea of a decline, Sievert does believe that the military capabilities of the Mamlūk army, specifically the Royal Mamlūks, declined.

Der Herrscherwechsel emphasizes the succession struggles during the fifteenth century, legitimacy, and the role of parties and factions in these events. Sievert states that the Mamlūks abandoned two out of the four “key political values” first introduced by Humphreys that medieval Muslim polities had to uphold to preserve political stability. These are “a dynastic succession” and “loyalty to a ruling family.” He argues that even in the case of the Qalāwūnid dynasty, most of the sultans, like the caliphs in Cairo, were “shadow sultans.” Thus, these shadow sultans “ruled” until the final takeover by the amīr Barqūq, and the beginning of a new political era. One can also view the sons of sultans, who succeeded their fathers for very brief periods during the fifteenth century before being deposed, as shadow sultans who held the throne until the most powerful amīr rose to claim it.

Sievert asserts that familial political attachment fell into the background as a result of the attachment to the Mamlūk household. The Circassian sultans used three modes of legitimacy: traditional (legitimacy through the Caliph and successors of the Ayyūbid tradition), Islamic (bay’a, Khuṭba), and the concept of the warrior king or heerkönig (i.e. the election of the most successful). Furthermore, these sultans had to quickly build up their household composed of their own mamlūks in order to secure their positions on the throne.

Sievert emphasizes the importance of the role of groups and factions in the power politics and succession crises of the fifteenth century in the Mamlūk sultanate. He states that every sultan first had to convert his household into a faction as an active network and then activate further

131 Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 57.
132 Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 4, 101, 135, 137.
133 Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 78.
134 Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 85.
135 Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 4.
136 Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 78.
137 Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 81.
138 Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 61. For more on Royal Mamlūks as the largest military body and household in the sultanate and their political importance in securing the ruler’s position see Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 61-67.
relations, such as his *khushdāshiyya*, and form alliances and a network of power through which he could attract further supporters and through which he could hold the sultanate’s ruling apparatus together.¹³⁹ The fifteenth century was relatively peaceful compared to the thirteenth century when the Mamlūks had seized power and legitimized themselves as the defenders of Islam from the Crusaders and the Mongols. It was through heavily integrated networks of factions and their supporters (both core members of the group and peripheral supporters)¹⁴⁰ that the sultans of the fifteenth century were able to rise to power and to maintain their rule and the unity of their realm.¹⁴¹ The author thus argues that the divide between the mamlūks and the rest of the population was not clear cut. He believes that social groups such as the *awlād al-nās* (the sons of mamlūks) and the ‘*ulama*’ were mediators between the mamlūks and indigenous circles whose support they sought to secure in exchange for protection against other mamlūk factions.¹⁴² He thus contends that there was a high degree of social “interlacing” between the various factions and social groups that formed the sultanate.¹⁴³ He further adds that the succession struggles and the fighting among the factions was not as destructive as it seemed. In fact, he agrees with Irwin’s statement that “fighting for the succession in Cairo was more in the nature of a voting by a show of swords than anything a medieval Englishman would recognize as a civil war. The street fighting in Cairo tended to be a matter of armed demonstrations rather than hard hand-to-hand, life or death fighting.” The participants in these aggressive martial displays rode around in armed demonstrations in a restricted part of the city and sometimes engaged in skirmishes. If the partisans of one group sensed that they were in the losing minority, they quickly switched sides until a final decision was reached. Such practices were a form of “restricted violence” and these struggles “can be seen as tending towards a form of consensus politics.”¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Sievert, *Der Herrscherwechsel*, 136.

¹⁴⁰ For more on the different types of factions, their members, and their objectives see Sievert, *Der Herrscherwechsel*, 97-100.

¹⁴¹ Sievert, *Der Herrscherwechsel*, 97, 100, 102

¹⁴² Sievert, *Der Herrscherwechsel*, 102.

¹⁴³ Sievert, *Der Herrscherwechsel*, 102.

Through his examination of Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsī’s *Tārīkh* and its discussion of the political history of the Circassian period, with an emphasis on maintaining order, succession crises, and legitimacy, Sievert makes a number of statements and draws some conclusions. Regarding the *Tārīkh*, he states that this work both praised Qāytbāy, to whom it was dedicated, and also lauded his illustrious predecessors, using them as exemplary rulers. It also omits or refocuses a lot of the unpleasant parts of these sultans’ reigns such as the problems with the Royal Mamlūks and Shāh Suwār’s rebellion. However, it does not omit or hide mentioning the succession struggles because they served to elevate Qāṭbāy’s path to power and placed him in a continuity of dignified and successful sultans, especially his *ustādh* Barsbāy.145

Sievert’s monograph also contributes to the thesis that some of the marginal members of a mamlūk household or faction had very artificial links and relationships with their patron and comrades. On the other hand, the majority of the mamlūks serving powerful amīrs and the sultan were in a patronage relationship with their masters. These connections always became clearer and more recognizable during a succession crisis.146

Sievert also argues that the function and role of the mamlūks had changed by the fifteenth century. They had come to power as warriors and defenders of Islam during a time of crisis in the thirteenth century. They were a warrior class led by a warrior king. By the fifteenth century the situation had changed and there were long periods of peace without any major external threats to the Mamlūk sultanate. The central authorities had to find new ways to generate income to supplement booty that had been generated by the Mamlūks’ wars and to counter the declining economy in order to maintain the status quo.147 Furthermore, there was no single faction within the sultanate whose leader wielded enough power to dominate the others. Thus, alliances and networks had to be formed during periods of succession. That is why the dynastic model was fully abandoned by this period.148 As chaotic as this succession model may seem, Sievert argues that the layers of networks and factions interlacing various elements of both military and civilian society created stability that gave it continuity. The author states that the mamlūks were not a

145 Sievert, *Der Herrscherwechsel*, 133-134.
146 Sievert, *Der Herrscherwechsel*, 134.
147 Sievert, *Der Herrscherwechsel*, 135.
“military aristocracy” by the fifteenth century. He says, citing Robert Irwin, that they formed a
“civil service” established in a martial manner and that the amīrs were more concerned with
political and administrative matters than military activities.¹⁴⁹ Sievert finally asserts that despite
seeming insecure and imbalanced because of the regular failure of attempts to replace it with a
dynastic succession, the political system of the Mamlūk sultanate and the “Circassian
succession” of the fifteenth century were stable.¹⁵⁰

1.2 Earlier Research on Mamlūk Military History

1.21 David Ayalon

The late David Ayalon is viewed as a pioneer in the field of Mamlūk history. His vast
work has become the foundation upon which many other scholars have built their own research
and theories. Ayalon’s work covers a wide variety of topics, not least of which is the area of
military history. As a matter of fact, this author’s articles stand out as being some of the most
thorough studies on the Mamlūk army to date.

Ayalon is one of the few scholars who has made the attempt to link the Mamlūk military
to earlier periods of Islamic history and trace its evolution up to the establishment of the Mamlūk
sultanate. His works on this topic include a number of articles relevant to the current study on the
formation and development of the institution of military slavery in the Muslim world.

“Preliminary Remarks on the Mamlūk Military Institution in Islam,”¹⁵¹ traces the development of
the Mamlūk institution to the early Islamic conquests. Ayalon argues that as early as the reign of
the second caliph, ‘Umar, there was a manpower shortage, which was remedied by recruiting
units from the defeated armies such as the Asāwira and the Hamrā’ al-Daylam and Islamized
freedmen of non-Arab origin known as mawālī.¹⁵² According to Ayalon, these first steps taken
by ‘Umar decided the direction that the Islamic military took both regarding its main source of

¹⁴⁹ Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 137. Also see Irwin, “Factions,” 228-246.
¹⁵⁰ Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 139.
¹⁵¹ David Ayalon, “Preliminary Remarks on the Mamlūk Military Institution in Islam,” in War, Technology, and
Society in the Middle East, eds. V.J. Parry and M.E. Yapp, (London: SOAS, 1975).
manpower (the east)\textsuperscript{153} and its structure. The institution of military slavery was the next step and developed out of this use of the *mawālī*\textsuperscript{154}.

Ayalon’s article “The Military Reforms of Caliph al-Mu‘taṣim: Their Background and Consequences,”\textsuperscript{155} discusses the rise and dominance of the mamlūk institution during and after the reign of the caliph al-Mu‘taṣim. The unreliability of the Arabs, the Abnā’, and the Khurāsānī troops during the late Umayyad and early ‘Abbāsid periods, and especially during the ‘Abbāsid Civil War had an impact on this ruler.\textsuperscript{156} Ayalon’s argument that this caliph’s practices led to the decline of the Arabs and other free units in the army and their replacement with military slaves is very important and relevant because the armies of the Muslim world were dominated by mamlūks during the millennium following al-Mu‘taṣim’s death.\textsuperscript{157}

Ayalon discusses the Seljūk period as an important transitional phase for the development of the mamlūk military institution between the ‘Abbāsid caliphate and the Zengid, Ayyūbid, and Mamlūk successor states in “The Mamlūks of the Seljūks: Islam’s Military Might at the Crossroads.”\textsuperscript{158} He states that upon assuming power, the Seljūks embraced the mamlūk institution and did not attempt to overthrow it.\textsuperscript{159} Ayalon gives the examples of the great wazīr Niţām al-Mulk and the caliph al-Muqtafī, who both kept strong mamlūk forces, to show the importance of the mamlūks as the core and mainstay of Islam’s military might.\textsuperscript{160} In this article, the author also points out the different paths taken by the Ottomans in Anatolia and the other Muslim polities regarding their elite military slaves. The Ottomans, due to their geographical proximity to the Balkans and to their European adversaries, developed and depended more on an elite slave infantry force recruited from the Balkans rather than one based on mounted Turks.

\textsuperscript{153} The units enumerated above had previously formed a part of the Sasanian armies, and a lot of the *mawālī* were easterners too.

\textsuperscript{154} Ayalon, “Preliminary Remarks,” 46.


\textsuperscript{156} Ayalon, “Military Reforms,” 1-22.

\textsuperscript{157} Ayalon, “Military Reforms,” 23.


\textsuperscript{159} Ayalon, “Mamlūks of the Seljūks,” 305.

\textsuperscript{160} Ayalon, “Mamlūks of the Seljūks,” 307-310.
which allowed them to transition more smoothly into the age of firearms. On the other hand, in the eastern branch of the Seljūk sultanate and its successor states in Syria and Egypt the military elite continued to be composed of mounted Turkic mamlūks.

In “From Ayyūbids to Mamlūks,” Ayalon investigates the transition from the sultanate of the Ayyūbids to that of the Mamlūks. This is an important article because it states that the mamlūk elements of the military were already very powerful under the Seljūks and the Ayyūbids and formed the most dominant and superior regiments of the military preceding the rise of the Mamlūk sultanate. In essence, what Ayalon is saying is that the impact of the Ayyūbids on the Mamlūk sultanate was very strong because the Ayyūbid armies were based on mamlūk units, which became the model upon which the Mamlūks built their own forces. Thus, according to Ayalon, there was a great deal of continuity between the armies of the Ayyūbids and the Mamlūks, who were “in no great hurry in making meaningful changes in the Ayyūbid military structure.”

In “Aspects of the Mamlūk Phenomenon: Ayyūbids, Kurds, and Turks,” Ayalon discusses the transitional period between the Ayyūbids and the Mamlūks. Here he shows that even in the Ayyūbid period there was a preference for Turks over Kurds in the army and in promotion. He describes how groups such as the Kurds and even free Turks and Mongols had to give way to the mamlūks as they grew in number and strength. The main point of this article is to show that there was not much room for advancement for non-mamlūks in the Mamlūk military society whose members were accepted “according to strict rules and criteria” such as having a patron (ustād) and comrades (khushdāshiyya) in slavery, education, training, and manumission.

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164 Ayalon, “From Ayyubids to Mamluks,” 50.
165 Ayalon, “From Ayyubids to Mamluks,” 56.
Ayalon published a series of articles in 1953 and 1954 entitled “Studies on the Structure of the Mamlûk Army I, II, and III.”168 These articles give a thorough overview of the regular Mamlûk army in both the Baḥrī/Turk and the Circassian periods. They discuss the different parts of the army, its organization, the size of its units, the quality of the various elements that formed the armed forces, and the different military ranks and positions in the Mamlûk sultanate. Part I focuses primarily on the Royal Mamlûks who formed the core and backbone of sultanate’s armies at all times. Within this category Ayalon distinguishes between the mamlûks of the ruling sultan (i.e., those purchased and trained by him and who were known as mushtarawât, ajlāb, or jübân)169 and those who passed into his service from previous sultans (mamālîk al-ṣalāṭîn, almuptaqađidima, qarānîs, or qarāniṣa) or from amīrs (sayfîyya) due to death or dismissal.170 In addition to these groups, there was also the khāṣṣakiyya171 who formed the sultan’s bodyguard and select retinue and were the most powerful and influential of the Royal Mamlûks.172 A major theme in this scholar’s discussion is the enmity between the different factions that formed the elite of the Mamlûk army. The mamlûks of previous sultans, who were purged by the new ruler, were especially hostile to the reigning sultan’s mamlûks who had replaced them and taken all the prominent positions. Ayalon is also of the opinion that the quality of the sultans’ purchased mamlûks, as soldiers, deteriorated greatly in the later period. Citing Ibn Taghrī Birdī, he states that in the Circassian period 100 qarānîs were able to rout 1,000 jübân and that even the lowest of black slaves could put them to flight. Ayalon also gives the examples of the jübân being

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169 The term mushtarawât was used in the early sultanate to refer to the mamlûks purchased by the sultans. However, it is unclear how early this term came into common usage. For instance, al-Ẓâhir Baybars’ mamlûks were referred to as al-Ẓâhiriyya. The terms jübân and ajlāb replace mushtarawât (though not entirely) during the Circassian period. See Ayalon, “Studies I,” 207.

170 Ayalon, “Studies I,” 204. Again, most of these terms appear in the sources from the later period of the Mamlûk sultanate.

171 Ayalon states that the members of the khāṣṣakiyya were generally Royal Mamlûks and from among the mushtarawât/jübân, but he states that there were exceptional cases in which even non-mamlûks were admitted into the ranks of the khāṣṣakiyya. See Ayalon, “Studies I,” 215.

routed by the small army of an amīr in one instance and a Cairo mob in the other. He attributes these defeats to “poor training and their ignorance of the arts of war.”\footnote{Ayalon, “Studies I,” 211.}

In “Studies on the Structure of the Mamlūk Army II” Ayalon discusses the other units that formed the regular army. These were the ḥalqa, the mamlūks of the amīrs, and the ʿtawāshiyya. Ayalon examines the ḥalqa, composed of freeborn cavalrymen, its prominence under the Ayyūbids and the early mamlūk sultans, and its decline due to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s rawk (cadastral survey and land redistribution), which resulted in its members losing much of their income.\footnote{Ayalon, “Studies II,” 448, 451-453.} According to Ayalon, the mamlūks of the amīrs were similar to those of the sultan, but they were generally not as well trained or equipped. The amīrs’ courts and retinues, which accompanied them everywhere, were a miniature version of the royal court.\footnote{Ayalon, “Studies II,” 459-461.} Due to a lack of clarity in the sources for the Mamlūk period, Ayalon discusses the ʿtawāshiyya in the Ayyūbid period to provide a clearer picture of this unit. According to the author, the ʿtawāshiyya seem to have been the regular cavalry that formed the Ayyūbid army.\footnote{Ayalon, “Studies II,” 464-465.} In the Mamlūk period it seems that the ʿtawāshī/ʿtawāshiyya did not change much. However, the term fell into disuse, and Ayalon raises the question whether the terms ʿtawāshiyya\footnote{The term ʿtawāshī or ʿtawāshiyya sometimes referred to eunuchs in the mamlūk period. For more on the usage of this term to refer to eunuchs see David Ayalon, “The Eunuchs in the Mamluk Sultanate,” in Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet, ed. Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (Jerusalem: Institute of Asian and African Studies, 1977) , 267-95; Carl Petry, “From Slaves to Benefactors: The Ḥabashīs of Mamlūk Cairo,” Sudanic Africa, 5 (1994), 57-66; Shaun Marmon, Eunuchs and Sacred Boundries in Islamic Society (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 41, 134. Yaacov Lev also comments on the term ʿtawāshiyya referring to eunuchs in the Mamlūk period however he says that he does not know how it came to acquire this meaning. He states that “ʿtawāshī” was primarily used in the Ayyūbid period to refer to a trained cavalryman and “when a certain tawashi happened to be an eunuch the sources take the trouble to state this congruity explicitly.” See Yaacov Lev, Saladin in Egypt (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 146.} and mamlūk could be seen as being synonymous in some cases.\footnote{Ayalon, “Studies II,” 465-466.}

In “Studies on the Structure of the Mamlūk Army III” Ayalon provides a detailed description of the offices in the mamlūk regime. He divides the article into two parts, one dealing with the offices held by the “men of the sword” (arbāb al-suyūf) and the other dealing with those
held by the “men of the pen” (arbāb al-qalam). He investigates what these offices were and how they evolved during the Mamlūk period.179

Ayalon also focuses a considerable amount of attention on the non-mamlūk elements in the Mamlūk military. His articles “The Wāfidiyya in the Mamlūk Kingdom,”180 and “The Auxiliary Forces of the Mamlūk Sultanate,”181 examine such military elements in the Mamlūk sultanate. In the first article he examines the place of the wāfidiyya (immigrants or refuge seekers) in the Mamlūk regime and army. He explains that some of these horsemen (i.e. Kurds and Khwārazmians) sought refuge in the Mamlūk sultanate as a result of the Mongol pressure upon other peoples as they advanced west. Groups of Mongols also fled to Egypt due to internal conflicts such as the one that erupted between the Ilkhanate and the Golden Horde. It is important to note that Ayalon states that the status of the wāfidiyya was subordinate to that of the mamlūks. There was a certain degree of discrimination against this group whose members, for the most part, were enrolled in the ḥalqa because they entered the sultanate in great numbers and were a potential threat to the ruling elite. The author enumerates and describes the various wāfidi groups that entered the Mamlūk sultanate, which were: the Khwārazmiyya (over 10,000 horsemen), the Shahrazūrī Kurds (3,000 horsemen), the Mongol wāfidīs under Baybars (over 3,000 horsemen), the Oirats during Kitbughā’s reign (10,000-18,000 horsemen), and the wāfidiyya after the Oirats (a few hundred horsemen).182 In the second article Ayalon discusses the different groups who formed the irregular forces that supplemented the Mamlūk army during campaigns and were charged with guarding and securing certain parts of the sultanate during times of peace. Chief among these groups were the Turkmen, the Kurds, and the Arabs (full nomads and semi-nomads).183 Overall, this article shows the importance of these groups in the Mamlūk sultanate as allies and subjects, but also highlights the dangers of tribal revolts and desertion to the enemies of the sultanate by these groups if the ruler and the central government did not maintain a strong hold on them.

Ayalon also dedicated some of his work to the late period of the Mamlūk sultanate. His article “The Circassians in the Mamlūk Kingdom”\(^\text{184}\) gives a thorough outline of the Circassian presence in the Mamlūk army and \textit{Gunpowder and Firearms in the Mamlūk Kingdom}\(^\text{185}\) explores the attitude of the mamlūks to firearms and the reasons why this weapon was, in Ayalon’s opinion, not widely adopted by the Mamlūk sultanate. In the first article, Ayalon examines the rise of the Circassians to power and the effect that they had upon the Mamlūk sultanate. They always formed the second largest group after the Turks, even in the early period of the sultanate and were the only group whom the latter feared.\(^\text{186}\) He concludes that the army lost its military efficiency during this period because of corruption and favoritism and also due to the fact that the Mamlūks did not have to face any major foes during the fourteenth century which allowed them to relax training and discipline and to focus their energies on internal factional struggles. In \textit{Gunpowder and Firearms}, Ayalon argues that the mamlūks disdained firearms because their use went against their traditional equestrian military culture. The use of firearms would have reduced the mamlūk military elite to mere foot soldiers and put them on equal standing with non-mamlūk elements that could just as easily be trained to use them.\(^\text{187}\) Therefore, Ayalon concludes that due to their stubborn resistance to adopting firearms the Mamlūks were eventually defeated by the more modern Ottoman army.\(^\text{188}\) Overall, Ayalon’s contribution to the study of Mamlūk military history is invaluable. He has laid the foundation upon which future scholars have based their research. However, his claims regarding the regression of the Mamlūk army and its refusal to adopt firearms have gone almost unchallenged.\(^\text{189}\)


\(^{185}\) David Ayalon, \textit{Gunpowder and Firearms in the Mamlūk Kingdom; A Challenge to a Mediaeval Society} (London: Vallentine, Mitchell, 1956).

\(^{186}\) Ayalon, “Circassians,” 137.


\(^{188}\) Ayalon, \textit{Gunpowder}, 77-82. This opinion is also shared by J.R. Partington in his book on incendiary weapons. This work focuses on global history rather than Mamlūk history with regard to gunpowder weapons. However, in one chapter entitled, “Gunpowder and Firearms in Muslim Lands,” the author discusses the early development and use of firearms in the Muslim world (including Spain and India in addition to the core Islamic regions) and mentions the Mamlūks on several occasions. Partington echoes Ayalon in his assertion that the mamlūks disdained firearms and had a negative attitude towards them. See J. R. Partington, \textit{A History of Greek Fire and Gunpowder} (Cambridge: W. Heffer and Sons, 1960), 189-207.

\(^{189}\) Robert Irwin has written an article on gunpowder and firearms in the Mamlūk sultanate in which he refutes Ayalon’s statement that the Mamlūks refused to adopt firearms. I will discuss this article below. See Robert Irwin,
1.22 Stephen Humphreys

Stephen Humphreys’ work focuses primarily on the Ayyūbids and the transitional period between them and the Mamlūks. The works he has produced that are relevant to the field of Mamlūk military history include a book, *From Saladin to the Mongols: The Ayyubids of Damascus, 1193-1260,* and two articles, “The Emergence of the Mamluk Army” and “The Emergence of the Mamluk Army (Conclusion).” In his monograph Humphreys presents a detailed study of the political and military situation in the Ayyūbid sultanate, especially in Syria. His discussion of the later part of the sultanate and the state of instability and decentralization with which the last effective Ayyūbid sultan, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb (1240-1249 CE) had to contend are very important because it is this ruler’s experiences that led him to depend more heavily on mamlūks in his army. In the articles Humphreys argues against Ayalon’s assertion that the Mamlūk military model was an unchanged continuation of the one established by the Ayyūbids, which is based on Ayalon’s advocacy of the unity of Egyptian history. Humphreys states that despite some similarities, the differences and contradictions between the two periods were even more glaring and cannot be ignored.

Humphreys mentions some of the obvious similarities between the armies of the Mamlūks and the Ayyūbids. He states that they both relied on slave soldiers (of mainly Turkic descent) to form the elite core of the army and were financed through the *iqtā’* land grant system. Additionally, both militaries excluded the Arabs from service in the regular army, but

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192 Stephen R. Humphreys, “The Emergence of the Mamluk Army (Conclusion),” *Studia Islamica,* 46 (1977).

utilized some bedouin tribes as auxiliaries. Furthermore, both armies depended on the fighting style and tactics of steppe warfare. Another similarity, according to Humphreys, is that both armies had a unit named the *halqa*.

However, according to Humphreys, the differences between the two militaries far outweigh the similarities. He states that the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk periods cannot be studied as one entity. As a matter of fact, he says that the two armies were operating in totally different socio-political milieus. He argues that unlike the Ayyūbid army which was decentralized and composed of several armies with their own command structures, the Mamlūk army stationed in Egypt and the provincial armies in Syria and Upper Egypt were all “yoked together in a common political and administrative framework.” Furthermore, unlike the various Ayyūbid armies which were all equal, the Mamlūk army was hierarchical with some units having more importance and prestige than others.

Humphreys also points out the differences in the size and composition of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk armies. The Mamlūk army under Baybars, for instance, was much larger than the combined Ayyūbid forces under Šalāḥ al-Dīn. Baybars’ army consisted of 40,000 regular troops whereas Šalāḥ al-Dīn’s forces numbered only 10,000 regulars (16,000 at the height of his career). This difference in size is also reflected within the elite units; the Royal Mamlūks often numbered over 5,000 men, whereas Šalāḥ al-Dīn’s *halqa šultāniyya* (his personal royal guard) never rose over 1,000 men. The Ayyūbid armies were formed around a nucleus of slave soldiers, but were mainly composed of freeborn troops and were binational with large Kurdish

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194 Humphreys, “Emergence,” 70.
195 Humphreys, “Emergence,” 70.
196 Humphreys, “Emergence,” 68.
197 Humphreys, “Emergence,” 69.
198 Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 147; Humphreys, “Emergence”, 70.
199 Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 147.
200 Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 8. One must take care when citing such numbers from the sources as their accuracy is often difficult to verify. However, in this instance the big difference between the size of the two armies does indicate a significant growth by Baybars’ reign.
201 Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 18.
202 Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 147.
203 Humphreys, *From Saladin*, 18.
and Turkic contingents. On the other hand, the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model made the recruitment of Turkic slave troops the “foundation of the army and the state” (although they continued to use Arabs, Kurds, and Turkmen as auxiliaries). Humphreys also points out that the ḥalqa differed in status and composition under the Ayyūbids and the Mamlūks. Under the former, it formed the elite bodyguard of the sultan, whereas under the latter it constituted a second tier unit.

Another important difference noted by Humphreys is the organization of the officer corps. The individual Ayyūbid armies were much smaller than the Mamlūk army and thus their organization and the distribution of officer ranks was much simpler and was often improvised during campaigns. Furthermore, there was no graduation of rank in the Ayyūbīd army and no correlation between holding a high rank in the army and having a position at the royal court. On the other hand, Humphreys points out that “the Mamluk army developed a most striking and complex hierarchy of ranks, offices, and troop subdivisions.” A three-tiered system for officer ranks was established, which was closely coordinated with a graduated series of offices and posts in the court. He also asserts that unlike the Mamlūk army in which offices were attained through merit, the officer corps of the Ayyūbīd army had a hereditary character.

Humphreys also addresses the assertions made by others regarding the changes wrought by al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb on the Ayyūbīd army, which may have created the right conditions for the rise of the Mamlūk sultanate after his death. He did “Turkify” the army through purchasing more mamlūks of Turkic origin than his predecessors, and he also centralized it along with the whole Ayyūbīd state. However, Humphreys argues that despite his innovations, this sultan did not

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204 It was mentioned earlier that Humphreys notes that a similarity between the militaries of the Ayyūbīds and the Mamlūks was that their armies were centered on a core of Turkic mamlūks. But here, he states that the Ayyūbīd regular army, as a whole, was bi-national. See Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 149; Humphreys, From Saladin, 28-29.

205 Humphreys, “Emergence,” 68.

206 Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 149.

207 Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 148.

208 Humphreys, “Emergence,” 73-87.

209 Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 148.

210 Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 148.

211 Humphreys, From Saladin, 8.
radically change the organization of the army or the officer corps. He also states that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s elite Baḥriyya and Jamdāriyya corps formed only about ten percent of his army.\footnote{212 Humphreys, “Emergence,” 94-98.}

\subsection*{1.23 Amalia Levanoni}


In “The Mamlūks’ Ascent to Power in Egypt,” Levanoni agrees with Humphreys’ view regarding the mamlūks’ rise to power and builds on this argument. Like Humphreys, she attributes the conditions that allowed the mamlūks to seize power to the policies of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb. She states that this sultan created a new pattern of rulership in order to solidify his position and enhance his authority after he had been betrayed by most of his army, captured, and imprisoned in Karak in 1240 CE.\footnote{217 Levanoni, “Mamluks’ Ascent,” 123.} After his rise to power, he altered the structure and composition of the army to create a force that was loyal solely to him.\footnote{218 Levanoni, “Mamluks’ Ascent,” 124.} Earlier Ayyūbid sultans had depended on the ḥalqa, the amīrs, their relatives, and mamlūks to form their armies. Al-Ṣāliḥ
Ayyūb, on the other hand, created an army that was based predominantly on mamlûks because only his mamlûks had remained loyal to him when he suffered his worst setback in 1240 CE.\textsuperscript{219}

As a result of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s new military organization, the Baḥrī regiment was created, which was primarily composed of mamlûks of Turkic origin. The sultan favored his mamlûks over all others and gave them the best and largest \textit{iqtāʾāt}. Thus, the balance of power in the Ayyūbid army was broken with most of it concentrated in the hands of the mamlûks, which left no one who could effectively challenge them when they decided to seize power shortly after the sultan’s death.\textsuperscript{220} Levanoni also points out that the mamlûks learned from their patron who set patterns that they imitated. First of all, he centralized power and secondly he undermined and even shed the blood of rival Ayyūbids who threatened his rule. These were the precedents upon which the mamlûks based their actions when they deposed and murdered al-Ṣāliḥ’s son, Tūrānshāh.\textsuperscript{221}

“Awlad al-Nas in the Mamluk Army during the Bahri Period” is pertinent to this study because in this article Levanoni argues that the numbers of \textit{awlād al-nās} in the army increased greatly towards the end of the Bahrī period due to a deliberate policy of the later Qalāwūnids. She states that those among the sons of the mamlûks who were trained to be soldiers were not allowed to join the mamlûk units, were restricted to the inferior \textit{ḥalqa}, rarely attained high ranks in the army, and held inferior \textit{iqtāʾāt}.\textsuperscript{222} Levanoni argues that the numbers of the sons of mamlûks in the army increased during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign and during the struggles that ensued after his death. In contrast to Baybars and Qalāwūn under whom only eleven of the \textit{awlād al-nās} were granted the rank of amīr, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad promoted ninety-three sons of mamlûks (nine of whom attained the highest rank of Amīr of One Hundred) to solidify his rule by creating a new elite.\textsuperscript{223} Furthermore, between 1341 CE – 1382 CE there were 257 amīrs who were from among the \textit{awlād al-nās}.\textsuperscript{224} Levanoni explains\textsuperscript{225} that Timur’s wars devastated the

\textsuperscript{219} Levanoni, “Mamluks’ Ascent,” 122.

\textsuperscript{220} Levanoni, “Mamluks’ Ascent,” 124-125.

\textsuperscript{221} Levanoni, “Mamluks’ Ascent,” 127.

\textsuperscript{222} Levanoni, “Awlad al-Nas,” 96-97.

\textsuperscript{223} Levanoni, “Awlad al-Nas,” 97.

\textsuperscript{224} Levanoni, “Awlad al-Nas,” 100.
territories of the Golden Horde, which affected the supply of fresh mamlūks of Turkic origin and led to a heavier influx of Circassian mamlūks, which increased the tension between the two ethnic groups, resulting in a power struggle. Thus, the awlād al-nāṣ of Turkic origin were increasingly included in the army and promoted to higher ranks in order to bolster the Turkic element against the growing power of the Circassians.

In “Rank-and-File Mamluks versus Amirs: New Norms in the Mamluk Military Institutions” Levanoni argues that there was a total breakdown of discipline in the Mamlūk army in the later period as a consequence of which the rank and file mamlūks, especially the julbān, became the dominant force in the sultanate. She states that the decline of order, discipline, and military efficiency in the Mamlūk army was a long and gradual process that started during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s third reign. She asserts that this sultan bolstered himself against the amīrs who had removed him from power twice by buying the loyalty of the mamlūks and discarding the system of strict discipline, hard training, and slow advancement that had been established by the founders of the sultanate. The author argues that these policies blurred the lines that had separated the amīrs and sultans from the rest of the mamlūks and emboldened the latter group to make demands, disobey their superiors, and to play a more active role in internal politics without suffering any major consequences for their unruly and rebellious behavior. In this article Levanoni strongly supports the notion that the Mamlūk army lost its military capabilities early in the history of the sultanate and she argues that this downturn started with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s changes.

Levanoni’s 1995 monograph, A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn (1310-1341), is arguably her most important work. In it she

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225 Ayalon had previously discussed the idea of the dwindling of the supply of Kipchaks due to Timur’s devastation of the territories of the Golden Horde in “The Circassians in the Mamluk Kingdom,” 135-136.
discusses the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and explains its effects on the future of the Mamlūk sultanate. A great deal of her discussion is focused on how the army was transformed during this sultan’s reign. Levanoni states that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad broke with “mamlūk traditions” in order to consolidate his reign and secure his position upon his third accession to the throne due to his experiences during his first two reigns.\textsuperscript{231} The author mentions that the sultan first purged his father’s and brother’s mamlūks (the Manṣūriyya and Ashrafiyya respectively) and promoted large numbers of his own followers to their positions.\textsuperscript{232} He also discarded mamlūk traditions and fast-tracked his mamlūks through the training process and was very permissive with their promotion and advancement. He also recruited and promoted non-mamlūks and awlād al-nās in great numbers.\textsuperscript{233} According to Levanoni, these practices led to the disintegration of loyalty and discipline in the army. She gives several detailed examples of the effects of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s practices such as the loss of the ḥalqa’s military capabilities, corruption, and endless feuds and power struggles among the factions at court.\textsuperscript{234}

On the basis of these points, Levanoni concludes that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s break with mamlūk traditions had detrimental effects on the sultanate and the army. She argues that the mamlūks deteriorated as a military force after this sultan’s reign and that “the mamluks' professional excellence, their unswerving loyalty to their master, and their undisputed solidarity with their peers were supplanted by rampant opportunism and blatant materialism.”\textsuperscript{235} Despite concluding that the Mamlūk army lost its military vigor during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign, Levanoni ends her book with a question that undermines her whole argument: “If, as the present study has tried to show, the Mamluk system lost its military vigour at a relatively early stage, how did it survive for as long as it did.”\textsuperscript{236}

\textsuperscript{231} Levanoni, \textit{Turning Point}, 28.
\textsuperscript{232} Levanoni, \textit{Turning Point}, 28-30.
\textsuperscript{233} Levanoni, \textit{Turning Point}, 34-80.
\textsuperscript{234} Levanoni, \textit{Turning Point}, 81-132.
\textsuperscript{235} Levanoni, \textit{Turning Point}, 197.
\textsuperscript{236} Levanoni, \textit{Turning Point}, 199.
1.24 Reuven Amitai-Preiss

Another important scholar in the field of Mamlūk military history is Reuven Amitai-Preiss. He focuses a significant amount of his work on the early Mamlūk military and the composition of the Mamlūk army during the Mamlūk-Ilkhanid war. His major work on this topic, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamlūk-İlkhanid War, 1260-1281*, focuses on the early part of this conflict until 1281 CE. The various articles by this scholar relevant to this study address a number of themes including the rise and fall of the Mamlūk institution, the North Syrian frontier between the Mamlūks and the Mongols, the interaction between the sedentary world and the Eurasian nomads, and the Mamlūk officer class in the early period of the sultanate.

In his article on the rise and fall of the Mamlūk institution, Amitai-Preiss summarizes Ayalon’s contributions to the field of Mamlūk history. The article is divided into three sections that are of concern to us here: 1) the development of the Mamlūk institution in early Islamic society; 2) the Ayyūbid period; and 3) the Mamlūk sultanate. Amitai-Preiss mentions and supports Ayalon’s most important ideas such as the policies of the Rāshidūn and Umayyad caliphs that allowed for the early development of a form of military slavery that eventually led to the formalization of the mamlūk institution, the prominence of the Turkic mamlūks in the

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242 There is a small section on the Ottoman period (page 29) that falls outside the scope of this study.
Ayyūbid armies, the organization and composition of the Mamlūk army, and most importantly the fall of the Mamlūk sultanate due to economic, political, and social factors and especially to the decline in the quality of the army and the refusal of the mamlūks to adopt firearms.

Following in the footsteps of David Ayalon, Amitai-Preiss, produced some important work on the relations between the Mamlūks and the Ilkhanids. *Mongols and Mamluks* delivers a detailed account and analysis of the political and military history of the first two decades of the Mamlūk-Ilkhanid War. In this book the author outlines the historical background that led to the hostilities between the two sides; he analyzes the Mamlūk victory at the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt in 1261 CE, which led to the consolidation of power in the hands of the Baḥrī Mamlūks and the rise of Baybars. He discusses Baybars’s political and military efforts to strengthen the position of the Mamlūks against the Mongols and the consolidation and centralization of power within the sultanate, and ultimately his victory, even after death, at the second Battle of Ḥimṣ in 1281 CE. Amitai-Preiss, after a comparison of the Mamlūk and Mongol armies, concludes that the Mamlūks defeated the Mongols on most occasions because they were superior and because their army was a professional one, unlike the Ilkhanid army which was a people’s army. In essence, what Amitai-Preiss asserts is that the Mamlūks emerged victorious throughout this conflict because their war effort far surpassed that of the Mongols both militarily and diplomatically.

Amitai-Preiss also published an article on the Mamlūk-Ilkhanid conflict entitled: “Northern Syria between the Mongols and Mamluks: political boundary, military frontier, and ethnic affinities.” Here the author discusses the frontier strategy that Baybars developed along the Euphrates, which stayed in place for the duration of the war with the Ilkhanids (1260 - 1323

244 Amitai-Preiss, “Rise and Fall,” 23.
246 He discusses the rise of Genghis Khan, his conquests and his successors. He also gives an account of the formation of the Bahriyya regiment, the rise of its members to prominence, and the foundation of the Mamlūk sultanate. Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 1-25.
CE), after the Mongols were defeated at the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt and the first Battle of Ḥimṣ in 1260 CE. This frontier strategy revolved around maintaining a string of fortresses and castles along the border and in the hinterland, the use of the bedouin of Syria (as scouts, couriers, border guards, and raiders), frequent cross-border attacks, espionage, the destruction of grasslands prior to Mongol incursions, and decisive action in response to even the slightest rumor of a Mongol attack. Amitai-Preiss also points out that the most precarious part of the frontier was along the border with Lesser Armenia, where there was no major geographical obstacle for the Mongols to traverse. The Mamlūks fortified and strengthened the towns and castles in this area and launched repeated attacks across the frontier in order to forestall any potential Mongol attacks through this region. Amitai-Preiss argues that even after the collapse of the Ilkhanate in 1335 CE, the Mamlūks, now the dominant power in the region, expanded to the east and northeast and established a new and more sophisticated frontier system that lasted until the collapse of their sultanate in 1516 CE.

Amitai-Preiss’ article, “Mamluks of Mongol Origin and Their Role in Early Mamluk Political Life,” discusses the role of Mongol-Mamlūks in the military and the politics of the Mamlük sultanate. He argues that that there was a large number of Mongol-Mamlūks in the sultanate and lists six of the most prominent among them and briefly describes the circumstances under which they entered the sultanate and began their careers. Amitai-Preiss also argues that these Mongol-Mamlūks were more politically and militarily prominent and influential than the Mongol wāfidiyya who entered the sultanate before 1301 CE. This author mentions Kitbūghā’s failed attempt to consolidate his position by admitting 10,000 (or 18,000)...

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251 Amitai-Preiss, “Northern Syria,” 132.
255 The author uses this term in his article to refer to mamlūks of Mongol origin.
257 Their careers saw them rise to the ranks of Amīr of One Hundred, to important governorships, to important posts in the sultan’s court and in his inner circle, or to the position of sultan in the case of Kitbūghā. Amitai-Preiss, “Mamluks of Mongol Origin,” 120-126.
Oirat Mongols to the sultanate after seizing the throne from al-Nāṣir Mūḥammad as an example of the political and military influence some of the Mongol-Mamlūks wielded. He also mentions the example of Qipchāq, who defected to the Ilkhanids after the Battle of Wādī al-Khazindār in 1299 CE, was named governor of Damascus, and then returned to the Mamlūk fold and was reconciled with the sultan when the Mongols withdrew. Qipchāq’s case is an example of Mamlūk loyalty/solidarity, which was developed during his youth and was stronger than his loyalty to his ethnicity. On the other hand, the example of Salār, another Oirat Mongol, who rose to prominence under al-Manṣūr Lājīn (r. 1297-1299 CE) and had his family brought into the sultanate, shows familial, rather than ethnic, solidarity. Amitai-Preiss concludes that when dealing with the Mongol-Mamlūks one should be aware that their political impact can be viewed on several levels and that they may have had multiple identities and loyalties.

Amitai-Preiss has also produced some of the most important work after David Ayalon on the Mamlūk officer class. He has written two articles on this topic. In the first article, “The Mamluk Officer Class during the Reign of Sultan Baybars,” Amitai-Preiss examines the amīrs during the reign of Baybars I and essentially expands on previous work by Humphreys and Irwin. His aim is to assess the strength of the various factions and where they stood relative to the sultan. After the victory at ‘Ayn Jālūt, the Baḥriyya emerged as the dominant faction within the army and they raised Baybars to the throne. Amitai-Preiss lists several of the Şāliḥiyya who were granted high positions early on in Baybars’ reign, showing the strong links between the sultan and his khushdāshiyya. In addition to his comrades, Baybars also depended on his large and powerful regiment of purchased mamlūks, the Žāhiriyya. Citing F.M. Abel’s

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260 Amitai-Preiss, “Mamluks of Mongol Origin,” 133.
262 Identities such as: Mongol, mamlūk, tribal, family etc. Amitai-Preiss, “Mamluks of Mongol Origin,” 136.
264 Amitai-Preiss, “Mamluk Officer,” 270.
266 Amitai-Preiss, “Mamluk Officer,” 274.
study, the author goes on to describe Baybars’ distribution of the huge tracts of land that fell into his hands after the conquests of Caesarea, Arsuf and Haifa in 1265 CE as rewards to his followers not as iqṭā’ but as milk. In all, Amitai-Preiss states that thirty seven villages were distributed among sixty one amirs, most of whom he was able to identify and arrange into groups based on their khushdāshiyya. He concludes that the most powerful and prominent group on this list were the Šāliḥiyya, Baybars’ comrades, who took precedence over the sultan’s own mamlūks, the Žāhirīyya, because most of them were still junior officers at this point due to the mamlūks’ long and arduous process of training and promotion. Furthermore, the presence of Kurdish and wāfidi amirs and those of obscure origins shows that Baybars rewarded his followers based on competence and loyalty. Nevertheless, most of those rewarded were mamlūks; out of sixty-one amirs on the list only eleven were of non-mamlūk origin.

In his second article, “The Remaking of the Military Elite of Mamlūk Egypt by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn,” the author states that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was able to consolidate his rule during his third reign by eliminating real, potential, and even imaginary rivals. Thus, he destroyed his father’s Manṣūriyya and advanced to high positions men upon whom he could depend. Amitai-Preiss uses a roster of the senior amirs from the year 1313 to exemplify this purge in process. The roster lists twenty-two Amirs of One Hundred from various factions. Fifteen to seventeen of these positions were opened up for al-Nāṣir’s men through arrests, exiles, and natural attrition. He concludes that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad advanced his own supporters and

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267 F.M. Abel discusses this distribution of land as mulk before Amitai-Preiss and in more detail. See F.M. Abel, “La liste de donations de Baibars d’après la charte de 663 H. (1265),” JPOS, 19 (1939), 38-44.

268 Amitai-Preiss, “Mamluk Officer,” 281-282.

269 Nineteen Šāliḥiyya, nine Žāhirīyya, seven wāfidiyya, three Kurds, three Syrian amirs, nine miscellaneous, and thirteen whose origin cannot be identified. Amitai-Preiss, “Mamluk Officer,” 283-285.

270 Amitai-Preiss, “Mamluk Officer,” 286-289.


272 Amitai-Preiss, “Remaking,” 145.

273 This roster is found in Nuzhat al-Malik wa al-Mamlūk fi Mukhtāṣar Sīrat man Waliya Miṣr min al-Mulūk, by al-Ḥasan b. ′Abd Allāh al-Ṣafadī, from a passage that describes the preparation of the Egyptian army to march out to meet a potential Mongol attack. See footnote 4 in Amitai-Preiss, “Remaking,” 145.

274 Four were Manṣūriyya, two were Ḥusāmiyya, six were Nāṣirīyya, eight were unaffiliated with major mamlūk factions, and two were of unknown origin. Amitai-Preiss, “Remaking,” 148.

weakened other groups to make space for them and that he raised a large number of unaffiliated amīrs who had no ties with his rivals and depended on him for their good fortune.²⁷⁶

1.3 Other Scholarship

In this section I will discuss other works in the field of Mamlūk history by scholars who may have not written as many books and articles on the military as the ones mentioned above, but are not any less important. Here, I will also discuss general histories of this era, or studies focused on certain periods or rulers of the Mamlūk sultanate which touch tangentially upon the military history of the Mamlūk sultanate produced by both western and Arabic scholars.

Donald Little’s book entitled An Introduction to Mamluk Historiography²⁷⁷ and his chapter in The Cambridge History of Egypt, “Historiography of the Ayyubid and Mamluk Epochs,”²⁷⁸ are both very important historiographical studies on the primary sources of the Mamlūk period. In his book he provides a comprehensive overview and analysis of the sources on the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and their authors. This monograph is divided into two parts; in the first part Little covers the annalistic sources for al-Nāṣir’s reign. He discusses the contemporary Egyptian and Syrian historians and those who were writing during later periods in separate subsections. In the second section he discusses the biographical sources for al-Nāṣir’s reign. In his chapter in The Cambridge History of Egypt, Little outlines and discusses the most important sources and their authors for the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk sultanates. Although this scholar’s work is not directly related to military history, it is important because it provides a good overview and summary of the primary sources from the Mamlūk period.

In “The Fall of ʿAkkā in 690/1291: The Muslim Version,”²⁷⁹ Little, using Mamlūk sources, discusses the reason for the Mamlūk attack on Acre (the last major Frankish stronghold

²⁷⁶ Amitai-Preiss, “Remaking,” 158.
in the Levant), the siege, and its final outcome, and in the process provides important
information and analysis on this military episode in Mamluk history. This chapter also provides a
perspective on the efficiency and performance of the Mamluk army after the deaths of Baybars
and Qalāwūn through its operations during this siege.

Studies on military slavery in the Muslim world by Patricia Crone280 and Daniel Pipes281
do not focus solely on the Mamluk period though they discuss it in great detail. Crone argues that
the ascendance of the military slaves was due to the failure of the Muslim military
aristocracies282 and the fact that “Islam lacked a form of settled government to which transition
could have been made [by incoming tribes and military slaves].”283 She states that the difficulty
of mobilizing and controlling the early tribal armies of the Rāshidūn and Umayyad periods and
the rarity of volunteers compelled the caliphs and their governors to utilize the non-Arab military
élites284 of the conquered regions and prisoners of war in large numbers.285 Crone adds that with
the erosion of the tribal military system, rulers became increasingly dependent on their slaves
and freedmen and formed private armies and retinues composed of these non-Arabs.286 This
scholar also discusses a transitional period during the early ‘Abbāsid caliphate that saw the rise
of a new military elite, which emerged in Khurāsān as a result of the fusion between Arab troops
and the local population. She states that, in essence, the early ‘Abbāsids fused Sasanid traditions
with those of Islam.287 However, Crone argues that this new military aristocracy, the abnā’ al-
dawla (sons of the dynasty), only gained support and power in and around Baghdad and were
soon defeated in the ‘Abbāsid Civil War leaving the Muslim world without a military elite.288

282 Crone, Slaves on Horses, 61-73.
283 Crone, Slaves on Horses, 91.
284 In the early period these non-Arabs became clients of the Arab tribes. For example, the Persian Asāwīra turned
themselves into a sub-tribe of the Tamīn. Crone, Slaves on Horses, 38.
286 Crone, Slaves on Horses, 49-55.
287 Crone, Slaves on Horses, 61-62.
288 With the exception of Khurāsān which had an Iranian aristocracy. Crone, Slaves on Horses, 69.
According to Crone this vacuum could only be filled with the dependents of the caliphs.\textsuperscript{289} It was under these circumstances that the mamlūk system of military slavery arose, which allowed the ‘Abbāsids to combine the various aspects of the previous militaries, primarily servile status, dependence, and alien origin. Thus, she states that “the classical mamlūk is characterized by both personal dependence and cultural dissociation.”\textsuperscript{290} Finally, Crone discusses the volatile nature of slave armies. She mentions that control, order, and discipline in such a force depended fully on the personality and strength of the ruler. In her view the mamlūk armies had “all the virtues of elite troops at their best, but all the vices of private servants and foreign mercenaries at their worst,” and “a well-controlled mamlūk army might have kept the unitary state intact, but an uncontrollable one could not fail to bring about its total disintegration,” as was the case with the ‘Abbāsids.\textsuperscript{291}

In \textit{Slave Soldiers and Islam} Daniel Pipes discusses the development of the institution of military slavery in the pre-modern Muslim world from the inception of Islam until the establishment of the Islamic army based on military slavery in the early ninth century under al-Mu‘taṣīm. This author argues that slaves formed an important part of the nascent Islamic community and were not excluded from military service because of the need for manpower in the early umma. Thus, he states that this institution’s origins may be traced to the Battle of Badr in 624 CE.\textsuperscript{292} He also argues that it was the conditions present in the Muslim world that allowed for the establishment and longevity of the institution of military slavery. One of the important conditions was the invention of the metal stirrup, which caused a redistribution of military power from the settled and civilized people to barbarians inhabiting the marginal regions and a shift from primarily infantry-based armies to cavalry forces.\textsuperscript{293} Pipes also says that the nature of Islamic civilization allowed for non-Muslim ideas and practices to be absorbed and adopted by the Muslims, the most relevant example being that of the Sogdians\textsuperscript{294} who acquired young boys.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{289} Crone, \textit{Slaves on Horses}, 69.
\textsuperscript{290} Crone, \textit{Slaves on Horses}, 74.
\textsuperscript{291} Crone, \textit{Slaves on Horses}, 84.
\textsuperscript{293} Pipes, \textit{Slave Soldiers}, 55-57.
\textsuperscript{294} The Iranian world probably influenced Islam the most with regard to this practice. See Pipes, \textit{Slave Soldiers}, 162-164.
\end{flushleft}
whom they trained to be soldiers to guard their caravans, trade routes, and cities. Another example he mentions is that of the Sasanian practice of settling war captives on their territories and enrolling them into their armed forces because they were “endowed with a physical vigor superior to the degenerate Iranian peasants.”

He also argues that the Arab (and Muslim) subjects became disillusioned and relinquished their role in politics and the army because “political and military realities virtually never met the ideals established by Islam,” leaving a power vacuum that was filled with troops from marginal areas who came to dominate the whole Muslim world. Pipes discusses the presence of slave soldiers in the armies of Islam prior to the establishment of the institution of military slavery during the reigns of the caliphs al-Ma’mūn and his successor al-Mu’taṣīm. He states that the professionalization of the army under the ‘Abbāsids was conducive to the systematization of the institution of military slavery. Pipes concludes that the institution of military slavery emerged because of a need for manpower by the rulers of the Muslim world and because its subjects relinquished power, thus allowing outsiders to fill this power vacuum and take over. These foreign troops became unreliable or lost their military vigor, thus prompting the need for new batches of marginal area troops to reestablish some kind of control and creating a cycle of importation of troops from the periphery.

Several Arab scholars studied the Mamlūk army. Aḥmad ‘Adwān’s book al-‘Askariyya al-Islāmiyya fī al-‘Aṣr al-Mamlūkī is a detailed overview of the Mamlūk army during the early and late periods of the sultanate. The author examines the organization, composition, performance, and transformation of the army throughout the period of the sultanate. Muṣṭafā Najīb’s monograph Tanẓīm al-Jaysh al-Mamlūkī fī ‘Ahd al-Sulṭān al-Ghūrī discusses the

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295 Pipes, Slave Soldiers, 59-60, 162-164
296 Pipes, Slave Soldiers, 62-76.
297 Pipes, Slave Soldiers, 146-158.
298 During the earlier periods such an institution could not develop because the armies of the conquests and the Umayyads were tribal in nature and served as a kind of militia, but not as a professional army. Pipes, Slave Soldiers, 148-149.
299 Pipes, Slave Soldiers, 148-149.
300 Pipes, Slave Soldiers, 193-194.
organization of the military under Qānṣuh al-Ghawrī. This study presents a good overview of the elements of the Mamlūk army, especially the new regiments created by this sultan, in the last years of the sultanate. Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Karīm Sulaymān’s book al- ‘Unṣuriyya wa Atharuhā fī al-Jaysh al-Mamlūkī examines the various ethnic groups of the early Mamlūk army and racial discrimination within its ranks. He discusses the paramount position of the Kipchak Turks in the military and the discrimination faced by the other groups including the Khwārazmian, Kurdish, Mongol, and Seljūk Turkmen wāfidiyya. He also dedicates a significant portion of this book to discussing and analyzing the power struggle between the Turks and the Circassians that led to the eventual dominance of the latter group towards the end of the fourteenth century. Akram Ḥasan ‘Ulabī’s monograph Maʿārik al-Mughūl al-Kubrā fī Bilād al-Shām discusses four of the major battles that the Mamlūks fought against the Mongols in Syria during the Mamlūk-Ilkhanid war. He gives a detailed account of these battles, the armies that were involved, and analyzes the significance of these battles and the performance of the Mamlūk army. All of these studies deal directly with aspects of the Mamlūk military such as its organization, factionalism, and the importance of ethnic identity, all of which are themes that will be discussed in this study.

Robert Irwin gives an overview of the early Mamlūk period in The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate, 1250-1382. This monograph provides a comprehensive look at all of the major events, the important individuals, and the military of this period. He also discusses the rise and importance of the institution of military slavery in the Islamic world, the internal and external conditions under which the Mamlūk sultanate
emerged, the rigorous training regimen and slow advancement system established by the Mamlûks, and the one-generational nature of the Mamlûk elite.

One can argue that “Gunpowder and Firearms in the Mamluk Sultanate Reconsidered,” Irwin’s response to Ayalon’s earlier work *Gunpowder and Firearms in the Mamlûk Kingdom*, is more important than the monograph mentioned above with respect to this study. In it Irwin takes a strong stance against the assertions of David Ayalon regarding the attitude of the Mamlûks towards firearms. He disagrees with Ayalon’s argument that the Mamlûks’ refusal to adopt firearms had a negative impact on their military capabilities and resulted in their inability to make the transition from a feudal military elite to one that was more accepting of modern styles of warfare. Irwin argues that this negative attitude to gunpowder weapons on the part of the Mamlûks is very peculiar because other military aristocracies in Europe, China, Japan, and Circassia all eagerly adopted firearms. As a matter of fact, he states that in the West firearms became “an extension of chivalry rather than its antithesis.”

Irwin argues that the Mamlûks were not far behind their European and Ottoman counterparts in adopting or using firearms. He states that artillery was first used by both Europeans and Muslims in sieges and in field battles around the same time. Irwin also points out that there were units in the Mamlûk army that were armed with handguns from the late fifteenth century onward, giving the example of a unit of *awlâd al-nâs* that was armed with

309 The internal conditions caused by al-Ṣâliḥ Ayyûb’s policy of recruiting large numbers of Turkic mamlûks and promoting them to powerful positions at the expense of the other groups in the army and the external threat posed by the Crusader States and the Mongols. See Irwin, *Middle East*, 12-19.


311 Full citation in note 65.

312 Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 117.


314 Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 118.

315 In Europe the first successful use of canons as field artillery was at the Battles of Castillion (1453 CE), Ravenna (1512 CE), and Marignano (1515 CE), and handguns were first employed successfully by the Hussites and the Swiss in the 1420’s and 1430’s, respectively. Likewise, in the Muslim world firearms were successfully deployed in the Battles of Bashkent (1473 CE), Chaldirân (1514 CE), Marj Dābiq (1516 CE), and Raydâniyya (1517 CE). See Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 123.
arquebuses and deployed to fight against the Ottomans\textsuperscript{316} in 1490 CE.\textsuperscript{317} Irwin adds that the mamli\textluk military elite did not adopt early firearms because the composite re-curved bow was a more efficient weapon. He argues that the composite bow had a longer range, was more accurate, had a more powerful penetrating force, and had a higher rate of fire than the arquebus.\textsuperscript{318} Irwin also argues that even in the sixteenth century the mounted archer had an advantage over musket-armed infantry because of his mobility and the range and firing rate of his weapon. The only disadvantage of the composite re-curved bow was that it took years to master due to its heavy drawing weight.\textsuperscript{319} Irwin asserts that it would have been a step backward for the skilled mamli\textluk horsemen to start using firearms. He says that it was not the chivalric and traditional mindsets and psychologies of the mamli\textluk\s that prevented them from adopting firearms as Ayalon asserts, but rather practical and military considerations.\textsuperscript{320} Irwin states that it made more sense to arm lower grade infantrymen with firearms, and in his view, that is what the sultans of the late Mamli\textluk period did.\textsuperscript{321}

In his book \textit{The Lion of Egypt}\textsuperscript{322} Peter Thorau gives a detailed account of the reign of al-\textl Zahir Baybars. He first describes the struggles among the late Ayyubids which resulted in al-\textl Si\textl Ayyub’s centralizing policies and his resolve to build a powerful army based on mamli\textluk\s, and the importance of these mamli\textluk\s in consolidating his reign and in defeating King Louis’ Crusade at Mansura in 1250 CE.\textsuperscript{323} Thorau goes on to describe the turmoil in Egypt after the death of al-\textl Si\textl Ayyub and the murder of his son Turchash, the exile of the Bari\textluk, their

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{316} Irwin even states that Bayezid II reformed his army and equipped it with firearms following the defeats he suffered at the hands of the Mamluks during the first Ottoman-Mamluk War (1485-1491 CE), Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 124 (he refers to Halil Inalcik’s \textit{The Ottoman Empire: The Classical Age 1300-1600} pages 33-34 when making this statement).

\textsuperscript{317} Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 124.

\textsuperscript{318} The composite bow could be fired from horseback and foot, it could hit a target five hundred yards away and could pierce plate armor from a distance of fifty yards, and a trained archer could fire six arrows in one minute. On the other hand the early matchlock could only be fired on foot, it had a short range, and could only fire one shot per minute. Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 125.

\textsuperscript{319} Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 125.

\textsuperscript{320} Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 128.

\textsuperscript{321} Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 125.


\textsuperscript{323} Thorau, \textit{Lion}, 8-36.
\end{footnotesize}
eventual return, the role they played in defeating the Mongols, and Baybars’ rise to the sultanate after the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt. The bulk of Thorau’s book gives the reader a detailed account of the energetic reign of this sultan including his reorganization of the army into an efficient and disciplined force and a description of his major military campaigns against the Armenians, the Crusaders, and the Mongols and his political dealings with both his allies and enemies and ends with the death of Baybars in 1277 CE. Although the book reads as a biography of Baybars’ life, it is still a useful reference for this study with a detailed description of important military events that took place during Baybars’ reign.

Carl Petry’s research focuses on the late period of the Mamlūk sultanate. His two monographs, Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of the Mamlūk Sultans al-Ashraf Qāytbāy and Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī in Egypt and Protectors or Praetorians?: The Last Mamlūk Sultans and Egypt’s Waning as a Great Power, give a good general history of the reigns of Qāytbāy and Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī in the last decades of the Mamlūk sultanate. His discussion of internal plotting and opposition from the viceroys of Syria to the sultans, the opposition to Mamlūk rule from the Arab tribes of the Hijāz, the challenges of quelling Shāh Suwār’s revolt, the costly Ottoman-Mamlūk war of 1485-1491 CE, and finally the Ottoman conquest of the sultanate is clear, concise, and pertinent to the topic of this study. Petry also upholds the idea that the Mamlūk military was in a state of disarray and stagnation and paints a picture of the sultanate

324 Thorau, Lion, 37-81.
325 Thorau, Lion, 91-235.
326 Thorau, Lion, 241.
328 Carl F. Petry, Protectors or Praetorians?: The Last Mamlūk Sultans and Egypt’s Waning as a Great Power (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).
329 Petry, Protectors, 35-39.
330 Petry, Protectors, 39-42.
331 Petry, Protectors, 16, 42-49, 75; Petry, Twilight, 57-72.
332 Petry, Protectors, 51-55; Petry, Twilight, 88-102.
333 Petry, Protectors, 24-26, 192-196; Petry, Twilight, 199-232.
334 He also shows the decline in other areas such as the economy, corruption, and disloyalty within the mamlūk ranks and in the leadership.
and its military machine in its last decades as a tottering giant on the verge of collapse. In his chapter in *The Cambridge History of Egypt* “The Military Institution and Innovation in the Late Mamlūk Period,” Petry argues that, despite facing threats from several external enemies such as the Ottomans, the Aq Qoyūnlū, and later the Safavids in the fifteenth century, the Mamlūks did not change the model upon which their military was based. He upholds Ayalon’s thesis that the mamlūks opposed modernizing the army and did not adopt firearms on a large scale out of traditionalism, elitism, and fear. Thus, Petry argues that, despite his attempt to create a unit of arquebusiers to bolster his position and to modernize the army, al-Ghawrī failed.

In *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East* Shai Har-El focuses on the major conflict that took place between the Ottomans and the Mamlūks a few decades before the Ottoman conquest of the Mamlūk sultanate. This monograph is important for the light it sheds on the fact that the Mamlūk army was more than capable of defeating the Ottoman army in the field, and thus validates the questioning of the statements made by other scholars regarding the weakened state and inefficiency of the Mamlūk military in the later period of the sultanate. Har-El offers a very detailed account of the causes of the war, its major events, and its conclusion. He states, that conflict broke out over spheres of influence and control over the minor principalities between the two empires in Anatolia. The Ottomans took the offensive and sought to bring these principalities under their direct control. Har-El also mentions that the Ottomans, an empire on the rise, pursued a policy of expansion, whereas the Mamlūk sultanate was waning both politically and economically and pursued a policy of maintaining the status quo and preserving the balance of power in the region. Har-El states that the Ottomans, who were expanding eastward, intervened in the conflicts between the Mamlūks and their Turkmen satellites states that tried to assert their independence, and this is what caused the Mamlūk buffer system to fall.


apart and accelerated a direct confrontation between the two powers. By 1485 CE the situation changed; the Ottomans were poised to strike and invaded the Aḍana-Ṭarsūs region. In the ensuing war the Ottomans were defeated by the Mamlūks in several major field battles. By 1491 CE Har-El states that both sides desired peace and a treaty was signed between them, which stipulated that the Ottomans had to surrender all their conquests and that the status quo was to be restored making the Mamlūks the victors of this war.

Taqqūsh’s book *Tārīkh al-Mamālīk fī Miṣr wa Bilād al-Shām, 648-923 H/1250-1517* is a general study of the whole Mamlūk period. In this monograph the author gives a comprehensive overview of Mamlūk history from the establishment of the sultanate to its demise. He covers topics such as the army, the reigns of individual sultans, internal and external conflicts, and the major changes that the sultanate and army underwent throughout the existence of the sultanate. Although there is not much new in this book, it is still an important source for this study due to its detailed coverage of Mamlūk history.

Linda Northrup’s monograph *From Slave to Sultan: The Career of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamlūk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678-689 AH/1279-1290 AD)* focuses on Qalāwūn’s reign. The most important event covered in Northrup’s account of the political history of Qalāwūn’s reign in this monograph is the Battle of Ḥimṣ in 1281 CE. Her description of the Mamlūk army’s battle formations, the elements that formed the army, and

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342 Har-El, Struggle, 56-58.
343 The Mamlūk army was back in Egypt and the Ottomans had secured peace with King Mathias of Hungary and the Aq Quyūnlū were no longer a threat after their defeat at Bashkent in 1473 CE and the death of Uzūn Ḥasan in 1478 CE. Har-El, Struggle, 97-133.
344 Har-El, Struggle, 133-134.
345 Har-El, Struggle, 138-203.
her analysis of the battle and its outcome are all very important.\textsuperscript{351} Furthermore, Northup also discusses the influence of the senior mamlûk amîrs who were both a strong support to the ruler, but also a force of opposition when they chose to be disobedient, a recurring theme in Mamlûk history. The event that best exemplifies this challenge occurred prior to the battle when Qalāwûn and his commanders disagreed on whether to meet the Mongols at Damascus or Ḥimṣ. Most of the amîrs opted to meet the invaders at Ḥimṣ and Qalāwûn had no choice but to follow his army or risk losing it as well as his sultanate.\textsuperscript{352}

Northrup’s discussion of the Mamlûk army during Qalāwûn’s reign is also very relevant to this study. Through her analysis of the sources she estimates the size of the army to have been somewhere around 40,000-50,000.\textsuperscript{353} Like Ayalon, Northrup also discusses the three main sections of the Mamlûk army in detail: the Royal Mamlûks, the amîrs’ mamlûks, and the \textit{halqa}. She describes the importance of these units and especially focuses on the acquisition, training, and slow advancement of the Royal Mamlûks, who were also the elite and backbone of the army.\textsuperscript{354} Northrup also discusses Qalāwûn’s recruitment practices and his attempts to diversify the races from which he drew his mamlûks.\textsuperscript{355} This is an important point because it is quite evident here that this sultan is in fact the first one to effect a break with the Şâliîhi Mamlûk Model with his attempts at diversifying the races of his mamlûk troops.

Northrup’s state-of-the-art chapter, “The Baḥrî Mamlûk Sultanate, 1250-1390,”\textsuperscript{356} in \textit{The Cambridge History of Egypt} provides a comprehensive historical overview of the early Mamlûk sultanate. This chapter is based primarily on secondary scholarship, as informed by the author’s own research and presents a good overview and summary of the early period of the sultanate and the consensus in this field. The chapter traces the tradition of using slave soldiers as far back as the Umayyads\textsuperscript{357} and gives a brief history of the use of these types of troops in the Muslim world

\textsuperscript{351} Northrup, \textit{Slave to Sultan}, 108-112.
\textsuperscript{352} Northrup, \textit{Slave to Sultan}, 109.
\textsuperscript{353} Northrup, \textit{Slave Sultan}, 184.
\textsuperscript{354} Northrup, \textit{Slave to Sultan}, 189-199.
\textsuperscript{355} Northrup, \textit{Slave to Sultan}, 150-151, 191-192
\textsuperscript{357} Northrup, “Baḥrî Mamlûk Sultanate,” 246.
It also outlines the conditions that enabled the mamlūks to rise to power and to establish their sultanate. She also comments on the army and the need to maintain military supremacy in the face of external foes by continuously importing fresh recruits to maintain “the nomadic vitality” of the military, which resulted in the development of a one-generational elite. Northrup then gives a summary of the major elements of the army and the various officer classes and court positions. Lastly, this chapter briefly outlines the beginning of the decline of the Mamlūk army which, reflecting scholarly consensus, she attributes to the period of peace and prosperity following the elimination of the Crusaders and the Mongols as major rivals in the region by 1322 CE, and due to the policies of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad during whose reign there was laxity in the training, promotion, and the pay of the mamlūks resulting in the “de-mamlūkization” of the army.

Jean-Claude Garcin’s chapter “The Regime of the Circassian Mamlūks,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, covers the later part of the Mamlūk sultanate, known as the Circassian period. Like Northrup’s chapter on the early sultanate, this chapter is a state-of-the-art survey of the history of this era which started with the reign of Barqūq (r. 1382-1389 CE and 1390-1399 CE) and ended with the Ottoman conquest in 1516-1517 CE. The chapter serves as a good summary of this epoch. Garcin describes Barqūq’s reign as a “restoration” of the Mamlūk state and its military institution, which, for the most part, remained unchanged during this

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358 The ’Abbāsids (al-Mu’tašim), the Tulūnids, the Ikhshīdids, the Fāṭimids, the Seljūks. Northrup, “Baḥrī Mamlūk Sultanate,” 246.
359 Northrup, “Baḥrī Mamlūk Sultanate;” 244, 248.
367 Barqūq returned to the principles of training and promotion that were introduced by the founders of the Mamlūk sultanate.
period.\textsuperscript{368} He reiterates that this era (up to and including much of Qāytbāy’s reign) was one of prosperity and order. Within their domain, the Mamlūks were the masters; they even managed to bring the unruly tribes of Upper Egypt under control.\textsuperscript{369} Garcin also considers the Ottoman-Mamlūk war, in which the Mamlūks launched several campaigns into Anatolia and won almost all the major field battles of the conflict. These defeats (and threats on other fronts) forced the Ottomans to sign a peace treaty that was favorable to the Mamlūks.\textsuperscript{370} Garcin also outlines the destabilization and decline of the Mamlūk sultanate and its fall after Qāytbāy’s reign. He mentions, in conformity with several other historians regarding the Mamlūk army in the Circassian period, the insubordination and poor training of some of the young mamlūks, the factionalism within the army,\textsuperscript{371} the imbalance between the numbers and strength of the Royal Mamlūks and the amīrs’ mamlūks,\textsuperscript{372} and mamlūk greed and concern with privileges, and the inability of the economy to support the military machine as the main causes for the collapse and defeat of the sultanate.\textsuperscript{373}

Several Arab scholars have also written monographs on the reigns of individual sultans. These works all cover important aspects of these sultans’ reigns and the significance of these rulers, their policies, and the direction in which they took the sultanate. Such works include: Usāma Ḥasan’s books \textit{al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn}\textsuperscript{374} on al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and \textit{Tūmānbay: Ākhir Ṣalāṭīn al-Mamālīk}\textsuperscript{375} on the reign of Tūmānbay, Imān Umar Shukrī’s monograph \textit{al-Ṣulṭān Barqūq: Mu’assis Dawlat al-Mamālīk al-Jarākisa min Khilāl Makhtūṭ ‘Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān li Badr al- ‘Aynī}\textsuperscript{376} on the reign of Barqūq and the transition

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{368} Garcin, “Regime of the Circassian Mamlūks,” 290.
\textsuperscript{369} Garcin, “Regime of the Circassian Mamlūks,” 295.
\textsuperscript{370} Garcin, “Regime of the Circassian Mamlūks,” 296.
\textsuperscript{371} Garcin, “Regime of the Circassian,” 297-302.
\textsuperscript{372} The fact that, according to Garcin, 7,000 Royal Mamlūks and only 1,000 amīrs’ mamlūks were present at Marj Dābiq in 1516 CE indicates that the power of the amīrs had declined significantly. Garcin, “Regime of the Circassian Mamlūks,” 305.
\textsuperscript{373} Garcin, “Regime of the Circassian Mamlūks,” 316.
\textsuperscript{374} Usāma Ḥasan, \textit{al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn} (Cairo: Dār al-Amal, 1997).
\textsuperscript{375} Usāma Ḥasan, \textit{Tūmānbay: Ākhir Ṣalāṭīn al-Mamālīk} (Cairo: Dār al-Amal, 2000).
\textsuperscript{376} Imān Umar Shukrī, \textit{al-Ṣulṭān Barqūq: Mu’assis Dawlat al-Mamālīk al-Jarākisa min Khilāl Makhtūṭ ‘Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān li Badr al- ‘Aynī} (Cairo: Dār al-Ṣafwa li-‘l-Ṭibā‘a, 2002). This work is for the most part an edited version of al-‘Aynī’s annals for this sultan’s reign with commentary by the editor.
\end{footnotesize}
from Kipchak to Circassian rule, and ʻAbd al-Raḥmān Maḥmūd Abd al-Tawwāb’s *Qāytbāy al-Maḥmūḍī* on the reign of Qāytbāy.

Muḥammad ʻAbd Allāh Sālim al-ʻAmāyira’s book *al-Jaysh fi al-ʻAṣr al-Mamlūkī al-Thānī, 784 H-923 H* discusses the Mamlūk army in the Circassian period. This scholar gives an excellent overview of the military, its composition, and organization. He also makes a very important observation that most Arab and western scholars have overlooked regarding the training and efficiency of the mamlūk soldiers during this period. He makes a clear distinction between the *julbān* (the sultans’ purchased mamlūks) and the *qarāniṣa* (the veterans) and states that due to their young age and lack of experience, the *julbān* were less effective than the veteran *qarāniṣa*. Thus, instead of taking the statements of the mamlūk historians about the inefficiency and lack of discipline of the sultans’ mamlūks to mean there was a general decline in the army, al-ʻAmāyira attributes these descriptions to the untried and inexperienced young mamlūks. This observation is very helpful here since it supports the thesis that the Mamlūk army maintained its military efficiency throughout the Circassian period.

James Waterson’s book, *The Knights of Islam*, provides a general history of the Mamlūk sultanate. He covers the major military events of the Mamlūk period including the Battle of Manṣūra, the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt, Baybars’ campaigns against Armenia and the Mongols in Anatolia, the Battle of Ḥimṣ, Timur’s invasion, and the struggle against the Ottoman empire. It is important to note that Waterson, like many others, concurs with the idea that under Baybars the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model flourished and produced a large, powerful,

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382 Waterson, *Knights*, 144.
disciplined, well-trained, and efficient army.\textsuperscript{387} This tradition continued under Qalāwūn, but ended shortly after his death. Waterson also supports the argument that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad introduced changes that transformed the regime and the army, which continuously weakened until the Ottomans performed the final \textit{coup de grace} in 1516-1517 CE.\textsuperscript{388}

Winslow Clifford’s \textit{State Formation and the Structure of Politics in Mamluk Syro-Egypt 648-741 A.H./1250-1340 CE}\textsuperscript{389} provides important insights into the concepts of state building and patronage in the Mamlûk sultanate. In this study Clifford argues that the aim of the Mamlûk oligarchy was to maintain order (\textit{nizâm}). He contends that revolts by amīrs were regulated and ritualized to minimize damage and avoid mass violence to the army and the state.\textsuperscript{390} He also argues that it is not incorrect to use terminology such as “state” when referring to the Mamlûk polity because it was “a vast clientelist structure or a patronate, not much different from modern militaristic Arab regimes today.”\textsuperscript{391} This scholar also states that the Mamlûk sultanate was a patrimonial state and that in exchange for patronage the amīrs and rank-and-file mamlûks offered their sovereign their loyalty and service.\textsuperscript{392} The importance of Clifford’s study is that it deals with the process of state formation in the Mamlûk sultanate, a theme pertinent to the current study.

A.S. Tritton,\textsuperscript{393} M.A. Hiyari,\textsuperscript{394} and J. Drory\textsuperscript{395} have all examined the relationship between the Mamlûk sultanate and the Arab tribes of Syria. Their research focuses on the link between the sultans and the chiefs of the Banū Faḍl tribe who held the position of \textit{amīr al-ʿarab},

\textsuperscript{387} Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 118-124.
\textsuperscript{388} Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 215-225.
\textsuperscript{390} Clifford, \textit{State Formation}, 16-17, 60.
\textsuperscript{391} Clifford, \textit{State Formation}, 46
\textsuperscript{392} Clifford, \textit{State Formation}, 16, 47.
\textsuperscript{393} A.S. Tritton, “The Tribes of Syria in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,” \textit{BSOAS}, 12, ¾ (1948).
and with it controlled much of the Syrian Desert and its tribes. These scholars all demonstrate the volatile relationship between tribal chiefs such as ʿĪsā b. Muḥannā and his successors and the central government. The tribes provided auxiliaries for the mamlūks during military campaigns; for example, they played an important role in the right wing of the Mamlūk army at the Battle of Ḥimṣ in 1281 CE when they attacked the Mongols in the rear. Furthermore, the amīr al-ʿarab was also charged with maintaining order among the tribes of Syria and with reporting any news from within and without the realm to the central government in Cairo. On the other hand, the amīr al-ʿarab could also be a thorn in the side of the rulers when they threatened to defect to the Mongols or rebel if their interests were threatened.

Although these articles cover the same time period and the same topic within this era, they focus on different issues. Tritton’s primary aim is to provide a general history of the tribes of Syria and their chiefs. Hiyari’s objective is to trace the formation and development of the amirate of the Arabs. Thus, he focuses on the internal struggles between the tribal chiefs for this position and their relationship with the mamlūk rulers. Lastly, while providing a general history of the Banū Faḍl, Drory also analyzes the role of these tribes. He concludes that despite their support to the mamlūks on some occasions and belligerence towards them on others, they were never a real military threat to the mamlūk ruling elite; he even describes them as an “insignificant force whose collaboration could be obtained cheaply.” He states that they were at their most powerful when the conflict between the Mamlūks and the Mongols was at its peak, because it was during this time that these tribes were most valued politically and militarily. On their own, however, they did not form a formidable force and were a small part of the whole military apparatus of the Mamlūk sultanate.

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398 According to this author they were never a major military threat, but they were a constant threat to instability and chaos in certain parts of the sultanate if they were not firmly under control. See Drory, “Role of Banū Faḍl,” 484.
399 Drory, “Role of Banū Faḍl,” 484.
400 Drory, “Role of Banū Faḍl,” 481-484.
1.4 Assessment of the Literature

When one reviews the corpus of scholarship in the field of Mamlūk military history, it is clear that much has been achieved over the past few decades. Because the Mamlūks formed a regime that was ruled by a predominantly military elite,\(^{401}\) it is impossible for any scholar to ignore the martial aspect of the history of this sultanate. As shown above, even those scholars who did not specifically focus their research on the Mamlūk army or warfare during this time period could scarcely avoid addressing this matter whether they were discussing the reign of a sultan, presenting a general history, or addressing some aspect or institution of the Mamlūk period.

Despite the growing abundance of scholarship on the Mamlūks, thanks to the pioneering efforts of Ayalon and others in this field, there is a gulf that separates it from the pre-Mongol period of Islamic history. The Mamlūk period often resembles an island standing alone in the chronology of the general history of the Muslim world with very little to link it to the past, except for the idea, formation, and development of the institution of military slavery.

It would, however, be unfair and untrue to claim that efforts have not been made by previous scholars to make connections between the Mamlūk period and the era of the caliphates. Yet, these attempts have been rather one-sided, in the sense that they focus on tracing the genesis and development of the institution of military slavery through the ages to the point when the Baḥriyya Mamlūks seized power in Egypt. On the other hand, the scholarship, with its intense focus on military slaves, has for the most part ignored the larger picture regarding the military traditions of the Muslim world as a whole. Thus, the events and changes that occurred in the military of the Mamlūk sultanate have not yet been fully analyzed in a larger context, while somewhat flawed ideas regarding the deterioration of the Mamlūk army over time and the loss of its martial qualities that enabled it to defeat foes such as the Crusaders and Mongols have become authoritative and gained widespread acceptance in the field. Even some of the recent

\(^{401}\) This idea is now disputed by scholars such as Sievert who argues that the Mamlūks were not really, at least by the Circassian period, a military elite. According to him, they were more concerned and involved with politics and administration and that many of them did not partake in militaristic activities and were less martial than their predecessors. See Sievert, Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 100-102. The current study takes an opposite stance to this statement and will refute this point through the detailed examination of the structure, training, and performance of the Mamlūk army in Chapters 4-6.
scholarship that has moved in the direction of challenging the decline paradigm in Mamlūk history has overlooked this point. As a matter of fact, historians such as Elbendary and Sievert have even accepted the idea that the Mamlūk army lost its martial qualities and military effectiveness by the fifteenth century.  

The preceding review of the scholarship has shown the great amount of work that has been dedicated to bringing the details of the Mamlūk sultanate and its army to light. The older generation of Mamlūk historians tends to be unanimous for the most part when it comes to discussing the emergence, development, and deterioration of the sultanate and its army. Most scholars who discuss the later Mamlūk period paint a somber picture of the state of the army and agree that the downturn started during the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. However, none of these scholars is able to explain why the Mamlūks survived for an additional two centuries if the army lost its military efficiency at such an early stage. On the other hand, the new generation of Mamlūk historians has challenged this “decline paradigm” and has made great strides in remedying this linear approach to Mamlūk history and the gross oversimplification of a big portion of the Mamlūk period. However, most of these scholars have chosen to focus on micro and social histories. They have successfully broadened the scope of the field by bringing in other elements of the society that have been ignored. Thus, a new and more complex picture of Mamlūk politics and society is being painted with an emphasis on the socio-political networks and factions that give the impression of a much deeper social integration between the ruling military elite and the non-mamlūk civilian elements of the population. This new image of Mamlūk society also highlights the role that these groups played in the power politics of the sultanate. However, even these recent studies either agree with the older assertions regarding the state of the military or they mention certain points in passing. Although some pertinent observations have been made by Loiseau and Sievert on the army, they do not go into a deep analysis of its structure and performance. But they cannot be faulted on this because their works are not focused on the military history of the sultanate. Many of the scholars ignore the consistently good performance of the Mamlūk army, even towards the end of the sultanate,  

Loiseau contends that there was no big difference in the training and martial capabilities of the young Royal Mamlūks of the fifteenth century compared to their thirteenth century predecessors. See Loiseau, Les Mamelouks, 87-90.
especially during the Ottoman-Mamlūk war in 1485-1491 CE, which ended with the Mamlūks forcing the Ottomans to restore the status quo ante bellum.

The main problem with much of the scholarship is that the institution of military slavery and the Mamlūks are somehow still viewed in isolation from the larger picture, despite attempts to link them to the past and discover their origins. This is very important when studying the military of the Mamlūk sultanate. The accepted theory in this regard, especially by the older generation of Mamlūk historians, is that by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s third reign, the Mongols and Crusaders were no longer a threat and thus discipline and training in the army could be relaxed. Furthermore, with a regime based on the military, the factionalism of the mamlūks came to the fore more prominently with the disappearance of major external foes. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad aimed to bring all the mamlūk factions and their leaders under control so he promoted his supporters to high positions and expedited his mamlūks’ training in order to have the support base he needed to impose his authority over the great mamlūk amīrs. It was this sultan’s policies that led to the deterioration of the Mamlūk army according to several historians.

This argument is convincing and would make sense if the mamlūks had risen and declined in a vacuum. Some scholars have taken into account the fact that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb made changes to his military due to his personal experiences, which were continued by his Mamlūk successors as an as an emergency response to the unprecedented threats posed by the Mongols and the Crusaders to the core regions of the Muslim world. However, none of these historians have not pointed out that this transformation of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s military, which I have labelled as the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model, was exceptional in comparison to the armies of the Muslim polities that had preceded him, which were organized along the lines of the Diversified Army Model. Thus, the rise of the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model was a combination of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s personal needs, followed by its implementation as an emergency measure by the Mamlūks to ensure their own survival after his death. It was, therefore, an anomaly and a break with the Diversified Army Model that had been the basis of the armies of the Muslim world up to that point. One can argue that when the military emergency ended with the conquest of the last Crusader strongholds and the disintegration of the Ilkhanate, it was only natural for the rulers to return to the older tradition

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403 This factionalism was present from the earliest period of the Mamlūk sultanate, but was overshadowed by the unifying force of powerful external foes. See Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 97-110.
with which the al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb and Mamlūks had broken. Furthermore, after one examines the Mamlūk army throughout the existence of the sultanate, it becomes clear that it fluctuated back and forth between these two military models depending on the political and military situation in the region and also depending on the state building decisions of the ruling sultan. In fact, by the fifteenth century one can state that the two models became melded to form a hybrid Mamlūkized Diversified Army model due to the increase in the number of factions and interest groups within the sultanate.\(^{404}\)

Overlooking this issue is what has led several of the earlier scholars of Mamlūk history to state that the initial stages of the downfall of the Mamlūks started at an early period. As mentioned above this ‘decline paradigm has been challenged by more recent studies that have rejected the linear approach to Mamlūk history and several have instead proposed that the later period of the sultanate should be viewed as going through change(s). Historians such as Sievert have asked that if the decline came so early, then how did the regime maintain itself for two and a half centuries?\(^{405}\) The current study adds to this question with a focus on the military: if the members of the army lost their martial qualities and military effectiveness due to changes made to the structure, organization, and training practices, then how did the Mamlūk sultanate, a regime centered on the military, survive for as long as it did? How did the Mamlūks continue to defeat their foes, including the Ottomans in the late fifteenth century? The answer is that the break with the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model and the admittance of non-mamlūks into the army and the officer corps did not necessarily mean that the army got weaker or that it was permanently demamlūkized. The mamlūk cavalryman was as effective in his role on the battlefield against the Ottomans in 1485-91 CE and 1516-1517 CE as he was against the Mongols in 1260 CE and

\(^{404}\) As mentioned in the introduction, every Mamlūk sultan can be viewed as a state-builder creating a new ruling apparatus and patrimonial household to support his reign because he could not depend on the one established by his predecessor. The reason for this need to create a new ruling apparatus is the one generational nature of the ruling elite of the sultanate and the loyalty of the mamlūks rarely extended to the successor of their master/patron (ustādh). Van Steenbergen makes an interesting point stating that within the macrocosmic dawla of the Mamlūks (which he and the sources have labelled as Dawlat al-Atrāk) there were as many microcosmic dalwas as there were sultans. So in essence every sultan’s reign was a dawla. See Van Steenbergen, “Appearances of Dawla,” 65.

\(^{405}\) Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 2.
1281 CE. There is no other way to explain the victories that the Mamlūks continued to enjoy up to the very last moments of their existence.406

1.5 The Current Study and its Place in the Field of Mamlūk Studies

The recent scholarship in Mamlūk history discussed in this section has made significant strides in amending the way in which this period is viewed and understood. All of the recent research challenges the decline paradigm that earlier scholarship had argued in the past, especially after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign. The authors of these studies have proposed that rather than a linear decline, there was a series of changes that were taking place on the socio-political level in the Mamlūk sultanate, especially in the fifteenth century. They emphasize the importance of networks and factions and have presented an alternative idea to the mamlūks being an isolated and segregated military elite. They propose that Egyptian and Syrian society as a whole were much more integrated and that there were actors from various social, political, and economic backgrounds who affected the way in which the sultanate operated on a social and political level. The households of the sultan and the great amīrs were central in the power networks of the sultanate. Furthermore, several of these historians argue that the longevity of the sultanate shows that it was not in decline and that the political system, based on these households and networks, was in fact much more stable than previously perceived.

The current study contributes to the ongoing discussions by bringing the focus back to the military of the Mamlūk sultanate and highlighting the transformations in the structure and organization of the army throughout its existence and the effects that these changes had on the Mamlūk army. These transformations can be better highlighted through examining the Mamlūk military through the military models that I have proposed. I have already stated that although at first glance it seems as though the Mamlūk army was deteriorating and the soldiers and officers were losing their martial capabilities, discipline, and loyalty, that was not, in fact, the case. In this study I examine the structure and composition of the Mamlūk military, initially based on the Şālihi Mamlūk Model, which was born due to al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb’s break with the Diversified Army Model. The army underwent several changes throughout the Mamlūk period, fluctuating between

406 The current study will elucidate upon this statement with a detailed analysis of the Mamlūk army during the early and late periods for the sultanate in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.
the two military models, and ultimately merged into the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model. Thus, studying the Mamlūk army’s performance during the early and late periods highlights that, once again, we are not dealing with a linear progression for the military but rather a series of changes (with both ups and downs) that were linked to the ruling sultan and his household and supporters and to both the internal and external political and military threats that the ruler and the elite faced at any given time between the thirteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Therefore, the current study brings the focus back to the Mamlūk army and reassesses the sultanate’s military history. It adds to the earlier research on the Mamlūk military and at the same time aligns this topic with the new studies by examining the history of the army through a series of changes rather than as a single linear progression.
Chapter 2

The Sources

This section will provide an historiographical review of the most important primary sources that will be utilized in this study, which include pre-Mamlūk Persian sources, pre-Mamlūk Arabic sources, and Arabic Mamlūk sources. This primary material will provide an idea of what the “ideal” military was like in theory and what the militaries of the caliphates and the various polities of the Muslim world were like in practice from the seventh century to the sixteenth century CE. It will also illustrate how the armies that resembled the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model differed from those resembling the Diversified Army Model and how these militaries constantly transformed and fluctuated between the two models during the Mamlūk period, especially after the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. I will discuss only those authors whose works contribute information on military issues. Lastly, in the interest of avoiding repetition and redundancy, I will not be presenting long and detailed biographical information on the authors of the sources, because this has already been done by others.

2.1 The Advice Literature

The genre of advice literature or mirrors for princes (also known as the naṣīhat nāmeh in Persian) is important for the purposes of this study. These literary works cover a broad range of topics that their authors believed were important in order for sovereigns to rule efficiently. These topics ranged from significant subjects such as rulership in general (i.e. the qualities of a good ruler, the nature of governance, and justice), administration, and waging war to more mundane matters such as running a household, marital life, and purchasing horses. Several works of Persian advice literature have survived some of which contain relevant chapters and sections regarding how a ruler could maintain a strong, loyal, and efficient army and wage war successfully. These works are pertinent to this study because they help to highlight their authors’ theoretical views and opinions regarding the army, its composition, and how to maintain it and
keep it under control.\textsuperscript{407} They also indicate that there was a conscious awareness of the concept of the Diversified Army Model, at least on the part of the authors.

\section*{2.11 The Persian Advice Literature}

The \textit{Qābūs Nāme\textsuperscript{h}}\textsuperscript{408} is one of the earliest \textit{naşıhat nāmeh} works and was written by the Ziyārid prince of Tabāristān, ‘Unṣur al-Ma‘ālī Kāy Kā‘ūs b. Iskandar b. Qābūs (r. 1049-50 CE to around 1085 CE). He wrote the \textit{Qābūs Nāme\textsuperscript{h}} for his son and successor Gīlān Shāh. Its forty-four chapters cover a wide variety of topics such as hunting, raising children, marriage, acquiring wealth, the vizierate, and many others. The most important sections of this text with regard to this study are chapters twenty “on giving battle to an enemy” and forty-two “on the conduct of kingship.” These chapters discuss how a ruler could remain in control of his army by regulating its composition and the proper conduct of the ruler/commander and his forces on the battlefield. This is a useful source due to the colorful career of the author. He not only ruled his own principality, but he had also served other rulers both in their courts and during military campaigns. Thus, Kāy Kā‘ūs b. Iskandar wrote from the perspective of both a ruler and a servant and based his advice not only on what he had heard and learned, but also on what he had personally witnessed and experienced during his career.\textsuperscript{409}

\textbf{Niẓām al-Mulk’s} \textit{Si\textsuperscript{y}ar al-Mulāk}\textsuperscript{410} (also known as the \textit{Siyāsat Nāme\textsuperscript{h}}) is another important political treatise that was written shortly after the \textit{Qābūs Nāme\textsuperscript{h}}. The author of this work, Abū ‘Alī al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī b. Ishāk al-Ṭūsī Niẓām al-Mulk, was the \textit{wazīr} of the Seljūks

\textsuperscript{407} The authors of the works in this genre were not only scholars but also politicians, military men, and rulers i.e., \textit{wazīrs}, amīrs, and princes.


\textsuperscript{410} Abū ‘Alī Ḥasan Tūsī Niẓām al-Mulk, \textit{Si\textsuperscript{y}ar al-Mulāk: Siyāsat Nāme\textsuperscript{h}} (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjamah va Nashr-i Kitāb, 1962).
throughout the reigns of Alp Arslān (r. 1063-1072 CE) and Malikshāh (r. 1072-1092 CE). During his tenure in office, Niẓām al-Mulk was the real power behind the throne.\textsuperscript{411}

\textit{Siyar al-Mulūk}, written towards the end of Niẓām al-Mulk’s life, was fully completed in the year of his death, when he was assassinated by an Isma‘īlī disguised as a Sufi.\textsuperscript{412} Like the \textit{Qābūs Nāmeh}, this treatise covers a huge range of topics and issues concerning rulership, politics, espionage, court protocol, diplomacy, the army, the palace guards, servants, and dealing with rebels and heretics among others. Similar to the \textit{Qābūs Nāmeh}, certain chapters and sections of \textit{Siyar al-Mulūk} are dedicated to the army and warfare. These chapters outline what a well-functioning army and palace guard should be like and how war was to be conducted according to the author, who was not only a politician and an administrator, but also a general. Pertinent to this study are chapters nineteen concerning the mufradān\textsuperscript{413} and their equipment, chapter twenty-four on having troops of various ethnicities, chapter-twenty-six on keeping Turkmen in service as ghilmān, and chapter thirty-one on preparing arms and equipment for wars and expeditions. Niẓām al-Mulk may have had an agenda that he wanted to promote to the ruler through his book; this is quite clear in some sections of his work where he either promotes certain ideas or warns against those whom he believes were intent on doing harm to the realm and the faith. However, the chapters concerning the army mentioned above seem reliable because they come from a man with a strong military background and experience.

The two sources discussed above are the most important and useful texts of Persian advice literature. However, it must be noted here that there are several other important works in this genre that will be used to a lesser extent because they do not focus on the military. Such works include al-Ghazālī’s \textit{Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk},\textsuperscript{414} al-Ṭūsī’s \textit{Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī},\textsuperscript{415} Faḍlullāh b.


\textsuperscript{412} Lambton, “Dilemma of Government,” 55.

\textsuperscript{413} In the 1978 edition this term is translated as “solitaries” while in the earlier 1960 edition mufradān, a Persian term, is translated as “special guards.” I have opted not to use either of these translations, but rather to maintain the term in its Persian form. See Niẓām al-Mulk, \textit{Book of Government}, 4, 96.

Rūzbihān al-Isfahānī’s *Sulūk al-Mulūk*, and the anonymously written *Bahr al-Favā‘īd*.\(^{416}\) These texts focus on religious principles, ethics, philosophy, and law/legal matters. It should come as no surprise that the authors of these works focus on these subjects because they, unlike the authors of the *Qābūs Nāmeh* and the *Siyāsat Nāmeh* who were soldiers and politicians, were scholars and men of religion. Therefore, it should suffice to mention these sources here and to state that they are of very little use to this study for their lack of content regarding the militaries of the Muslim world.

### 2.12 The Arabic Advice Literature

There are several works of advice literature and military manuals in Arabic\(^{417}\) from the pre-Mamlūk and Mamlūk eras. The topics covered in these sources are similar to those covered in the Persian advice literature and include justice, good rulership, the organization of the royal household and kingdom, and the military. Furthermore, the Arabic military manuals tend to focus more heavily than the Persian advice literature on the equestrian arts, training with a variety of weapons, and drills in various military formations.

Abū Sa‘īd al-Sha‘rānī al-Ḥarthamī is the author of *Mukhtaṣar fī Siyāsat al-Ḥurūb*.\(^{418}\) Not much is known about the author or his life. He wrote the original version of this work, entitled *al-Ḥiyal*, for the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Ma‘mūn (r. 813–833 CE). It was later abridged by an anonymous writer and renamed, probably upon the request of one of the military commanders of the ‘Abbāsid army or one of the caliphs.\(^{419}\) Although there is no direct reference, or instruction, to create an army composed of several ethnic groups in *al-Mukhtaṣar*, it may still hold some value because it discusses the organization of an army, its deployment in marching and battle.

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\(^{417}\) These works focus on military drills, equestrian arts, training with all manner of weapons, and army organization.


\(^{419}\) Al-Ḥarthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, 8.
orders, the types of men who should be chosen for various tasks and positions, and the different fighting styles of different peoples.

Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Murādī al-Ḥaḍramī (d. 1095-96 CE) was a North African theologian and jurist whose lineage has been be traced back to the Arab tribes of Yemen. He was born in Qayrawān and received much of his education there. However, in the mid-eleventh century he headed west to Morocco, probably due to the Hilālī bedouin invasions from Upper Egypt that took place around that time. Al-Ḥaḍramī became acquainted with some of the leaders of the Almoravid movement and attached himself to the amīr Abū Bakr b. ʿUmar and accompanied him on several military campaigns. After the fall of the city of Akzid (in present day Mauritania), al-Ḥaḍramī became its chief qāḍī and spent the remainder of his life there, with the exception of a short stay in Cordoba in 1094 CE. In addition to several theological works, none of which survived, he wrote Kitāb al-Siyāsa, which also goes by the title al-Ishāra fī Tadbīr al-Imāra, which falls under the genre of the mirrors for princes. In fact, Russell Hopely argues that this author was “indebted to several eastern works…, that of Ibn al-Muqaffa’ (d.c. 756) most notably.” The author may have been trying to establish himself as a spiritual leader of the Almoravid movement and wrote this work for Abū Bakr b. ʿUmar. Like other literature in this genre it contains advice on good governance, recruiting and promoting followers and advisors, warfare, and military leadership. Although it does not contain a detailed exposition of the army, this book is still useful because the author does make some important relevant statements regarding military organization.

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Naṣr al-Shayzarī (d. 1193 CE) was a Syrian scholar and polymath. He was poet, physician, theologian, and jurist. He held the positions of qāḍī of

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421 Al-Ḥaḍramī, Kitāb al-Siyāsa, 5; Hopely, “Hadrami.”

422 Hopely, “Hadrami.”
Tiberius and of physician to the Ayyūbid ruler, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (r.1174-1193 CE).²²³ He wrote a number of books on diverse subjects including a manual for market inspectors, theology, and dream interpretation.²²⁴ His *al-Nahj al-Maslūk fī Siyāsat al-Mulūk* is a work of advice literature. An edition of this work was published in the same volume as al-Ḥaḍramī’s *al-Ishāra*. Like other texts from this genre al-Shayzarī’s book treats a variety of topics, one of them being the army and its organization. Again, this author does not go into too much detail. However, he does make some relevant observations regarding distinct units in the army.

al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar b. Maḥāsin al-‘Abbāsī (d. 1310 CE) is the author of *Āthār al-Uwal fī Tartīb al-Duwal*.²²⁵ There is not much information on the author as he is absent from most of the chronicles and biographical dictionaries of his era. Thus, we do not have any information about his upbringing or education. *Āthār* is the only work (or only surviving work) of al-‘Abbāsī. The editor, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Umayra, makes some statements about this author including the claim that he was a scion of the ‘Abbāsid family and that he must have written other works that have been lost. The editor also conjectures that based on the content of *Āthār*, its composer must have received an extensive education and likely had access to the royal court and to the leading political and military figures of his age through whom he gained experience in both politics and military matters. However, he leaves it as an open ended question because there is a lack of evidence to prove any of these points.²²⁶ *Āthār* is a work of advice literature that was composed some time between the late thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries. The author intended this book to serve as a manual for the rulers in managing all aspects of the realm including organizing the army and waging war. The fourth section of the text dealing with war is further subdivided into ten parts that provide detailed expositions on practicing and using various weapons, the equestrian arts, garrisoning towns and military marches, sieges, naval warfare, and the various races and their military attributes.²²⁷ Although al-‘Abbāsī does not explicitly instruct

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²²³ Al-Ḥaḍramī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa*, 73.
²²⁴ See al-Ḥaḍramī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa*, 73
his reader to create an ethnically diverse army, the section in which he discusses the different races and their military skills may still prove to be useful.

Muḥammad al-Nāṣirī b. Manklī was an officer of the ḥalqa during the reign of al-Ashraf Sha’bān (r. 1362-1377 CE). He was born in Cairo into the household of a mamlūk officer and was thus a member of the awlād al-nās (sons of mamlūks) social group. He had a long and successful military career and rose to the rank of muqaddam (commander) in the ḥalqa. He is the author of several works on the art of war, naval warfare, and hunting. Only his work on hunting has survived intact, his other writing on the military and warfare is cited in works written by other authors. However, a book entitled Kitāb al-Ḥiyal Fī al-Ḥurūb Fath al-Madāʿin wa Ḥifẓ al-Durūb is attributed to Ibn Manklī by its editor, Sulaymān al-Raḥīlī. Kitāb al-Ḥiyal instructs the reader on training with, using, and repairing weapons and armor, battle formations and tactics, and incendiary weapons. Like the previous author, Ibn Manklī does not instruct the reader to recruit men of various backgrounds to form competing factions in the army. However, like al-ʿAbbāsī he includes a section in which he discusses the fighting styles and skills of several different groups.

Muḥammad b. ʿĪsā b. Ismāʿīl al-Ḥanafī’s (d. 1405) Kitāb Nihāyat al-Suʿl wa al-Umniya fī Taʿallum Aʿmāl al-Furūsiyya fī Umūr al-Ṣalṭana is a very detailed book on war. In his work, this author presents a thorough outline of all types of weapons, their uses, their description, and how to repair them and how to best train and fight with them. He also discusses horses, the equestrian arts, and hippodromes. The most relevant section in this book discusses mustering

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430 Ibn Manklī, Kitāb al-Ḥiyal, 293-297.


432 Al-Ḥanafī, Nihāyat al-Suʿl, 73-166, 196-285, 300-357.

433 Al-Ḥanafī, Nihāyat al-Suʿl, 167-192, 286-299.
an army and organizing it for battle. Al-Ḥanafi does mention some groups, but a detailed discussion of various ethnicities in the army, their role, and why a commander must recruit several groups when creating his military is neglected, making this work of limited use.

‘Umar b. Ibrāhīm al-Awsī al-Anṣārī (d. 1408), known as Ibn al-Adīm, is the author of Tafrīj al-Kurūb fī Tadbīr al-Ḥurūb. He was a Ḥanafī jurist and held several important positions including qāḍī al-‘askar (military judge) of Aleppo, and the Ḥanafī qāḍī of Aleppo. He was taken prisoner by Timur when he invaded Syria, but managed to survive and became the Ḥanafī qāḍī of Egypt in the last few years of his life. The author must have amassed quite a bit of information regarding armies, battles, and military organization during his career and his experiences during times of war. His book was written for the Mamlūk sultan al-Nāṣir Faraj (r. 1399-1412 CE). It contains many details on military preparedness during times of war and peace, fortifying cities, the qualities and skills of the officers and men in the army, mobilizing for war and deployment in battle, scouting parties, ambushes, and sieges. Despite the detailed exposition regarding the army and military action, this book has nothing to say about races or ethnic groups within the army. For this reason, it is not very useful for the purpose of this study.

Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Ibrāhīm Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-‘Abbās al-Dimashqī al-Ḥanafī al-‘Ajamī, also known as Ibn ‘Arabshāh (d. 1450 CE), was a Syrian scholar. His education began in Damascus, but life as he knew it was cut short in 1400 CE when Timur invaded Syria and sacked Damascus. Ibn ‘Arabshāh and his family were taken to Samarqand after Timur’s Syrian campaign where he continued his education for eight years under a number of prominent scholars such as al-Jurjānī and al-Jazārī. His career as a confidant to rulers, scribe in their chanceries, translator, and scholar took him to Mongolia, Astrakhan, Edirne,

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437 Al-Anṣārī, A Muslim Manual, 22.
Aleppo, Damascus, and finally to Egypt. He is the author of *Fākihat al-Khulafā’,* a mirror for princes. It is divided into ten chapters, the last of which discusses dealing with enemies. In this chapter Ibn ‘Arabshāh discusses the rise and career of Genghis Khan and also briefly discusses the composition of his armies. He also wrote a history of Timur entitled ‘Ajā’īb al-Maqdūr fī Nawā’ib Timūr, in which he is extremely critical and hostile to the subject of his book, while also admitting some of his good qualities towards the end. Although ‘Ajā’īb is technically not advice literature, the author’s criticism and praise of Timur throughout can be viewed as such. This work is important because it contains much more detailed descriptions of the military than *Fākihat al-Khulafā’* during the lifetime of the author.

### 2.2 The Pre-Mamlūk Sources

Numerous Arabic historical sources provide insight into what the militaries of the pre-Mamlūk Muslim world were like (or should have been like ideally). These sources will be used to show what the general opinion and consensus on the composition and functionality of the armies of the Muslim world were during the centuries preceding the rise of the Mamlūks among pre-modern Arab historians. The majority of the sources that deal with the early and pre-Mamlūk Muslim world were written in the ‘Abbāsid period; however, many of them do refer to the earlier caliphates. Viewed individually, some of these sources appear to be unreliable. However, when used cautiously together they present as accurate a picture of this era as possible.

One of the most important works on the early conquests (and by extension the armies of the early Muslims) is Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Jābir b. Dāwūd al-Balādhuṟī’s *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān.* Al-Balādhuṟī was probably born and lived most of his life in Baghdad during the

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439 For a detailed overview of his education and career see McChesney, “A Note,” 208-246.


ninth century. Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān is an extensive and detailed history of the early Islamic conquests of Syria, Iraq, Mesopotamia, Iran, North Africa, Spain, and Armenia. Much of this text is devoted to a detailed account of the military campaigns undertaken by the Muslims to conquer the various areas mentioned above. However, this work is most useful for this study in its mention and description of non-Arabs who either defected to the advancing Muslims or were recruited into their armies as the boundaries of the empire were expanded. The recruitment of these non-Arabs and granting them special privileges, exemplified in this work, indicates that there was an inclination (probably due to practical needs such as shortages of manpower and the need for experienced troops) towards the Diversified Army Model even in the earliest period of Islamic history.

Kitāb Futūḥ al-Shām and Futūḥ Ifrīqiyya are two legendary accounts of the early conquests of Syria and North Africa attributed to Muḥammad b. ‘Umar b. Wāqidī (747-822 CE), whose main claim to fame is his Kitāb al-Maghāzī which chronicles the military campaigns of the Prophet. Although these works are attributed to al-Wāqidī, Leder and Rosenthal both state that these are false ascriptions and that they were written at a later date. These works lay a heavy emphasis on the heroic deeds of the champions of the Arabs and contain heavily inflated numbers for the sizes of the armies involved in the battles. Nevertheless, these sources do hold some value for this study; in fact, there are several accounts of conversions among the enemies of the Muslims and their subsequent participation in the conquests alongside their former enemies. These accounts may not be historically accurate; however, they are useful because they acknowledge the fact that non-Arabs and converts became an important part of the


448 Here I use the term “legendary” because there are some obvious embellishments and biases in the descriptions of the events and battles that emphasize elevating the deeds of the Muslims against almost impossible odds during the early conquests.

early Muslim armies and support the more reliable accounts of this time period provided by al-Balādhurī.

Abū Ja’far Muḥammad b. Jarīr b. Yazīd al-Ṭabarī’s (839-923 CE) Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulāk is arguably one of the most important universal histories for this time period. Al-Ṭabarī’s methodology involves his quoting sources for every event he describes and then providing his own opinion on it. Thus, this author’s universal history is the work that preserves the largest array of citations and quotes from early Islamic sources (many of them lost) on the history of the first three centuries of Islam. Al-Ṭabarī’s work carries little bias and he rarely criticizes his sources, even though he quotes criticisms of them by others and has a neutral attitude towards conflicting reports on the same event. Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulāk’s only limitations are those of the sources and their authors that al-Ṭabarī uses to portray early Islamic history. Therefore, because of his approach and methodology, al-Ṭabarī’s Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulāk provides details and information on military campaigns, battles, army composition, and the transformation of the militaries of the Muslim world from the formative years of Islam up until the ‘Abbāsid period. It also provides the means to trace the development of the Diversified Army Model throughout the caliphates.

Another important writer and a contemporary of al-Ṭabarī was Abū al-Ḥasan ʻAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Masʻūdī (896-956 CE). What sets al-Masʻūdī apart from many of the other writers

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453 Hugh Kennedy, “The Sources of al-Ṭabarī’s History of the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate,” in al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and his Work, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2008), 185. Also see John Nawas’s article on the use of numbers in al-Ṭabarī’s work, which concludes that the numbers used by this author in his text do not follow a topoi, as some scholars have stated, but in fact are reliable and present a historical reality (or something close to it) of the time in which the author lived. See John Nawas, “The Quest for Historical Reliability: A Test of Two Hypotheses Relating to the Use of Numbers in al-Ṭabarī’s History,” in al-Ṭabarī: A Medieval Muslim Historian and his Work, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2008), 209-217.

of his time is the fact that he not only depended on books and on accounts relayed to him by others for the composition of his works, but he also travelled extensively throughout and beyond the caliphate. On his journeys he had the chance to talk to a variety of people including soldiers, merchants, religious figures, scholars, and government officials of different ethnicities and religions. Between 915 CE and 946 CE his travels took him through Iraq, Iran, India, Arabia (including Yemen and Oman), Syria, Palestine, Egypt, the Caspian region and the Caucasus. Thus, this writer had firsthand information regarding many of the things about which he wrote. He wrote thirty-six works during his career of which only two survive to this day.

One of al-Masʻūdī’s two surviving texts and his claim to fame is Murūj al-Dhahab wa Maʻādin al-Jawhar. He completed the first edition of this work in 943 CE and the final version shortly before his death in 956 CE. Like al-Ṭabarī’s Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk, this work is a universal history that covers everything from creation to the ‘Abbāsid period. However, it differs greatly from other works in this genre because its author has infused it with a flavor of originality and even authenticity from his travels and personal experiences, which is also compounded by his combination of the genres of history, geography, biography, literary anthology, and encyclopedia in one work.

Abū ʻUthmān ‘Amr b. Baḥr al-Kinānī al-Fuqaymī al-Baṣrī (776/77-868/69 CE), also known as al-Jāḥiẓ, was an Arab writer from Baṣra. He produced a multitude of works on a variety of topics including history, adab, finance and chancery manuals, politics, animal stories, Muʻtazilī theology, and polemical debate among other subjects. However, for the purposes of this study only one of his essays, “The Virtues of the Turks,” is relevant. In this essay the author not only describes and extols the hardiness, strength, skill, discipline, and superiority of the Turks over other groups in military affairs, but he also provides an excellent description of the ‘Abbāsid army as a whole and lists the groups that formed the forces of the caliphate at the

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455 Al-Masʻūdī, Meadows, 11-12. For more on the life, experiences, and scholarship of al-Masʻūdī see the introductory remarks in al-Masʻūdī, Meadows.
456 Al-Masʻūdī, Meadows, 13.
458 Al-Masʻūdī, Meadows, 16.
time that he was writing. Therefore, this short essay, despite its bias favoring the Turks over other groups, is very useful in showing what the ‘Abbāsid army was like or at least should have been like and also how it operated in the ninth century.

ʿIzz al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan ʿAlī b. al-Athīr (1160-1233 CE) was a scholar and historian from Mosul who lived during the Zengid and Ayyūbid periods and enjoyed the patronage of both dynasties. Ibn al-Athīr was a contemporary of the Ayyūbid sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (1138-1193 CE) and served in his army on one or more of his campaigns against the Crusaders. His crowning achievement is his voluminous universal history, al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh. This work covers all of history from creation to the year 1231 CE. For the periods preceding his era this author depended primarily on al-Ṭabarī’s universal history and to a lesser extent on other works that have not survived in their entirety. However, al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh is original and most valuable for its coverage of Ibn al-Athīr’s lifetime and the preceding period. For this section of his work the author recorded his own observations and gathered reports and accounts of eyewitnesses with whom he had contact. Ibn al-Athīr’s father and brothers served in the chanceries of the Zengids, and he himself enjoyed the patronage of the Zengid house of Mosul late into his life. Thus, it should come as no surprise that this author favors the Zengids in his work, and is thus, according to D.S. Richards, is lacking in impartiality. Nevertheless, it still holds some value as a general history and even more so for the Ayyūbid period, during which this author became exposed to military life. However, despite these personal experiences, his descriptions of the armies, battles, and campaigns of this time period are lacking in detail.

Usāma b. Murshid b. ʿAlī also known as Usāma b. Munqidh (1095-1188 CE) was a Syrian nobleman of the Banū Munqidh family that ruled Shayzar (in modern ay Syria), warrior,

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463 Little, “Historiography,” 415.


poet, and man of letters.\textsuperscript{466} He had a very colorful and long career in which he was exiled from his home and lost his inheritance, served the Zengids, the Fāṭimids, the Artūqids, and the Ayyūbids, and was involved in several military campaigns against both Muslim and Christian adversaries.\textsuperscript{467} During his career Usāma b. Munqidh served as a diplomat, envoy, courtier, vassal, and soldier.\textsuperscript{468} Thus, his experience made him very familiar with the armies and warfare during the twelfth century in the regions of Syria and Egypt.

\textit{Kitāb al-Iʿtibār} is this warrior poet’s most important work. It consists of a series of stories and events that reflected on his life and adventures. He compiled this book towards the end of his life.\textsuperscript{469} For this reason, and due to personal biases and exaggerations, the events described by this author may not be as accurate as one would hope. However, it is his description of the battles and the men who fought them that really stands out with regard to this study. The author’s personal experiences that shine through in this work and provide the reader with a “ground view” of the army and the battlefield during the Ayyūbid period.

Bahāʾ al-Dīn Abū al-Maḥāsin Yūsuf b. Rāfīʿ b. Tamīm b. Shaddād (1145-1235 CE) was Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s biographer and close associate. When he met Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, the sultan was so impressed by him and his work that he appointed him as qāḍī al-ʻaskar (military judge) and qāḍī of Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{470} Ibn Shaddād’s most important work is \textit{al-Nawādir al-Ṣultāniyya wa al-Maḥāsin al-Yūsufiya},\textsuperscript{471} sometimes also referred to as \textit{Sīrat Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn}. The book is divided into two sections. The first part is dedicated to Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and praises his virtues and merits. The second part is a chronological account of his career.\textsuperscript{472} Even though this work is one that praises the founder of the Ayyūbid dynasty, it still contains valuable information about his life and is viewed

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{467} For more on his life see Paul M. Cobb’s introduction to his translated edition of \textit{Kitāb al-Iʿtibār}. This book is itself a reflection of the life of its author, Usāma b. Munqidh, \textit{Book of Contemplation}.
\item \textsuperscript{468} Ibn Munqidh, \textit{Book of Contemplation}, xxvi-xxix.
\item \textsuperscript{469} Ibn Munqidh, \textit{Book of Contemplation}, xxxvi-xxix.
\item \textsuperscript{470} For more details on this scholar see Little, “Historiography,” 416.
\item \textsuperscript{472} Little, “Historiography,” 416.
\end{itemize}
as one of the most reliable sources for this time period because of its author’s close relationship with this sultan. The second part of this book is the one that contains the most important information with regard to this study. In it, the author puts a considerable amount of emphasis on Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s military campaigns.\footnote{Little, “Historiography,” 416.}

ʻImād al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Kātib al-Iṣfahānī was an historian of the Ayyūbid era. He was born in Isfahān in 1125 CE and was raised in Kashān, thus making him the only non-Arab Ayyūbid historian.\footnote{For more on his life and career see Little, “Historiography,” 416.} He was able to win the favor of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn when he sent him a poem honoring him. As a reward, he was appointed as his kātib\footnote{He was appointed as the deputy scribe of al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil see Little, “Historiography,” 416-417.} and became his close confidant who accompanied him on all his expeditions.\footnote{Little, “Historiography,” 416-417.}

ʻImād al-Dīn’s most significant work with regard to this study is al-\textit{Fath al-Qūssī fī al-Fath al-Qudsī},\footnote{ʻImād al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Kātib al-Iṣfahānī, \textit{al-Fath al-Qussī} (Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmiyya li al-Tibāʿa wa al-Nashr, 1965).} which is an account of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s campaigns from 1187 CE until his death. This work is useful because its author was an eyewitness to the events that it describes. However, it could be a challenge to read and to extract information from it because it is written in rhymed prose which obscures and hides the events being described and exaggerates some of these events due to its panegyric nature.\footnote{Little, “Historiography,” 417.} Despite this shortcoming, there are several instances in which the Ayyūbid army and the groups that formed it are mentioned. One can also glean a similarity between the family-style rule of the Ayyūbids\footnote{Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his successors granted the Ayyūbid family control over various sections of the sultanate which they ruled almost independently.} and the decentralized nature of the Ayyūbid army.

Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-Qāṣim ʻAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ismāʿīl al-Maqdisī, known as Abū Shāma, was an Arab historian who lived between 1205 CE and 1268 CE and spent most of his
life in Damascus. His most important work is *al-Rawdatayn fī Akhbār al-Dawlatayn*, a chronicle that gives an account of the reigns of Nūr al-Dīn Zengī and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn. In addition to his own eyewitness accounts, he also refers to the works of other contemporary writers such as ʻImād al-Dīn al-Kātib al-İsfahānī, al-Qāḍī al-Fāḍil, and Ibn al-Jawzi. This work will be of some use as it gives an account of the main political and military events that occurred during the reign of the two rulers mentioned above and by extension some descriptions of their armies.

Abū ʻAbd Allāh Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʻAbd Allāh b. Muṣṭafā b. Saʿīd b. Waṣīl (1208–1298 CE) was a judge and a historian. His most important historical work is *Mufarrij al-Kurūb fī Akhbār Banī Ayyūb*, which is a history of the Ayyūbid dynasty. It has been seen as an attempt to portray the Ayyūbids as the ideal Muslim rulers. Despite its allegedly pro-Ayyūbid bias, this source remains an important one for this time period. The author depends on sources such as Abū Shāma’s *al-Rawdatayn fī Akhbār al-Dawlatayn* and Ibn al-Athīr’s *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* for the early period of the Ayyūbid dynasty up to the death of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, after which he relies on his own observations and experiences to recount the rule of the Ayyūbid family. Once again, this is a useful source because it reports the military events that occurred during the Ayyūbid period in a chronological manner, and occasionally provides some details on military action in the campaigns of the Ayyūbids.

### 2.3 The Mamlūk Sources

There is a large body of literature that survives from the Mamlūk period. These sources include chronicles, regnal histories, biographical dictionaries, and official documents, written by

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482 Little, “Historiography,” 418.


484 Little, “Historiography,” 418.
a variety of people including scribes, chancery officials, and military men.\textsuperscript{486} Because of the military nature of the Mamlūk sultanate and the central role that the army played in politics and society, these sources contain a wealth of detail regarding the condition, organization, and function of the Mamlūk army. This section will survey some of the most important sources from the Mamlūk period.

Among the prominent writers of the early Mamlūk period is Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl ‘Abd Allāh b. Rashīd al-Dīn Abū Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir b. Nashwān b. ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir b. Najda al-Sa’dī al-Rawḥī, known as Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir (1223-1292 CE), the author of \textit{al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir}.\textsuperscript{487} He held high positions at court during the reigns of al-Ẓāhir Baybars, al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn, and al-Ashraf Khalīl either as the kātib al-sirr (private secretary) of the sultan or as the ṣāḥib dīwān al-inshā’ (head of the chancery).\textsuperscript{488} \textit{Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir} is a regnal history of Baybars and may have been inspired by Ibn Shaddād’s biography of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, especially regarding the author’s enumeration of his patron’s merits and praising of his deeds. Despite the propagandistic and biased nature of this work,\textsuperscript{489} it remains a very important historical document because of the close proximity of its author to the sultan, his familiarity with the royal court, and his description of this ruler’s military campaigns and the army. Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir was also privy to information and secrets to which few others living at the time had access.\textsuperscript{490}

Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāfī b. ‘Alī al-‘Asqalānī (1252-1330 CE) was the nephew of Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir. He also worked in the chancery, but never reached the illustrious position and rank that his uncle attained.\textsuperscript{491} His career slowed down considerably after he was blinded at the Battle of Ḥimṣ

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\textsuperscript{486} For a summary of some of historical writing in this time period see Guo, “History Writing,” 449-452.
\textsuperscript{489} Little, “Historiography,” 421.
\textsuperscript{490} Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir has also written regnal histories for the reigns of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn and al-Ashraf Khalīl. However, these works have only survived in fragments. They are \textit{Tashrīf al-Ayyām wa al-‘Uṣūr fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Mansūr for Qalāwūn’s reign} and \textit{al-Altāf al-Khaṭfiyya min al-Sīra al-Sharīfa al-Ṣulṭāniyya al-Malikiyya al-Ashrafiyya for al-Ashraf’s reign}. For more details see, P.M. Holt, “The Virtuous Ruler in Thirteenth Century Royal Biographies,” \textit{NMS}, 24 (1980), 27-3; Northrup, \textit{Slave to Sultan}, 27; Little, “Historiography,” 421-422.
\textsuperscript{491} For a more detailed account of his career see, Northrup, \textit{Slave to Sultan}, 28-33.
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in 1281 CE. The first of Shafi’ b. ‘Ali’s books is *Husn al-Manaqib al-Sirriyya al-Muntaza‘a min al-Sira al-Zahiriyya*, which is a history of Baybars’ reign. In essence, this work is more than just an abridgement of his uncle’s biography; in fact, it corrects some of the errors and exaggerations in Ibn ‘Abd al-Zahir’s version because it was written two and a half decades after Baybars’ death. Shafi’ b. ‘Ali also wrote *al-Fadl al-Ma’thur min Sirat al-Malik al-Manṣūr*, a biography of Qalāwūn. While part of this work was written during the reign of this sultan, it was completed after his death. Like Ibn ‘Abd al-Zahir’s biography, one of the objectives of this work was to legitimize Qalāwūn’s rule; and thus seeks to portray the sultan as positively as possible. However, its value lies in the fact that its author was a firsthand witness to many of the events that he describes.

‘Izz al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Shaddād al-Ḥalabī (1217-1285 CE) was also a bureaucrat and historian of the early Mamlūk period. He authored a biography of the life of al-Zahir Baybars entitled *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zahir*. Like Ibn ‘Abd al-Zahir’s book, this work also glorifies the sultan and is even organized in a similar manner. However, the author does include unique information especially regarding the Turkmen tribesmen and Mongol wāfidiyya, thus providing some originality.

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495 Several of the royal biographies written between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries (of the Ayyūbids and the Mamlūks) aimed to legitimize the rule of their subjects, to outline their virtues, and to portray them as the ideal Muslim rulers. See Holt, “Virtuous Ruler,” 27-35.
496 Northrup, *Slave to Sultan*, 30-31; Little, “Historiography,” 422.
497 Northrup, *Slave to Sultan*, 31; Little, “Historiography,” 422.
498 For more on his life and career see Little, “Historiography,” 422-423.
500 The wāfidiyya were refugees and immigrants who entered the Mamlūk sultanate and took up service in the Mamlūk army. On the other hand, there were large numbers of Turkmen tribesmen in the Mamlūk domains, especially in Syria, who had entered during the Oghuz migrations and were always a source of military manpower. For more information see Ayalon, “Auxiliary Forces,” 13-37; Ayalon, “Wāfidiyya,” 81-104.
Another historian of the early Mamlûk period was Baybars al-Manṣūrî (d. 1324-25 CE). In contrast to other Mamlûk historians mentioned so far, he was a member of the ruling elite rather than a bureaucrat or scholar by profession. He started his career as one of Qalâwûn’s mamlûks during Baybars’ reign, participated in several military campaigns against the Franks, the Mongols, and the Armenians during his career, rose through the ranks to the highest echelons of the Mamlûk military, to the rank of Amîr of One Hundred, and held several lofty positions at court including niyâbat al-ṣaltana in Egypt (viceroys) and niyâbat al-ṣaltana of Karak (the governorate of Karak).  

Baybars al-Manṣūrî wrote two important historical works with the help of a Christian secretary. The first of these books is Zubdat al-Fikra fī Tārīkh al-Hijra, a universal chronicle ending with the events of 1324 CE. The most useful part of this work is the last section that deals with the Mamlûk sultanate, especially the reigns of the three sultans al-Manṣūr Qalâwûn, al-Ashraf Khalîl, and al-Nâṣîr Muḥammad, under whom he served. In this section the author describes the military campaigns and politics of the Mamlûks through his experiences and from his perspective. The second book, al-Tuhfa al-Mulûkiyya fī al-Dawla al-Turkiyya, is primarily a summary of the sections dealing with the Mamlûks from Zubdat al-Fikra in rhymed prose; it ends in 1312 CE. Despite the similarity of the two works, al-Tuhfa cannot be dismissed because Baybars al-Manṣūrî includes new details and bits of information that are not present in Zubdat al-Fikra. These sources are very important to this study because they present the history of the early Mamlûk sultanate from the perspective of a mamlûk, who rose to the highest of ranks in this military society and personally participated in several campaigns and battles.

Like Baybars al-Manṣūrî, al-Malik al-Mu’ayyad ‘Imâd al-Dîn Abû al-Fidâ was also a member of the ruling military elite. He was a scion of the Ayyûbid family and had a notable

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502 For more on his life and career see Little, Introduction, 4-10; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 38; Little, “Historiography,” 423.
military career and had participated in several campaigns including the conquest of Acre in 1291 CE and the Mamlūk subjugation of Ḥamā in 1299 CE, in addition to forays and campaigns against the Mongols and Armenians. Abū al-Fidā was able to maintain himself as the independent ruler of Ḥamā because of his support for the Mamlūk sultans especially, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who made him the city’s sultan.

His most important work is al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar, which is a universal history from creation to 1329 CE. This is a valuable source because its author was a member of the ruling elite and had a good relationship with al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. Thus, he had access to some of the most private information regarding the military and politics at that time. He had also participated in several military campaigns that gave him firsthand knowledge about warfare during this period. He used his own observations and information gained from others around him to write about the era in which he lived. His work is also important because it provides a Syrian perspective on the history of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

Like the last two historians discussed, Sayf al-Dīn Abū Bakr b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Aybak al-Dawādārī, known as Ibn al-Dawādārī, also belonged to a military family. However, he was a member of the awlād al-nāṣ (the sons of mamlūks) social group, who could not attain ranks and positions as high and prominent as those held by Abū al-Fidā and Baybars al-Manṣūrī. In fact, his personal achievements are of little note and he is not mentioned in any biographical

507 Little, “Historiography,” 423.
508 For more details on his life and career see Little, Introduction, 42-46; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 45; Little, “Historiography,” 423.
509 Little, “Historiography,” 423.
511 Little, “Historiography,” 423.
512 Northrup states that most of this text, at least for Qalāwūn’s reign when he would have still been very young, is based on other sources such as Baybars al-Manṣūrī’s Zubdat al-Fikra. She concludes that most of the material found in this text could be found elsewhere (and in more detail), thus making this source of little use for the reign of Qalāwūn. However, it may be more useful for the purposes of the current study which is broader in scope and encompasses all the military developments of this period. See Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 45.
513 Little, Introduction, 43; Little, “Historiography,” 423.
514 For a more detailed look at his life and career see Ulrich Haarmann, Quellenstudien zur frühen Mamlukenzeit (Freiburg im Breisgau K. Schwarz 1970), 61-84, 86-90; Little, Introduction, 10-18; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 47-48; Little, “Historiography,” 424-425.
dictionaries or chronicles of the period. His most important work is *Kanz al-Durar wa Jāmi‘ al-Ghurar*. This nine volume work is a universal chronicle of which two volumes deal with the Mamlūk period until 1336 CE. This writer used his father and his acquaintances as his main informants. He also borrowed heavily from other historians, especially from al-Jazarī’s lost works, although he does not acknowledge them. In fact, he may have even attributed information he took from other sources to his father in order to make his own work seem more authentic. 

Ibn al-Dawādārī’s chronicle, despite its biases, story-like nature, and “lack of scholarliness,” contains some original information based on the experiences of the author and his father and may even be a source that preserves some parts of al-Jazarī’s lost annals. 

Mūsā b. Muḥammad b. al-Shaykh al-Ŷūsūfī was also a military man. He was the commander of the ḥalqa (*muqaddam al-ḥalqa*), the freeborn regular cavalry corps of the Mamlūk army, composed of non-mamlūks. He participated in several military campaigns in Syria against the Mongols, in Yemen, and in Armenia and made acquaintances and friends both among the high ranking mamlūks of the army and in the bureaucracy, all of whom he quotes and uses as sources in his chronicle. His work, *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir*, covers the period from the end of Qalāwūn’s reign to 1354 CE. Much of this work did not survive; we have only the fragment for the years 1332-1338 CE, in addition to a few sections of it preserved in other sources. Al-Ŷūsufī’s lack of a conventional education makes his work “a distinctly

517 This scholar will be discussed below on page 20.
519 Little, “Historiography,” 424.
520 For his unconventional approach to history, i.e., his break with the rigid historiographical framework of the other writers of this period and “his literarization and dehistorification” of historiography (due to a lack of a traditional education) see Little, “Historiography,” 424-425

523 Little, “Historiography,” 426.
personalized version of history” which “reads like a fiction.” However, this work is useful because it is the “fullest, best documented contemporary source for the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.” Al-Yūsufi is the only writer who openly criticizes al-Nāṣir and thus reveals some of the grievances against this sultan’s rule and thus influenced the way in which he was viewed by posterity.

Shams al-Dīn b. al-Shujāʿī must be briefly mentioned at this point. He was a contemporary of al-Yūsufi and died in 1356 CE. He wrote Tārīkh al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn al-Ṣāliḥī wa Awlādihi. This work is a history of the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and his progeny. It only survives as a fragment covering the years 1337-1345 CE. The fact that the content for the years that overlap with those that survive from al-Yūsufi’s work are almost identical shows that this author relied fully on him for his information. Thus, this work partially preserves some of the missing material from al-Yūsufi’s Nuzhat al-Nāẓir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir.

Shams al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Majd al-Dīn Abī Isḥāq Ibrāhīm b. Abī Bakr b. Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Jazarī al-Dimashqī was a Syrian scholar and historian. His most important work is Ḥawādith al-Zamān wa Anbāʾīhi wa Wafāyāt al-Akābir wa al-Aʾyān min Abnāʾīhi, which is a chronicle that puts equal emphasis on the events of the years that it covers and the obituaries that accompany them. It covers the period from 1196 CE up to the author’s death and is one of the important sources of the early Mamlūk period; it was often used and

527 Little, “Historiography,” 426.
528 Little, “Historiography,” 427.
530 Little, “Historiography,” 427.
531 For more on his life, education, and career see Haarman, Quellenstudien, 12-60; Little, Introduction, 53-57; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 41-42; Little, “Historiography,” 428-429.
533 Little, Introduction, 53-54; Little, “Historiography,” 428.
referred to by other historians.\textsuperscript{534} \textit{Hawādith al-Zamān} has survived only in fragments, of which parts have been published.\textsuperscript{535} The author relied heavily on al-Birzālī and al-Yunīnī for parts of his work. However, even the material borrowed from other sources is supplemented with new details and the author’s observations.\textsuperscript{536} This source will be utilized in this study as it, like the others written by Syrian scholars, provides a Syrian perspective to the events that took place in the early Mamlūk period. However, the heavy emphasis on the obituaries and biographies of scholars in this work decreases its value for a study focused on military history.

Quṭb al-Dīn Mūsā b. Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Quṭb al-Dīn al-Yunīnī was another Syrian historian and religious scholar.\textsuperscript{537} He is the author of a \textit{Dhayl Mirʿāt al-Zamān fi Tārīkh al-Aʿyān} \textsuperscript{538} which is a continuation of Śibt b. al-Jawzī’s \textit{Mirʿāt al-Zamān fi Tārīkh al-Aʿyān}. During his career he had a positive relationship with both the Ayyūbids, who respected him very highly, and the Mamlūks.\textsuperscript{539} He was also linked to the mamlūk military elite through the marriage of his daughter to ‘Izz al-Dīn Aybak al-Iskandarī al-Ṣāliḥī, a powerful mamlūk amīr and the \textit{nāʾib} (viceroy) of the castle of Baʿlabakk.\textsuperscript{540}

Al-Yunīnī worked very diligently in gathering as much information as possible by talking to people who had witnessed or experienced certain events, but he also witnessed some of the occurrences during his personal travels. For instance, he heard a detailed account of the siege of Ḥiṣn al-Akrād when he met Baybars I’s advisor, Khaḍir b. Abī Bakr, as he passed through Baʿlabakk after the siege.\textsuperscript{541} He also witnessed Qalāwūn’s victory at the Battle of Ḥimṣ in 1281 CE. He may have even taken part in the battle.\textsuperscript{542} He also happened to be in Tripoli in 1289 CE,

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\textsuperscript{534} Haarmann, \textit{Quellenstudien}, 198-203; Little, \textit{Introduction}, 98; Northrup, \textit{Slave to Sultan}, 42.
\textsuperscript{535} Little, “Historiography,” 428.
\textsuperscript{536} Little, \textit{Introduction}, 54-56, 60; Northrup, \textit{Slave to Sultan}, 42; Little, “Historiography,” 428.
\textsuperscript{537} For details on his life and career see Li Guo, \textit{Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography: Al-Yūnīnī’s Dhayl Mirʿāt al-Zaman} (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 6-22.
\textsuperscript{539} Guo, \textit{Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography}, 8.
\textsuperscript{540} Guo, \textit{Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography}, 12.
\textsuperscript{541} Guo, \textit{Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography}, 11.
\textsuperscript{542} Guo, \textit{Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography}, 12.
\end{footnotes}
while en route to Egypt, and witnessed a battle there between the Mamlūks and the Crusaders.\textsuperscript{543} Even though there is a heavy emphasis on Syrian scholars in \textit{Dhayl Mir`āt al-Zamān},\textsuperscript{544} it still contains valuable information for the purposes of this study because of the military events that al-Yūnīnī witnessed or heard about, especially those taking place in Syria. There is a very close relationship between al-Yūnīnī’s work and that of al-Jazarī. In fact, it seems that they either freely borrowed information from each other, or even shared it.\textsuperscript{545} One could say that the works of al-Birzālī, al-Jazarī, and al-Yūnīnī complement one another and help present a Syrian perspective on early Mamlūk history.\textsuperscript{546}

\textquote{‘Imād al-Dīn Ismā’īl b. ‘Umar b. Kathīr was a religious scholar who was born in Buṣrā in 1300 CE and died in Damascus in 1373 CE.\textsuperscript{547} He was also a historian and his most famous work is \textit{al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya fī al-Tārīkh}.\textsuperscript{548} This source consists of fourteen volumes. Those volumes that cover the Mamlūk period rely heavily on other sources such as al-Birzālī, al-Jazarī, and al-Yūnīnī.\textsuperscript{549} Despite its apparent repetitiveness, \textit{al-Bidāya} is useful because it preserves some material that was lost from the other sources from which it borrowed. This author also adds his own comments and opinions, which add to its value.\textsuperscript{550}}

Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Bakrī al-Tamīmī al-Qurashī al-Shāfī ī al-Nuwayrī (1279-1333 CE) was a bureaucrat and historian of the Mamlūk sultanate in both Egypt and Syria.\textsuperscript{551} During his career, al-Nuwayrī worked in the \textit{Dīwān al-Khāṣṣ} and the \textit{Dīwān al-

\textsuperscript{543} Guo, \textit{Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography}, 13.


\textsuperscript{546} For more on the relationship between the works of al-Yūnīnī, al-Jazarī, and al-Birzālī see Guo, \textit{Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography}, 41-57; and for more information on al-Yūnīnī’s sources see Guo, \textit{Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography}, 60-80.


\textsuperscript{549} Northrup, \textit{Slave to Sultan}, 50.

\textsuperscript{550} Northrup, \textit{Slave to Sultan}, 50.

\textsuperscript{551} For more on his life and career see, Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh ’Inān, \textit{Mu’arrikhū Miṣr al-Islāmiyya} (Cairo: 1969), 62-75; Amīna Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn, \textit{al-Nuwayrī wa Kitābuhi Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab, Maṣādiruhu
Inshā’. His most important work, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab*, is an encyclopedia that he wrote for use by other clerks in the chancery. The work is divided into four parts; the last part is a universal history that covers the period from creation to 1332 CE and forms about two thirds of the entire work. For his history of the Mamlūk sultanate he refers to Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir, Baybars al-Mansūrī, and al-Jazārī. However, he adds his own observations and new material to these accounts, making this work valuable for its originality.

Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā b. Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umarī (1301-1349 CE) was a writer and an administrator who served in the Mamlūk chancery at Cairo and Damascus. His most important work, for the purpose of this study, is *al-Ta‘rīf bi al-Muṣṭalaḥ al-Sharīf*, which is an administrative manual. In addition to incorporating documents it also contains historical annals covering the *hijra* to 1342 CE. However, it is lacking in originality even for the period of the author’s lifetime.

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī (1297-1363 CE) was one of the most prolific biographers of the Mamlūk period. He was born into the family of a mamlūk amīr, and thus was a member of the awlād al-nās class. His privileged status allowed him access to people and

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**Notes:**


553 Little, “Historiography,” 430.


555 Little, “Historiography,” 430.


558 Little, “Historiography,” 431.

559 For more on his life and career see Little, *Introduction*, 38-40; Northrup, *Slave to Sultan*, 56-57; Little, “Historiography,” 431-432.
information that many others who were not members of the socio-military elite did not have.\textsuperscript{560} His most important works with regard to Mamlūk history and this study are his two biographical dictionaries \textit{al-Wāfi bi al-Wafāyāt}\textsuperscript{561} and \textit{A‘yān al-‘Aṣr wa A‘wān al-Naṣr}.\textsuperscript{562} The former includes the biographies of prominent people from the Prophet to his own day; the latter is devoted to the author’s important contemporaries.\textsuperscript{563} Even though there is some overlap between the two works, a large number of entries in \textit{A‘yān al-‘Aṣr wa A‘wān al-Naṣr} “are independent from” those in the more comprehensive \textit{al-Wāfi bi al-Wafāyāt}.\textsuperscript{564} These biographical dictionaries are useful for the information they provide on notables of the Mamlūk military class. Thus, they help to reveal the changes that occurred within the upper ranks of the Mamlūk military throughout the existence of the sultanate up to al-Ṣafadī’s time.

Shihāb al-Dīn Abu al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. Aḥmad b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Qalqashandī (d. 1414 CE) was a secretary in the chancery during the reign of Barqūq.\textsuperscript{565} His work, \textit{Ṣubḥ al-‘shā fī Šinā‘at al-Inshā‘},\textsuperscript{566} is a scribal and administrative manual for secretaries, similar to the one written by al-‘Umarī, but more comprehensive.\textsuperscript{567} This work is divided into thirteen volumes and preserves a large number of documents including appointments to offices, official letters, proclamations, and describes the various posts and positions in the administration of the sultanate.\textsuperscript{568} In addition to transcribing these administrative and diplomatic documents the author also provides his personal\textsuperscript{569} analysis of them.\textsuperscript{570} Thus, some of the documents preserved in \textit{Ṣubḥ

\textsuperscript{560} Little, “Historiography,” 431.
\textsuperscript{563} Little, “Historiography,” 431; Northrup, \textit{Slave to Sultan}, 56-57.
\textsuperscript{564} Little, “Historiography,” 432. Also see Donald Little, “Al-Ṣafadī as Biographer of his Contemporaries,” in Essays on Islamic Civilization Presented to Niyażi Berkes, ed. Donald Little (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 190-211.
\textsuperscript{567} Little, “Historiography,” 444.
\textsuperscript{568} Northrup, \textit{Slave to Sultan}, 58.
\textsuperscript{569} i.e. that of a chancery official.
al-

A’shā can be used to supplement and confirm the material that appears in other sources. For instance, it may help to clarify the role of the Arabs and the amīr al-ʿarab because it preserves several documents of investiture for this position.

Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm b. ʿAlī b. al-Furāt al-Miṣrī al-Ḥanafī (1334-1405 CE) was an Egyptian historian and scholar. He wrote a comprehensive universal history entitled Tārīkh al-Duwal wa al-Mulūk, in which he discusses the Ayyūbids and the early Mamlūk sultanate. However, it has only survived in fragments. This author’s work contains reports derived from previous histories in addition to original material. Despite the fragmentary nature of this source it will nevertheless provide some information which will help to round out and support the other sources regarding the militaries of the Ayyūbid and the Mamlūk sultanates.

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Khaldūn (1332-1406 CE) is one of the most important philosophers of history for his time. He had a rich career serving in the courts of several sultanates stretching from Morocco to Egypt and Syria. His most important work is the Muqaddima, which was the promising introduction to his universal history Kitāb al-ʿIbār wa Dīwān al-Muḥtada’ wa al-Khabar fī Ayyām al-ʿArab wa al-Barbar. According to Little, the latter has turned out to be something of a disappointment as it fails to live up to and fulfill the objectives set forth in the Muqaddima. Nevertheless, this work does contain some important sections on the impact of slave soldiers on the Islamic world and on Barqūq’s reign.

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570 Little, “Historiography,” 444.
571 For more details on his life see Little, Introduction, 73; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 51; Little, “Historiography,” 433-435.
572 For more details on his life see Little, Introduction, 73-75; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 5; Little, “Historiography,” 433-436.
575 Little, “Historiography,” 435.
Taqī al-Dīn Abū ʿAbbās Aḥmad b. ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī (1364-1442 CE) was once viewed as perhaps one of the most important historians of the Mamlūk period. He held several positions as a teacher and public official in Cairo and Damascus; however he eventually resigned from public life and dedicated himself to being a full-time historian. His chronicle Kitāb al-Sulūk li Maʿrifat Duwal al-Mulūk has long enjoyed a high reputation, but the extent of the originality of this work is unclear, because the author seldom quotes his sources. Yet, it is quite evident that he borrowed liberally from many other works, especially for the sections on the early Mamlūk period. As a matter of fact, his honesty and integrity as a historian and scholar, and the reliability of his work, have been challenged by several scholars. Most prominent among these is Frédéric Bauden, who has written a series of articles on al-Maqrīzī entitled “Maqriziana.” He points out that this historian almost fully plagiarized Kitāb al-Mawāʿiẓ wa al-Iʿtibār fī Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa al-Āthār from his colleague, al-Awḥadī. In fact, Bauden claims that accusations of plagiarism were first leveled against al-Maqrīzī by his contemporaries Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī and al-Sakhāwī. The latter even goes so far as to call him an incompetent historian whose works are full of errors. Amitai-Preiss, echoing Little, has also pointed out the lack of originality in Kitāb al-Sulūk, especially for the early decades of the Mamlūk sultanate. He states that al-Maqrīzī actually summarized Ibn al-Furāt’s Kitāb al-Duwal wa al-Mulūk for this period. Amitai-Preiss also asserts that al-Maqrīzī’s summary is sloppy and inaccurate. For this reason, he

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576 For more on his life, education, career, and work see Little, Introduction, 76-80; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 51-52; Little, “Historiography,” 436.


578 To date there have been twelve “Maqriziana” articles published by this author, which discuss a number of issues such as the reliability of al-Maqrīzī’s works, his plagiarism, and orthography. These include, Frédéric Bauden, “Maqriziana I: Discovery of an Autograph Manuscript of al-Maqrīzī: Towards a Better Understanding of His Working Method Description: Section 1,” MSR 7, 2 (2003); Frédéric Bauden, “Maqriziana I: Discovery of an Autograph Manuscript of al-Maqrīzī: Towards a Better Understanding of His Working Method Description: Section 2,” MSR 10, 2 (2006); Frédéric Bauden, “Maqriziana XII. Evaluating the Sources for the Fatimid Period: Ibn al-Maʿmūn al-Batūʿiḥi’s History and its use by al-Maqrīzī (with a Critical Edition of His Résumé for the Years 501–515 A.H.),” in Ismaʿili and Fatimid Studies in Honor of Paul E. Walker, ed. Bruce D. Craig (Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, 2010); Frédéric Bauden, “Maqriziana IX: Should al-Maqrīzī Be Thrown Out with the Bath Water? The Question of His Plagiarism of al-Awḥadī’s Khiṭaṭ and the Documentary Evidence,” MSR 14, (2010).

579 Bauden, “Maqriziana IX,” 159-161.

580 Also see Bauden, “Maqriziana I: Section 1,” 21-68; Bauden, “Maqriziana I: Section 2,” 81-139; Bauden, “Maqriziana XII,” 33-85.


582 Bauden, “Maqriziana IX,” 169.
suggests that al-Maqrīzī’s chronicle is best used in conjunction with other works, rather than as an independent historical source. While al-Maqrīzī’s work cannot be fully discarded, the researcher must be aware of its shortcomings and use it in conjunction with other works. Perhaps it may be best used as a kind of a reference as a history of the Mamlūks up to the author’s period and viewed as a work that compiles and preserves several older sources.

Abū Muḥammad Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad b. Mūsā Badr al Dīn al-‘Aynī (1361-1451 CE) was an historian, in addition to being a teacher and a fiqh scholar. He was a contemporary of al-Maqrīzī and also the author of a universal history entitled ‘Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān, which covers the period from creation to his time. It is deemed superior in “systematic organization, identification, and citation of sources” to al-Maqrīzī’s work.

This source is especially useful because it preserves al-Yūsūfī’s work more completely and in more detail than al-Maqrīzī’s universal history.

Abū al-Maḥāsin Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf b. Taghrī Birdī (1409-1470 CE) was an historian descended from a high ranking mamlūk amīr from Rūm who eventually rose to the rank of commander in chief of the army (atābak). In addition to a scholarly education, his status as one of the awlād al-nās also allowed him to receive military training. In fact, he was present at and actively participated in Barsbāy’s Syrian campaign in 1432 CE. This writer produced al-Manhal al-Ṣāfī, a biographical dictionary and al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa al-

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584 Little, “Historiography,” 437.
585 For more on his life and career see Little, Introduction, 80-87; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 52-53; Little, “Historiography,” 437.
589 For more on his life, career, and work see Little, Introduction, 87-92; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 53-54; Little, “Historiography,” 438-440.
590 Little, “Historiography,” 439.
Qāhira, a chronicle. This latter work is a history of Islamic Egypt and is not annalistic, but rather organized by dynasty. This historian’s works are important because of his superior and intimate knowledge of the Mamlūk army. Furthermore, his education at the hands of prominent scholars and his affiliation with the royal court and the army positioned this author to have access to information from a broader spectrum than most other authors.

Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Iyās (1448-1524 CE) was an historian of the late Mamlūk period. He was born into a mamlūk family with an illustrious great grandfather who was a mamlūk amīr who held prominent positions in Egypt and Syria. His most important work is Kitāb Tārīkh Miṣr al-Mashhūr bi Badā‘i‘ al-Zuhūr fī Waqā‘i‘ al-Duhūr, a chronicle devoted to the history of Egypt. It is a valuable source because it gives an account of the decline of the sultanate and its defeat by the Ottomans.

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593 Little, Introduction, 87; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 53; Little, “Historiography,” 439.
595 Little, “Historiography,” 439.
596 For more on his family, life and career see, Little, Introduction, 92-94; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 54-55; Little, “Historiography,” 440-441.
598 Little, “Historiography,” 441.
Chapter 3

Military Models: the Diversified Army Model, the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model, and State Building

3.1 Defining the “Army” in the Context of the Current Study

This study is focused on examining the structure and composition of the Mamlūk army, the transformations it underwent, and assessing its military effectiveness throughout the Mamlūk period. For this reason, it is important to briefly discuss the term “army” and what it means within the context of this study. Defining this term here will clarify that the Mamlūk sultanate did have an entity that can be referred to as its army. Furthermore, although this army was composed of several groups that had their own leaders and were often in competition with one another (especially during the fifteenth century), they were all ultimately under the sovereign’s control, especially during times of war when these groups were summoned and mobilized by the sultan and his representatives to fight external threats.

The Mamlūk army was composed of the army of Egypt and the provincial armies of Syria. The army of Egypt was composed of three main elements: the Royal Mamlūks, the ḥalqa, and the amīrs’ mamlūks.599 The Royal Mamlūks and the ḥalqa were directly under the command of the sultan and the central regime. The amīrs commanded their own forces; however they were promoted to their ranks by the sultan and the number of mamlūks an amīr had under his command depended on how high up he was in the hierarchy and upon the income he received from the iqṭā’ he was granted. For example, an Amīr of One Hundred had the right to have one hundred mamlūks of his own in theory. However, this number was sometimes greatly exceeded by powerful and wealthy amīrs. For example, the great fourteenth century amīr Yalbughā al-‘Umarī’s mamlūks numbered in the thousands.600 These amīrs were sometimes a challenge and a threat to the ruling sultan and often competed with one another for resources and power. However, they formed a part of the military apparatus of the Mamlūk army in Egypt. During

599 See Ayalon, “Studies I,” 203-228 for a discussion of the Royal Mamlūks; see Ayalon, “Studies II,” 448-476 for a discussion of the ḥalqa and the amīrs’ mamlūks. These elements of the Mamlūk army will also be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 see pages 215-222.

600 See Van Steenbergen, “On the Brink,” 142. This amīr and his mamlūks will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 see pages 316-318.
military campaigns, the armies that were mobilized in Egypt and sent to fight in Syria or Anatolia were composed of troops from among the Royal Mamlûks, the halqa, and the amîrs’ mamlûks. The sources describe such armies and often give the numbers of amîrs of various ranks who were in that army with their troops. Additionally, sometimes an amîr who displeased or came into conflict with the sultan lost his iqṭâ’ and his mamlûks were confiscated and enlisted into the ranks of the ruling sultan’s Royal Mamlûks. Finally, all the soldiers and amîrs of the three main elements of the Mamlûk army in Egypt received their pay either from the central treasury or through the iqṭâ’ that were granted to amîrs in order for them to maintain their forces.

The military forces of the Mamlûk sultanate in Syria were also organized in a similar manner to the army in Egypt. The viceroy (nâ‘ib al-ṣalṭana) and the governors of the various districts had their own personal guards. The amîrs of Syria also had their followings, the size of which depended on their ranks. There were also units of Syrian halqa, which were stationed in the various towns and cities of Syria. The Syrian armies were smaller in size than the main Egyptian army, and did not have a counterpart to the vaunted Royal Mamlûks. Despite the seemingly large number of independent military units in Egypt and Syria, they can all be viewed as parts of a single body that was the Mamlûk army. During a major campaign that required a full mobilization of the army, the Egyptian army was assembled and marched out to face the enemy either in Syria or along the Anatolian frontier and was joined along the way by the armies of Syria that had been mobilized by the governors. Overall command of the army usually either fell to the sultan, or in his absence to the atâbak (the commander-in-chief) or a senior amîr who had been appointed to command the army.

The fifteenth century author of Kitâb Zubdat Kashf al-Mamâlik wa Bayân al-Ţuruq wa al-Masâlik, Ghars al-dîn Khalîl b. Shâhîn al-Ţâhirî, mentions an anecdote that shows how the Mamlûk army was viewed as being a unified body. He tells the story of an envoy from the “greatest” ruler in the east paying a visit to an unnamed Mamlûk sultan’s court with an

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601 Examples of such armies are discussed in detail in Chapter 7 see pages 352-354, 356.
602 This concept is no different to ancient standing armies such as the army of the Roman Empire that was composed of a number of legions and auxilia units or modern armies composed of various battalions, divisions, and regiments with their own hierarchy of officers and commanders.
603 The text names this ruler as Qarâbâlqolî.
ultimatum that gave the sultan the option of paying his master tribute and acknowledging him as his overlord or to face an invasion. The envoy then went on to compare his master’s army to the sultan’s. In the text he states that the armies of the east were so vast that the sultan’s entire military is the equivalent of but a fraction of the eastern ruler’s forces. The sultan was perturbed by this report and sought the advice of his counsellors. One of them, the commander of the army, comforted his sovereign by stating that his armies were stronger and larger than those of his eastern rival and advised that he should carry out a survey of the dīwān al-jaysh in order to create an accurate report on the state of the military and to respond to this threat with real information on the true might of the sultanate’s forces. Ibn Shāhīn lists the following units for the Egyptian army: 24,000 ḥalqa soldiers, 10,000 Royal Mamlūks, and 8,000 amīrs’ mamlūks. He then lists the armies of Syria as follows: 12,000 ḥalqa soldiers and 3,000 amīrs and their mamlūks in Damascus; 6,000 ḥalqa soldiers and 2,000 amīrs and their mamlūks in Aleppo; 4,000 ḥalqa soldiers and 1,000 amīrs and their mamlūks in Tripoli; 1,000 ḥalqa soldiers and 1,000 amīrs and their mamlūks in Ṣafad; and 1,000 ḥalqa soldiers and mamlūks in Ghaza. Although the numbers presented in this anecdote are probably highly exaggerated, especially for the fifteenth century, and intend to convey the message that the armies of the sultanate were vast and mighty, what is pertinent to us here is the fact that all of the forces that were listed above were considered to be a part of the Mamlūk army by the author of the text and that the soldiers in the units listed above were all registered in the dīwān al-jaysh. Thus, for the purposes of this study the Mamlūk army will refer to all the regular mamlūk and ḥalqa soldiers and their officers who were enrolled in the dīwān al-jaysh and received payments either from the central treasury or through the iqṭāʿ system.

3.2 Defining “Military Effectiveness”

One of the arguments of the current study is that the Mamlūk army retained its military effectiveness throughout the existence of the sultanate. What is “military effectiveness?” Within the context of the current study military effectiveness refers first and foremost to the Mamlūk army’s ability to successfully conduct campaigns and fight battles and to emerge victorious. As we will see, the Mamlūks won most of their military encounters. The few instances in which the
Mamlūks were defeated were under very unusual circumstances that temporarily affected the performance and military effectiveness of their army.\textsuperscript{605} The Mamlūk army was more than capable of conducting successful offensive operations such as the attacks on the Crusader strongholds, on the Mongols in Anatolia, and against Lesser Armenia during Baybars’s reign; the invasion of Cyprus by Barsbāy’s forces; and the offensive operations against the Ottomans during the Ottoman-Mamlūk war of 1485-1491 CE. The Mamlūks were also very adept at defending their domains against Mongol attacks, Crusader raids, and Ottoman invasions. They were thus able to maintain the territorial integrity of their polity without losing any ground until the final Ottoman invasion of 1516 CE. In the instances when they suffered temporary setbacks and Syria fell to the Mongols and to Timur, they were able to recover their lost territories within one year. Military effectiveness also refers to the army’s training, armaments, the competence of its officers, and its state of readiness for war. These criteria were met by the Mamlūk army through the rigorous training process its soldiers went through, the slow promotion of its officers, and frequent military reviews that were conducted by the sultans.\textsuperscript{606} Another measure of the military effectiveness of the Mamlūk army was its ability to recover after suffering defeats or after the sultanate went through internal strife that may have weakened it.

### 3.3 The Diversified Army Model

The idea of an army composed of several ethnic, religious, or interest groups is not a new one. In fact, this concept has been mentioned by a number of historians studying Islamic military history. For instance, Bosworth describes the armies of the ʿAbbāsids and the Ṣaffārids as being “multi-racial.”\textsuperscript{607} Bosworth also mentions that the armies of the Buyids were composed of two main racial elements: the Turks and the Daylamīs.\textsuperscript{608} B.J. Beshir also describes the Fāṭimid army in detail as being composed of Berbers (from a number of tribes), blacks, the saqāliba (Slavs,\textsuperscript{609}}

\textsuperscript{605} The Mamlūks suffered their most notable defeats at the Battle of Wādī al-Khazindār at the hands of the Mongols, at Aleppo and Damascus in Syria against Timur, and at the Battle of Marj Dābiq fighting the Ottomans will be discussed in detail in Chapters 4 and 6.

\textsuperscript{606} See Chapters 4, 5, and 6.


\textsuperscript{609} Ibn Faḍlān describes his journey to the land of the Ṣaqāliba from the territories of the Oghuz Turks. He states that they crossed several rivers along the way and that it took seventy days to arrive from Khwārazm to the domains of the king of the Ṣaqāliba. He also states that these lands bordered the Khazar kingdom and that they were far to the
Rūs, or eunuchs. In his book on the armies of the caliphs Kennedy also gives a detailed description of the various racial groups that composed the caliphal armies of Sāmarrā which included Turks, Khurāsānīs, Maghāriba (westerners i.e., Egyptians and Berbers), the jund (probably a new unit that was composed of the remnants of the abnā’), and shākiriyya (retinues of East Iranian grandees).

Jürgen Paul also describes an army composed of several groups in his paper on the Sāmānids. He states that the Sāmānid army was composed of Turkic slaves, free men, volunteers, and dahāqīn (Iranian landed gentry). Ayalon also mentions that the tendency to incorporate men from a variety of races from among the conquered populations was there from a very early stage in Islamic history and that such practices were carried out during the conquests led by the third caliph ‘Umar I. He mentions the defections of several units from the Sasanian armies as an

north (on account of the nights being bright during the summer). These observations do indicate that the territories being described were those of the Slavs north of the Caucasus Mountains. See Āḥmad b. Fadlān, Risālat Ibn Faḍlān (Damascus: 1959), 110-127. For more on the Ṣaqaḥība and their origins see Reinhart Dozy, Spanish Islam: A History of the Moslems in Spain (London: Chatto & Windus, 1913), 236-237, 429-430; William E. Watson, “Ibn Rustah’s Book of Precious Things: A Reexamination and Translation of an Early Source on the Rūs,” CASS, 38, 3 (2004), 290-296.

Pritzak makes a clear distinction between the Ṣaqaḥība and the Rūs, stating that the former specifically means Slavs. See Omeljan Pritsak, “The Origin of Rus,” RUSS REV 36, 3 (Jul., 1977), 251, 253. Mishin also mentions that initially the term “Ṣaqaḥība” was a reference to Slavs. See Dmitrij Mishin, The Saqaliba Slaves in the Aghlabid State (Budapest: Central European University, 1998), 236-237. On the other hand, Manfred Wenner argues that in al-Andalus the saqāliba were obtained “from various areas, although the preferred source appears to have been the lower Rhone Valley and northward as far as Metz and Verdun.” See Manfred Werner, “The Arab/Muslim Presence in Medieval Central Europe,” IJMES 12, 2 (1980), 62-63. Ayalon and Lev argue the term did not refer only to a specific ethnic group, but had the broader meaning of eunuch see David Ayalon, “On the Eunuchs in Islam”, part B; “Remarks on the Saqaliba within Dar al-Islam,” JSAI, I (1979); David Ayalon, “Khādim” in the Sense of “eunuch” in the Early Muslim Sources,” Arabica, 32, 3 (1985); Ayalon, “Mamlūks of the Seljuks”; Yaacov Lev, “Army, Regime, and Society in Fatimid Egypt, 358-487/968-1094,” IJMES, 19, (1987); David Ayalon, Eunuchs, Caliphs, and Sultans: A Study in Power Relationships (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1999), 210, 217-231, 241, 269, 349-352.


The Central Asian origins of the personal guard/retinue (chākar) will be discussed further in section 3.73 see pages 148-152.


example. Jere Bacharach clearly illustrates the operation of what I have identified as the Diversified Army Model in the introduction to his article. He says:

That most Muslim armies were composed of cavalry and infantry units organized into units based on racial identities. The theory was that their racial affinities were the cohesive element within a unit; that the natural rivalries between these groups would bring strength to a ruler's position as they tried to outdo one another on the field of battle; and that these racial jealousies would create a balance which would prevent any one military/racial group from dominating the government.

Bosworth also makes a similar observation. He refutes a statement made by M. Longworth Dames in his *Encyclopaedia of Islam* entry on the Ghaznavids, in which the latter scholar considers the fact that Muslim rulers had multi-racial armies that lacked a strong “nucleus of native troops” as a weakness. Bosworth states that:

Most contemporary rulers would have recoiled from arming their own subjects, and in their eyes, the racial diversity of such armies as those of the Ghaznavids and the Fatimids was a source of strength.

It is evident from the abovementioned examples that historians have been aware of the fact that more often than not the armies of the caliphates and the regimes that ruled after the disintegration of the ‘Abbāsid caliphate were composed of several ethnic groups. However, this practice of forming such diverse armies has never been given a label. In classifying this military tradition as the “Diversified Army Model,” I have established a link of continuity in the way that the armies of the Muslim world were recruited and organized throughout its history up to the pre-modern period. Furthermore, in this study the Diversified Army Model does not only refer to armies composed of units based on ethnicity and religion, but also to armies composed of interest groups that could be made up of men from a variety of backgrounds whose wellbeing, prosperity, advancement, and survival was a common shared interest within that group or faction.

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3.31 The Inclination toward the Diversified Army Model

There seems to have been an inclination toward the Diversified Army Model throughout Islamic history. As the caliphate expanded during and after the early Islamic conquests, the elite found themselves ruling over a vast empire encompassing many different ethnic groups and religions. As mentioned above, the caliphs started to incorporate non-Arabs into their armies at a very early stage. This practice only intensified as the frontiers of the empire were expanded during the seventh and eighth centuries. These groups were admitted into the army because they provided a new pool of martial manpower (especially in the frontier regions) and brought with them new skills and fighting techniques. For instance, the various groups that enlisted in the caliphal armies from the Byzantine and Sasanian empires enhanced the Muslim armies with valuable knowledge and skills in siege and naval warfare, heavy cavalry tactics, and fighting on rugged and mountainous terrains, while the Turks imported their equestrian traditions, especially mounted archery, to the caliphate. Thus, the Diversified Army Model can be viewed as an imperial model or tradition.

The Diversified Army Model was not exclusively practiced by the caliphate and the polities that ruled its territory after its disintegration. In fact, it was a global model that can be used to label the militaries of several of history’s great empires and kingdoms in the ancient and medieval periods. The following examples should suffice to show that during the pre-modern period there was a strong tendency and inclination toward the Diversified Army Model.

The Roman empire stretched around the Mediterranean and included North Africa, Western Europe, the Balkans, Anatolia, Syria, Egypt, and North Africa. The famous Roman legions that initiated the conquests were initially recruited from among the people of Rome and Italy. However, as the empire grew the ranks started to be filled with provincials. For instance during his Gallic campaigns, Caesar recruited extensively from Cisalpine Gaul for his legions. In fact, by the reign of Augustus (27 BCE – 14 CE) legionnaires were no longer recruited from

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Rome and Central Italy. Nevertheless, the provincials recruited into the legions continued to be armed and to fight in the traditional Roman manner.

The Romans, having had contact with the many tribes and peoples that they had conquered, began to adopt some of their tactics including the recruitment of non-Roman auxiliary units (i.e., not employing the organization and fighting techniques of the legions) which became known as the auxilia. These units were recruited because they brought with them their own weapons, armor, fighting styles, and skills which had not previously been present in the legions. Especially valuable were the cavalry auxilia units which were an important mobile supplement to the legions which, for the most part, were composed of heavy infantry. Caesar did not waste time in recruiting both German and Gallic horsemen to serve in his army during his Gallic campaigns and in his struggles against his Roman rival Pompeii. Auxilia units were recruited from all the frontier regions of the empire. For instance, there were seven Thracian cohorts that served in Thrace and in various parts of the empire from Germany to Syria. Tribal auxiliary units were also recruited from Britain, Belgica, Germania, Iberia, and Africa.

The auxilia had initially been raised to supplement the legions with flexible units that brought new fighting styles and tactics to the Roman army. However, by the reign of Augustus they were reorganized into regular units of the Roman army and their fighting techniques and equipment became more standardized. With this standardization, there was a need for new irregular units to supplement the legions and auxilia with their native fighting styles. The


620 The Romans were known to be mediocre horsemen in comparison to many of their foes. See Webster, *Roman Imperial Army*, 142.

621 Webster, *Roman Imperial Army*, 142-143.

622 Webster, *Roman Imperial Army*, 143, 237, 240;


624 For more details on the auxilia, its organization, composition, and equipment see Webster, *Roman Imperial Army*, 142-165; Dobson, “Roman Army in Britain,” 193-198.

answer was the formation of the *numeri*. The men who formed these units were levied from the least Romanized fringes of the empire and were not incorporated into the regular army. They maintained their traditional fighting styles and brought their own weapons and armor with them on campaign. Famous among these units were the Syrian archers (specifically the Palmyrenes) who served in Judea and as far abroad as Dacia (modern day Romania). Other examples are a unit of bargemen from the Tigris, *mauri* (Moorish) tribesmen, Britons, and Sarmatian horsemen all serving near their native homelands and far abroad in distant parts of the empire.626

The recruitment of troops from various ethnicities and tribes into the Roman army seems to have served a dual purpose: to draw from the vast pool of manpower of the empire in maintaining the legions and to utilize the specialized skills of some of the tribes living on the fringes of the empire. In addition to these two main objectives some rulers recruited men from various ethnicities to offset the balance of power in the army and to create units that were loyal solely to them. The German bodyguard (*Germani corporis custodes*) is a good example. They were the bodyguards of the early emperors alongside the Praetorian Guard and were considered to be more loyal and reliable and acted as a counterbalance to them.627 Emperor Caracalla (r. 198-217 CE) also had a special guard composed of both “Scythians” (i.e., barbarians from beyond the Rhine) and Germans.628 Such guard units were loyal to their emperors and acted as their private armies.629

The Western Roman empire collapsed in the fifth century CE, but in the east it continued to exist as the Byzantine empire until the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 CE. The Byzantines maintained the tradition of relying on an army composed of units from several ethnic backgrounds. For example, the army of Nikephoras Phokas (r. 963-969 CE) contained Armenian and other foreign infantrymen and *Rhos* (comingled Scandinavians, Slavs, and Finns)

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626 Webster, *Roman Imperial Army*, 150; Speidel, *Roman Army Studies*, 118-124; Southern, “Numeri,” 84-98; Summer, *Roman Army*, 21-22;

627 Summer, *Roman Army*, 16-17.


629 Summer, *Roman Army*, 16-17.
skirmishers and light infantry.\textsuperscript{630} There were Greek, Arab, and Armenian cavalrymen also serving in the Byzantine army at this time. In the late Byzantine empire the use of foreigners both as mercenaries and palace guards increased greatly. The Byzantines hired Latin (Italians, French, Germans, Catalans, and Englishmen) mercenaries\textsuperscript{631} in addition to Alans and Turks. These soldiers of fortune formed standing armies that remained under arms year-round, or could be dismissed and hired as need arose.\textsuperscript{632} Either way they provided a ready source of experienced military men. The late Byzantine army was thus made up of both foreigners and natives of the empire, both of whom often received their pay either from the central treasury or in the form of land holdings.\textsuperscript{633} There were also several divisions of palace guards that could be distinguished by ethnicity, arms, location within the palace, and whether they were an infantry or cavalry division. Native \textit{Paramonai} served alongside the Scandinavian\textsuperscript{634} Varangian guards in close proximity to the emperor.\textsuperscript{635} In addition, a guard unit of Christianized Turks fought as infantry archers called the \textit{Mourtatoi}.\textsuperscript{636} Another palace division was the \textit{Vardariotai}. The members of this unit were recruited from among Hungarians who had been resettled in the Vardar Valley in Macedonia.\textsuperscript{637} In addition to bringing their various martial skills, the men who formed these imperial guard regiments probably also had a restraining effect on one another, since they were in such close proximity to each other in the palace.

The Iranian empires that ruled much of the Middle East, Central Asia, and parts of India in the pre-Islamic period also had militaries that were composed of several racial groups. It

\textsuperscript{632} Bartusis, \textit{Late Byzantine}, 140-142.
\textsuperscript{633} Bartusis, \textit{Late Byzantine}, 191.
\textsuperscript{634} By the eleventh century large numbers of Anglo-Saxons had joined the Varangian guard which gradually lost its Scandinavian character and became dominated by Englishmen. See Bartusis, \textit{Late Byzantine}, 273.
\textsuperscript{635} Bartusis, \textit{Late Byzantine}, 271-276.
\textsuperscript{636} Bartusis, \textit{Late Byzantine}, 277-278.
\textsuperscript{637} Bartusis, \textit{Late Byzantine}, 279-280.
should come as no surprise that the armies of the Achaemenids exhibited the characteristics of the Diversified Army Model because the empire that Cyrus the Great and his successors created was the first “world empire” or superpower. Cyrus incorporated soldiers into his army from among all the conquered peoples of his empire. Thus, very early on in his campaigns of conquest he had already incorporated Greek hoplites, Lydian horsemen, and Medes into the Achaemenid military.\(^{638}\) During his invasion of Greece in 480 BCE, Xerxes, one of Cyrus’ successors, commanded a huge army composed of Persians, Medes, Scythians, Parthians, Bactrians, Sogdians, Sargathians, Lydians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Carians, Egyptians, Libyans, Arabs, Phoenicians, and Indians.\(^{639}\)

The precedents set by the early Persian emperors were continued by their successors through the Arab conquests\(^{640}\) and up to the pre-modern period. The Safavid armies of the early sixteenth century were initially composed of the Qizilbāsh, Turkmen tribesmen from eastern Anatolia and Azerbaijan. But by the reign of Shāh Tahmāsp (r.1524-1576 CE) the ruler started to rely more on Kurdish and other tribal allies as well as on foreign slave soldiers (ghulāms) imported from Georgia and Circassia.\(^{641}\) Similarly, Nādir Shāh (r. 1736-1747) created a powerful modern army based on several ethnicities during his career which he started as a commander in the Safavid army but ended as the ruler of an empire after overthrowing his former masters. His army in 1743 CE numbered 375,000 men\(^{642}\) (based on the totals drawn up by the pay clerk of the army) “of whom only a minority were Shi’a Persians. They included 60,000 Turkmen and Uzbeks; 70,000 Afghans and Indians; 65,000 troops from Khorasan; 120,000 from western Persia (Kurdistān, Hamadān, Luristān, Bakhtaran, Fārs, and Khuzestān); and 60,000 from Azerbaijan and the Caucasus.”\(^{643}\)

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\(^{640}\) The armies of some of the independent regimes that emerged in the eastern regions of the Muslim world after the disintegration of the ‘Abbāsid caliphate will be discussed in Chapter 3.


\(^{642}\) There are eyewitness accounts that also corroborate the large size of Nādir Shāh’s army. See Michael Axworthy, “The Army of Nader Shah,” *IS* 40, 5 (2007), 640-642.

Like the armies of the Muslim world and the Byzantine empire, the armies of medieval Europe were heterogeneous. Men from various regions were hired both to utilize their martial skills and to serve as a ruler’s bodyguard thereby strengthening his reign against any potential opposition. Contingents from Wales, Ireland, Gascony, Flanders, and Brittany were present in the armies of medieval England.\(^\text{644}\) Likewise, the kings of France commanded armies containing Scots, Genoese, Spaniards, and Lombards in addition to men from the Kingdom of France.\(^\text{645}\) By either the late fourteenth or early thirteenth centuries a special company of Scottish archers numbering between 100-200 men was recruited to serve as the bodyguard of the French kings.\(^\text{646}\) As a matter of fact in 1458-1459 CE the French royal guard was composed of 25 Scottish archers, 27 French archers, 24 crossbowmen (French and German) and 31 men-at-arms of the guard, commanded by a Scottish captain.\(^\text{647}\) In the fifteenth century France also employed large numbers of Swiss mercenaries.\(^\text{648}\) Louis XI constantly kept 6,000 Swiss pike men and halberdiers in his service throughout his reign.\(^\text{649}\) Likewise, the armies of the Crusader States contained Armenians, Maronites, and Turcopoles\(^\text{650}\) in addition to the Europeans who had come east on the various crusading expeditions between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries.\(^\text{651}\)

The examples presented in this section show that the practice of recruiting men of various races into the army was widely practiced in various eras and by different empires, kingdoms, and principalities. It seems as though this Diversified Army Model was the natural tendency toward


\(^{646}\) For a detailed study of the history of the Scots serving in the French army and the role they played as members of the royal guard see Forbes-Leith, *The Scots Men-at-Arms and Life-Guards in France*, 9-34, 64-72, 129-153.


\(^{648}\) The Swiss gained a fierce reputation as excellent infantrymen during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and were sought as mercenaries by several of the kingdoms and principalities of Europe. See Heath, *Armies*, vol. 1, 40-41; Mallet, “Mercenaries,” 227.

\(^{649}\) Heath, *Armies*, vol. 1, 41

\(^{650}\) Turcopoles were “native troops or westerners using native equipment.” They were most probably offspring of mixed unions or converts and were hired by the Franks to serve in their armies as light cavalry. See R.C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare: 1097-1193 second edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1956, 1995), xxix, 111-112. Also see J. Richard, “Les Turcopoles: Musulmans Convertes ou Chretiens Orientaux,” *REI* 54 (1986), 259-270.

\(^{651}\) Smail, *Crusading Warfare*, xxix, 47-48, 53, 111-112.
which rulers leaned. It can also be classified as an imperial or expansionist military model because as the borders of ancient and medieval polities were pushed outward, the conquerors came into contact with new peoples whose military skills and energies they often sought to harness. In addition to utilizing the martial manpower of their domains, rulers also employed men from various ethnic and religious backgrounds in their households as bodyguards. Having such a large body of men from various ethnic backgrounds gave the ruler protection, a permanent army ready to serve, and control over his household and his military.

3.4 Persian and Arabic Advice Literature and the Diversified Army Model

The examples of the application of the Diversified Army Model presented in the previous section and those that will be discussed in Chapter 3 on the armies of the Muslim world before the rise of the Mamlūk sultanate show that rulers and army commanders tended to recruit men from diverse backgrounds for both military and political reasons when such opportunities arose. The question that must be raised here is: was there a conscious awareness of implementing this military policy? Or was it practiced instinctively or out of necessity that was forced upon the leader to utilize all the available manpower at his disposal with as many variable martial skills as possible? The Persian and Arabic works of advice literature and military manuals partially answer this question. The literature in this genre is focused on giving rulers advice on how to govern their domains in a just manner in order to maintain order and control over their subordinates and subjects and to maximize the production of their people and the profits and benefits from all the enterprises upon which they embarked. The army was one of the central, if not the most important, institutions of the polities of the pre-modern Muslim world and the pillar that supported the reigns of the sultans, caliphs, and amīrs who ruled them. It is thus not surprising that the army, the recruitment of soldiers, and waging war is addressed in the advice literature to a considerable extent. The importance of recruiting men of various ethnicities is explicitly discussed by more than one author, which indicates that at least some of the scholars and rulers of the pre-Mamlūk and Mamlūk periods were probably aware of the theory of creating an army, personal guard, and patrimonial household composed of men from different backgrounds, which I have called the Diversified Army Model. In this section I will examine some of these works of advice literature with a focus on the army and its organization.
3.41 Persian Advice Literature

The main concern of the Persian advice literature is that the rulers maintain sovereign authority over their kingdoms and domains through just rule, increasing the prosperity of their lands, appointing suitable wazīrs, amīrs, and other officials at court and throughout the realm, creating a strong and loyal army, and maintaining control over it. There are several ways that the ruler could achieve full dominion over his military according to these sources. The first of these is the maintenance of a delicate balance of justice and prosperity throughout the realm. This balance is outlined in the Qābūs Nāmeh and Siyāsat Nāmeh as a circle (known as the Circle of Justice) in which the king upholds justice and maintains control over his realm and subjects through the army. The army in turn is kept under the ruler’s authority by the people, because their labor makes the realm prosperous and provides the king with the revenues to pay his troops. This prosperity is, in turn, secured through the justice of the sovereign towards his subjects.

The Siyāsat Nāmeh also contains chapters on utilizing spies to stay informed about matters within and without the realm, paying the army, supplying the army with weapons and provisions, and on dealing with the petitions of the soldiery.

In addition to the above mentioned points, the most important counsel that the Persian advice literature contains with regard to the military pertains to its organization. Both the Qābūs Nāmeh and the Siyāsat Nāmeh explicitly state the importance of having armies composed of several units comprising different ethnicities. The Siyāsat Nāmeh addresses this issue in three separate chapters. Chapter twenty-four is the most important chapter of this work and it deals

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with having troops of various races in the army. This section states that having an army composed of only one race or ethnic group is dangerous to the state and the ruler. This danger arises from the fact that having only one race in the army will cause the troops to become unruly and disorderly and will dampen their zeal in fighting for their sovereign. According to Nizām al-Mulk, it is therefore important that the army at court should contain two thousand Daylamīs and two thousand Khurāsānīs. In addition to these troops, Nizām al-Mulk also states that men from Georgia and Shabānkāra (in Pārs/Fārs) should also be retained at court. To emphasize this point, the author uses the example of Maḥmūd of Ghazna’s army which contained Turks, Khurāsānīs, Arabs, Hindus, Daylamīs, and men from Ghūr. The result of having such a mixed force was that when watchmen from the different groups were assigned duties, none of them dared to move from their posts because they were afraid of the other factions, and in battle the soldiers from each of the ethnic groups did their utmost to outdo the others and to gain a more fearsome and honorable reputation.

Two other chapters in the Siyāsat Nāmeh deal with the topic of various ethnic groups in the army. They are chapters nineteen which deals with the mufradān and the organization and equipping of this unit and chapter twenty-six regarding the maintenance of Turkmen as ghulāms (slave soldiers) at court. The former discusses the palace bodyguards. It states that there should be two hundred men, selected for their stature, strength, and appearance, who must be attached to the court and whose duty is to be around the ruler and to guard his person. At court, these men are to be armed and adorned with ceremonial weapons to reflect their sovereign’s grandeur, wealth, and power such as swords with sword belts adorned with precious stones, shields of gold and silver, and spears of Khaṭṭ. According to the author, this special unit was to be composed of one hundred Daylamīs and one hundred Khurāsānīs, again emphasizing the importance of a mixed guard. The latter chapter discusses the use of Turkmen as ghulāms in the court. It states that about one thousand sons of Turkmen tribesmen are to be kept at court where they will train in the use of weapons and learn to serve the dynasty and then settle on the land. The two

659 Nizām al-Mulk, Siyar, 128-129; Nizām al-Mulk, Book of Government, 103-104.
objectives of this measure were to sedentarize the troublesome Turkmen tribes and to create a constantly growing reserve of military manpower\textsuperscript{662} that could be called up alongside the other troops mentioned above, and thus add another group to diversify the army even more.\textsuperscript{663}

The \textit{Qābūs Nāmeh} makes a similar point in its chapter entitled “The conduct of Kingship.” In a section of this chapter, the author states that the ruler’s bodyguard should never consist of only one ethnic group. He says that if that happens, the ruler will be a mere puppet and prisoner of his own retinue. The reason for this loss of control over the troops by the ruler, according to the writer, is the fact that, being of one race, the guards ally with one another and promote their own interests and thus cannot be used to keep one another in check. Therefore, the author concludes that if the guards consisted of men from several races, the various groups would hold each other in check and none of them would dare to rise against the ruler due to their fear of the other groups.\textsuperscript{664} The author also uses the example of Maḥmūd of Ghazna’s army as the ideal army and states that this sultan kept four thousand Turks and four thousand Hindus as his palace guards and constantly used them to overawe one another. He kept them under his control because each group feared the other.\textsuperscript{665} It must also be mentioned here that these authors’ advice should also be considered instructive when creating a new and loyal patrimonial household and ruling apparatus because it was the members of the ruler’s retinue who were promoted to high ranks in the army or to offices at court, which would potentially lead to the establishment of a stable patrimonial household and a lasting ruling apparatus for the ruler and his dynasty.

The other works of Persian advice literature do not put as much emphasis on military matters; however, a few references do show an awareness of an organized yet mixed army as one that was the norm for an efficient ruler and commander.\textsuperscript{666} Ṭūsī’s \textit{Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī} mentions the

\textsuperscript{662} The author states, “…whenever the need arises 5,000-10,000 of them, organized and equipped like [military retainers]/pages, will mount to perform the task…” Niẓām al-Mulk, \textit{Siyar}, 131; Niẓām al-Mulk, \textit{Book of Government}, 105.


\textsuperscript{666} As discussed in the previous chapter, the most important sources with regard to advice on keeping an organized and efficient army are the \textit{Qābūs Nāmeh} and the \textit{Sīvāsat Nāmeh}. The other works are more concerned with proper religion and piety, rulership based on religion, philosophical ideas, and justice.
“Men of the Sword” and lists several categories of this group of people, such as “fighters, warriors, volunteers, skirmishers, frontier guards, sentries, valiant men, supporters of the realm, and the guardians of the state.” The author does not elaborate on these military categories or the men who formed them. However, he was clearly aware that the armies at this time were composed of groups that were stationed in different parts of the realm who had specific functions. He also mentions the Turks as being “distinguished by courage, worthy service, and fine appearance,” indicating that this ethnic group was most suited for service in the army. One can also conclude that by mentioning these groups Ṭūsī was aware that the army should be composed of several units made up of men from different ethnicities.

The anonymous author of *Bahār al-Favā'id* also shows an awareness that the armies of the Muslim world were composed of different groups when he describes some of the martial peoples, such as the Arabs, the Abyssinians, the Daylamīs, and the Ṭabarīs in his discussion of holy wars and the destruction of cities. Not only does this author mention these specific groups, but he also states that holy war is the obligation of every sane and healthy man, both free and slave, in a city if the enemy approaches it with the intention of attacking or besieging it. Once again this text shows that war was not the domain of one race or ethnic group, but almost anyone could be enlisted in the army regardless of race or social status. Furthermore, this writer states that even dhimmīs could be enlisted to fight against the enemies of the Muslims, and

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669 This conclusion is derived from the fact that the groups mentioned clearly come from different parts of the realm. The frontier guards were probably composed of the peoples who lived on the frontiers and in the military marches, the volunteers came from every part of the realm, the “sentries” could refer to palace guards and city militias, and the supporters of the realm and guardians of the state could refer to those men who formed the “regular” army and the retinues of the ruler, the nobles, and the officers (many of whom were of slave origin and thus imported from foreign lands).
671 This is more an elaboration on an apocalyptic prophecy on the destruction of the major cities/regions of the Muslim world by various plagues and peoples. However, the mention of some of these peoples shows that the author was aware that the military and warfare was not monopolized by one group and that the armies were composed of (or should have been composed of) a variety peoples.
672 Indicating his awareness that war was not the domain of one specific group and of the concept of a several martial races that formed the armies of the Muslim world.
if this is done, they should be paid from the treasury.\textsuperscript{674} This statement further reinforces the idea that the armies of the Muslim world were very diverse in their composition both racially and religiously. The text also advises rulers to control their “mercenaries” (or slave soldiers)\textsuperscript{675} and to stop them from committing evil acts against the people and the state. Here, once again the author shows the norm of a diverse army by mentioning these ghulāmān/ghilmān mercenaries (slave troops), but not their origin, implying that these troops could have been from a diverse background. Furthermore, the author of this text seems to be encouraging the use of as many different ethnic, social, religious, and racial groups in the military as possible when conducting holy war.

This section has outlined what some of the important works of Persian advice literature have to say about the composition and organization of effective, efficient, and properly functioning armies that were under the full control of their commanders.\textsuperscript{676} The two most important sources with regard to this topic, the \textit{Qābūs Nāmeh} and the \textit{Siyāsat Nāmeh}, focus to a considerable degree on the military and state building (in this case the creation of a ruling apparatus that includes a bureaucratic administration and a patrimonial household whose members hold the most important positions in this new “state”). They emphasize that the soldiers must be disciplined, well-trained, and most importantly of various ethnicities so that one group does not rise up to dominate the military and the ruler.\textsuperscript{677} The \textit{Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī} and \textit{Bahār al-Favā‘īd} are not as specific as the \textit{Siyāsat Nāmeh} and the \textit{Qābūs Nāmeh}. However, they do make references to the military and what little they say agrees with the works of Niẓām al-Mulk and Kay Kā’ūs b. Iskanadar.

\textsuperscript{674} Anonymous, \textit{Sea of Precious Virtues}, 29.

\textsuperscript{675} Here the term ghulāmān (i.e., slave troops) was translated as mercenaries in the English translation. See the endnotes to Anonymous, \textit{Sea of Precious Virtues}, 344.

\textsuperscript{676} For a more detailed discussion of the pay, organization, and composition of the armies of medieval and early modern Iranian world see Reuven Amitai, “Armies and their economic basis in Iran and the surrounding lands, c. 1000 1500,” in The Eastern Islamic World Eleventh to Eighteenth Centuries, ed.s David O. Morgan and Anthony Reid (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 539-560.

\textsuperscript{677} All writers were not unanimous regarding the idea of creating a diverse army. The thirteenth century writer, Muḥammad b. Maṭnūr Mubārakshāh, states quite the contrary in his \textit{Adab al-Ḥarb wa al-Shajā‘a}. He says that it is best that armies should be of one heart, mind and ethnicity, which in turn would make their purpose singular and the solidarity of the soldiers stronger. He also mentions that such a force is less volatile than one composed of several ethnic groups where the chances of conflict are increased. However, most of the sources do not hold Mubārakshāh’s opinion and encourage the creation of multi-ethnic armies. See Muḥammad b. Maṭnūr Mubārakshāh, \textit{Adab al-Ḥarb wa al-Shajā‘a} ed. Aḥmad Suhailī Khawansārī (Tehran: Iqbāl, 1968), 376-380.
3.42 Arabic Advice Literature and Military Manuals

Al-Ḥarthamī’s *Mukhtaṣar fī Siyāsat al-Hurūb* is one of the early texts of Arabic advice literature utilized in this study. This source gives a detailed discussion of how to organize and deploy an army in various situations including on the march, setting up camp, taking up battle formations (in various formations depending on the numbers and deployment of the enemy), where and how different soldiers should be positioned (i.e., experienced veterans should be placed in the front rows to encourage their comrades). Al-Ḥarthamī also discusses armies of various sizes and their classification, the sending of scouts and spies to gather intelligence, setting ambushes, and discipline in the ranks. The author does not explicitly state that a commander should strive to recruit men of various ethnicities. However, he does mention that a leader may need to recruit men from different backgrounds in order to attain his objectives. In that case, al-Ḥarthamī states that the commander must know all his men well and know upon whom he could depend most for support and to carry out his commands and the uses he could make of the various groups that compose his army. In another section, he mentions various racial groups such as the Turks, Daylamîs, Romans, Indians, Kurds, and Arabs. To these groups he also adds the Khārijites and the ṣaʿālîk (brigands) and states that they all have their own unique method of fighting and that when they go to war their objectives also differ ranging from gaining loot to conquering vast empires. Despite not directly advising the reader to create a multi-ethnic army, this author still discusses various ethnic groups and acknowledges that armies were often heterogeneous in their composition.

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682 Al-Ḥarthamī, *Mukhtaṣar*, 27.
al-Ḥaḍramī’s *Kitāb al-Siyāsa*, written for the Almoravid leadership also mentions the army and its organization. He discusses the character and virtues of soldiers and the relationship between amīrs and their troops. He even describes something resembling the “circle of justice” by stating that if the amīr strengthened his military at the expense of his subjects, he is in fact weakening the army which is ruinous to his realm. Likewise, he argues that if the amīr weakened his soldiers by favoring his subjects, then the army was left in shambles and again the realm suffered. Al-Ḥaḍramī argues that the ruler’s objective should be justice and that he should be balanced in his treatment of both his subjects and his soldiers for the good of his domains.\(^{689}\)

This author specifically states that the sultan must have an army composed of several ethnic groups and tribes so that the soldiers would never come together in agreement in opposing their sovereign.\(^{690}\) Regarding the matter of a multi-ethnic army, this explicit statement is as far as this author goes. Unlike Niẓām al-Mulk and Kāy Kā’ūs b. Iskandar who gave detailed examples of such mixed armies, al-Ḥaḍramī is content with only stating the fact and the reason behind it.

In *al-Nahj al-Maslūk fī Siyāsat al-Mulūk* al-Shayzarī makes two important observations regarding the organization of the army. First, he states that the army is composed of two main groups: paid professional soldiers and volunteers. Second, he argues that every leader should have a banner under which his followers fight and which binds them together as a distinct group in the army.\(^{691}\) This writer does not directly advise the reader to recruit an army composed of men from various backgrounds, but he does convey the idea that armies should be composed of several groups of men who distinguished themselves and their comrades from the other units.

In his chapter on warfare in *Āthār al-Uwal fī Tartīb al-Duwal*, al-ʿAbbāsī dedicates a section to the discussion of different races and their military skills. He describes the Persians,\(^{692}\) the Arabs,\(^{693}\) the Turks,\(^{694}\) the Romans (Byzantines),\(^{695}\) the Daylamīs,\(^{696}\) the Kurds,\(^{697}\) the

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\(^{689}\) Al-Ḥaḍramī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa*, 37.
\(^{690}\) Al-Ḥaḍramī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa*, 37.
\(^{691}\) Al-Ḥaḍramī, *Kitāb al-Siyāsa*, 166.
\(^{693}\) Al-ʿAbbāsī, *Āthār*, 290.
\(^{694}\) Al-ʿAbbāsī, *Āthār*, 291.
\(^{695}\) Al-ʿAbbāsī, *Āthār*, 291.
Berbers,698 the Armenians,699 and the Ethiopians.700 In his discussion of these groups the author outlines the martial skills and flaws of each of them. For instance he states that the Persians were good at archery, siege warfare and empire building.701 The Arabs were courageous light cavalrymen who engaged in the tactic of attacking, withdrawing, and counterattacking (al-karr wa al-farr), but were unreliable, lacked archery skills,702 and were driven by the desire for loot.703 The Turks were excellent horsemen who were disciplined, reliable, and skilled in the use of both the bow and melee weapons from horseback.704 The Romans are described as being good swordsmen, cavalrymen, and siege engineers.705 The Daylamīs were brave and fearsome mountain warriors whose battle cry put fear in the hearts of the enemy and whose primary weapon was the javelin which they hurled with great power and accuracy.706 The Kurds produced good infantry and cavalry and were brave, but they were also extremely partisan in favoring their own tribes.707 The Berbers, according to al-‘Abbāsī, were hardy light infantry and cavalry.708 The Armenians are described as patient, intelligent, and as being good servants.709 Lastly, the Ethiopians are depicted as the best and the bravest among the blacks. In a closing

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696 Al-‘Abbāsī, Āthār, 291-292.
697 Al-‘Abbāsī, Āthār, 292.
698 Al-‘Abbāsī, Āthār, 292.
699 Al-‘Abbāsī, Āthār, 292-293.
700 Al-‘Abbāsī, Āthār, 293.
701 Al-‘Abbāsī, Āthār, 290.
702 Al-‘Abbāsī mentions that the primary weapon of the Arabs was the spear. He also states that they used the Arabian bow, but it was rare and only a few tribes had archers.
703 Al-‘Abbāsī, Āthār, 290.
704 Al-‘Abbāsī, Āthār, 291.
705 Al-‘Abbāsī, Āthār, 291.
706 Al-‘Abbāsī, Āthār., 291.
707 Al-‘Abbāsī, Āthār, 292.
708 Al-‘Abbāsī, Āthār, 292.
709 Al-‘Abbāsī, Āthār, 292.
statement the author offers a description of the ideal soldier and argues that men from colder climes are braver and better warriors than those from hotter regions.\footnote{Al-'Abbāsī, Āḥār, 293.}

There is a section in Ibn Manklī’s \textit{Kitāb al-Hiyal} that is very similar to the one described in the preceding paragraph. But in addition to listing different races and their fighting styles, this author also describes how best to fight against them. For example, he states that when fighting against the Turks, infantrymen have to try to ambush or surround them and prevent them from mounting their horses and using their mobility.\footnote{Ibn Manklī, \textit{Kitāb al-Hiyal}, 293.} When fighting against the Indians he recommends the use of heavily armored cavalry because, according to Ibn Manklī, most of the soldiers of India were lightly armored.\footnote{Ibn Manklī, \textit{Kitāb al-Hiyal}, 294.} The author gives a very detailed exposition on fighting the Romans using a combination of infantry, cavalry, and archers and laying traps and ambushes for them in battle to surround them and strike them where they were most vulnerable.\footnote{Ibn Manklī, \textit{Kitāb al-Hiyal}, 294.} The reason for such varied approaches to fighting this enemy comes from the fact that the Ibn Manklī describes the Roman army as a heterogeneous force with men from different parts of the empire with a variety of fighting styles.\footnote{Ibn Manklī, \textit{Kitāb al-Hiyal}, 295.} There are similar instructions on fighting the Ethiopians, Nubians, Berbers, Daylamīs, the men of Ṭabaristān, the Arabs, and the Persians.\footnote{Ibn Manklī, \textit{Kitāb al-Hiyal}, 295.} Finally, this section thoroughly discusses the physical traits of men that make them good soldiers. It is important to note that even though this author does not instruct the reader to create a multi-racial army, he is aware of such armies because of his description of the Byzantine (Roman) army.

In \textit{Kitāb Nihāyat al-Su’l} Muḥammad b. ʻĪsā b. Ismā‘īl al-Ḥanafī mentions groups in the army in his description of its deployment in battle. The author states that when deploying, the army should form up in nine lines. He says that the infantrymen should form the first three lines, the third line being composed of Khurāsānīs, javeliners, and naptha throwers. Al-Ḥanafī states that behind the infantry various types of cavalry should form the last six lines of the army including cavalry archers, lancers, javelin throwers in addition to the ghilmān and the

\footnote{See Ibn Manklī, \textit{Kitāb al-Hiyal}, 296-297.}
Finally, in another section the writer discusses the physical traits of men that make them good soldiers. This section may not explicitly mention ethnic groups, but the author’s description of certain physical traits such as the shape and size of the eyes, the nose, and the mouth could indicate the preference of certain races over others. Although the author does not go into detail when discussing the groups composing an army, he does show an awareness of the concept of a diverse army.

Ibn Arabshāh also gives a good description of Genghis Khān and Timur’s armies in Fākihat al-Khulafā’ and ‘Ajā’īb al-Maqdūr fī Nawā’īb Timūr. He states that Genghis Khān’s forces were composed of 120,000 soldiers of whom 50,000 formed his professional paid army and 70,000 were levied from the various lands that his empire encompassed. He also mentions that Genghis Khān registered the names of all those who witnessed or partook in one of his campaigns including men, youths, and women. In addition to conquering the domains of his rival at the end of this campaign, he also incorporated the remaining elements of his defeated foe’s army into his own military. Ibn ‘Arabshāh also asserts that Genghis Khān’s forces were not the followers of one religion and lists several denominational groups that formed the ranks and officer corps including Ḥanafī Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians (Majūsī), other heterodox/heretical groups, and infidels. This writer gives an even more detailed description of Timur’s army, which, according to him included Turks, Mongols, Iranians (from various regions including Mazandarān, Jibāl, Fārs, Luristān, Hamadhān, Kirmān, Isfahān, Rayy, Ghazna, Khurāsān, Balakhshān, and Gīlān), and Indians. Like Genghis Khān’s forces, Timur’s army was also made up of men from different religious groups including idol worshippers, polytheists,

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716 Al-Ḥanāfī, Nihāyat al-Su’l, 375.
717 Al-Ḥanāfī, Nihāyat al-Su’l, 363.
718 Ibn ‘Arabshāh, Fākihat, 577-578.
719 Ibn ‘Arabshāh, Fākihat, 546.
720 Ibn ‘Arabshāh, Fākihat, 547-548.
and Zoroastrians. Timur also garrisoned the various regions of his empire with men who were not native to that land, ensuring in the process the loyalty and solidarity of his soldiers in a foreign land to which they had no ties. He employed similar tactics when on campaign; thus he made heavy use of Hindus during his campaigns in Syria because they had no qualms fighting against and killing Muslims. Timur’s army also contained large numbers of women who, according to the author, actively participated in battles and fought more fiercely than the men.

The Arabic advice literature, like its Persian counterpart, counsels the ruler and military commander to maintain an army composed of several ethnic groups. Some of these sources hint at this concept more subtly than the two primary Persian sources discussed earlier, while others are more overt in suggesting such a military organization. However, in several cases there seems to be less emphasis on the idea of a heterogeneous army and less details and examples of such militaries in the Arabic sources than those given by Niẓām al-Mulk and Kāy Kā’ūs b. Iskandar. Nevertheless, it is important to note that there was an awareness in the Arabic advice literature of the multi-ethnic army, which I have named the Diversified Army Model, both in the era preceding the rise of the Mamlūk sultanate and also after its establishment.

3.5 The Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model and the Institution of Military Slavery

The composition and organization of al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb’s army was profoundly different from those that came before it and shows a shift or change in the policies of this ruler when he created his army after assuming the sultanate of Egypt in 1240 CE. I have labelled this sultan’s military organization the “Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model.” Its main divergence from the Diversified Army Model was its makeup. It was composed primarily of mamlūks of Kipchak origin, who formed the largest and most powerful regiments. The elite Baḥriyya regiment was composed

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727 Ibn ‘Arabshāh, ‘Ajāʾīb, 170; Ibn ‘Arabshāh, Tamerlane, 100. Using non-Muslim soldiers against Muslims was not uncommon. The Ghaznavids also frequently used Hindu soldiers against Muslims see pages 193-194.
729 The reasons for al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb’s military policies will be discussed in further detail in Chapter 4 see pages 205-208.
of 800-2,000 cavalrymen. This policy of depending on an army composed primarily of mamlūks of Kipchak origin continued into the reigns of the early sultans of the Mamlūk sultanate. The Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model can be observed in the period encompassing the reign of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb to the middle of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn’s reign. Qalāwūn and his successors started to organize their armies in a manner that resembled the Diversified Army Model. However, there was a shifting back and forth between the two models throughout the remainder of the Mamlūk sultanate depending on the circumstances that the sultanate faced and upon the ruler’s choices regarding the organization of the military.

The Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model and the Mamlūk institution (or the institution of military slavery) should not be viewed as the same thing. The institution of military slavery was unique to the Muslim world. The use of military slaves can be traced back to the early periods of Islamic history. The creation of the institution in which foreign youths were acquired from beyond %Dār al-Islām% (the abode of Islam) through capture or purchase and trained in special schools to become soldiers took root during the ninth century CE, several centuries before the rise of the Mamlūk sultanate. Military slaves formed the elite units and bodyguards of several caliphs and the rulers of independent polities and principalities of the Muslim world prior to the rise of the Mamlūk regime. However, none of these caliphs or princes intentionally created an army with a mamlūk element that was as overwhelmingly large and powerful as al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb. Despite this difference between the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model and the institution of military slavery, the institution of military slavery formed a central component of the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model because al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s army was primarily composed of mamlūks who had to go through a period of

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730 The size of the regiment may have grown during the reign of al-Ṣāliḥ. Irwin, Middle East, 18; Thoreau, Lion, 17; Levanoni, “Mamlūk’s Ascent,” 125; Northrup, “Bahḥī Mamlūk Sultanate,” 247.

731 There are instances in history when other societies and cultures used military slaves. However, none of them created an institution that dominated the military and politics for such a long period (a millennium) as the one that emerged in the Muslim world. For more on slaves in the military in non-Muslim societies see Christopher L. Brown and Philip D. Morgan eds. Arming Slaves: From Classical Times to the Modern Age (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

732 For a detailed discussion of the rise of the institution of military slavery in the Muslim world see Crone, Slaves on Horses, 61-93; Pipes, Slave Soldiers, 107-159; Ayalon, “Military Reforms,” 1-4, 23-29.

733 The armies of the caliphs and those of the independent and semi-independent polities that emerged in the Muslim world after the fragmentation of the caliphate will be discussed in Chapter 3.
the education and training to become full-fledged mamlūk soldiers, and that process of training itself was one of the foundations of the institution of military slavery.

3.6 The Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model

In the latter half of the sixteenth century the Diversified Army Model and the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model merged in the Mamlūk army to form the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model. This army was still dominated by mamlūks. However, by this time several factions and interest groups had emerged within the army. These factions included groups within the Royal Mamlūk corps that had served previous sultans. Several powerful amīrs had created large households and powerful networks forming factions centered on their households. Therefore, by the late Circassian period the army was still predominantly composed of mamlūks, but it was more diverse due to the number of factions within its ranks.

The Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model continued to be the model upon which the Ottoman army was organized. 734 It was composed of a strong standing army that was primarily composed of slaves and several various elements that were gathered from the vast regions of the empire during military campaigns. Regarding the Ottoman army one can ask: why is it classified in this study as being organized along the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model and not the Diversified Army Model? We must outline the difference between these two military models to answer this question. The difference between the Ottoman army and the militarise[s] of the polities of the Muslim world in the pre-Mamlūk period that are classified here as following the Diversified Army Model 735 is that the slave or mamlūk units of the latter formed a very small proportion of the entire militaries of these pre-Mamlūk polities. The mamlūks often composed the personal guard of the ruler or military commander and were vastly outnumbered by the other groups in the army, which were based on ethnicity, religion, geographical origin, or shared interests. For example, in 1239 CE, prior to his ascent to the throne and his break with the Diversified Army Model, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb was abandoned by all his forces except his mamlūks. Due to the small size of this mamlūk unit, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb was unable to continue his campaign

734 For a more thorough discussion of the Ottoman army, its organization, and its connection to the military models see pages 381-402.
735 See Chapter 4 pages 167-200
and was taken prisoner by his rivals. On the other hand, the Ottoman sultans’ slave troops formed a large army, eventually numbering in the tens of thousands, which was composed of several units of cavalry and infantry, the Corps of Gunners, and supply and support units such as the Corps of Armorers. Thus, this standing army of slave soldiers not only formed an imperial guard, but also the backbone of the imperial forces. Therefore, the Ottoman army was “mamlūkized” by the presence of such large numbers of slave troops and also diversified due to the many other units that were enlisted in the regular army and called up for service during military campaigns.

3.7 State Building in the Pre-Modern Era

State building was a continuous process in the Mamlūk sultanate. I have previously mentioned that every successful sultan was a new state builder who created a new ruling apparatus for himself. In such regimes it was the ruler’s patrimonial household that formed the “state” and ruling apparatus. These sultans started building up their patrimonial households long before they assumed the throne. Early in their careers they created personal retinues that grew larger and more powerful as they progressed through the ranks. This section will discuss some of the theoretical work done on state building and the patrimonial household and create a link between these ideas and the concept of state building in the Mamlūk sultanate presented in this study.

3.71 State Building and the Patrimonial Household

Patrimonialism was the form of government that dominated the Muslim world in the medieval and early modern eras. Thus, when discussing the Diversified Army Model one must also include the patrimonial household due to the fact that it was the ruler’s household that formed the government and his army that enforced his will. Furthermore, it was often soldiers and officers who occupied some of the most important positions in the ruler’s household. Max Weber discussed patrimonialism as one of the forms of “traditional domination” in the pre-

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736 For more on al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb and his
modern era. A brief examination of his ideas will clarify the concepts of patrimonialism and state building in the context of this study. This section will discuss the patrimonial household and its centrality in the formation of pre-modern governments and state building more broadly.

Patrimonial states emerged as a result of patriarchal authority being applied to large political units (i.e., larger than the patriarch’s household). Weber states that the difference between patrimonialism and the other forms of traditional authority, namely gerontocracy and patriarchalism, is that a personal administrative staff and a military developed under patrimonialism that was directly under the control of the chief or the ruler. The patrimonial master acquired the coercive means to enforce his will and turned those whom he ruled from members of his society (who chose to comply with his orders) into his subjects. The recruitment of “patrimonial troops” in the form of slave soldiers or mercenaries gave the ruler the ability to expand the range of his arbitrary power and enabled him to “put himself in a position to grant grace and favors at the expense of the traditional limitations of patriarchal and gerontocratic structures.” The reason for the shift and transformation of the patriarchal household into the patrimonial state was to provide for the ruler’s personal household. Thus, all the needs of the members of the ruler’s household including sustenance, clothing, and weapons were provided by the subjects of the realm. The sovereigns had to exert the maximum amount of control over their domains to ensure that these provisions were delivered in a timely manner.

In the case of patrimonialism the whole state and government became the rulers’ private domain and they exercised “authority as an aspect of their personal property, similar in all respects to their patriarchal control over their household.”

In the patrimonial state the central feature of the government was the royal/imperial family or the patrimonial household. Most, if not all, government positions and offices were held by members of the ruler’s household. In other words, the administrators of such a government were the dependents of the sovereign upon whose loyalty and obedience he could rely. The membership of the ruler’s household was composed of those related to him through traditional ties of loyalty and included “kinsmen, slaves, dependents who are officers of the households, clients, coloni, or freedmen.” These patrimonial servants were close in proximity to the ruler and were maintained as a part of his household, and government appointments reflected an emphasis on personal service to the ruler. As the holders of these offices rose in the ranks, they got even closer to their benefactor and their services were reciprocated by the granting of favors and gifts, which were paid out from the ruler’s stores or treasury. One powerful symbol of prestige and of the close proximity of these individuals to their master was that they ate at his table. Weber states that this “men’s house,” in which the leader and his followers lived together was “the earliest form of professional military organization.”

Weber argues that, as the patrimonial state grew in size, it tended to become more decentralized because the duties of certain members of the household gave them more freedom from their master’s direct control. A household member’s separation from the chief’s table and the replacement of his lord’s direct support with the income generated through land grants was the inevitable result of the growth the patrimonial state and the establishment by his high ranking officers of micro households alongside that of the ruler. Due to the nature of patrimonial states, control from the center (especially if the state was very large), was a last resort “rather than the routine basis of government.” In addition to the decentralization of income, some members of the privileged class that emerged from the ruler’s household also gained judicial and military powers. The appropriation of such powers by privileged social groups led to the participation of the members of these groups in politics through compromise with their lord who

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ruled at the center.\textsuperscript{749} To counter some of this decentralization and loss of control patrimonial rulers created associations that were responsible for the regulation of the actions of its members. Such organizations entailed responsibilities similar to the responsibility placed upon the actions of the members of kinship groups. In exchange for regulating their members, the services and contributions they provided, and their obedience to the head of the patrimonial state, these associations, such as guilds, were granted certain rights. “In this way the ruler grants privileges in exchange for the duties he imposes.”\textsuperscript{750} Weber argues that the granting of such collective responsibilities to associations for the performance of certain duties and the regulation of its members was a response of the patrimonial state to its inability to exert full and complete control over the domains that it ruled. He states that such regimes lacked the administrative and coercive apparatuses to exert complete control over their political subjects.\textsuperscript{751}

In addition to attempting to exert the maximum amount of control over the subjects of his domain in order to maintain his household (which was sometimes very large), the patrimonial ruler also extended his authority in the economic sphere. Weber says that several different economic structures agree with patrimonialism. However, he states that trade was central in the development of “strongly centralized patrimonial rule.” The ruler of such a state got involved in trade as his personal privilege and he also imposed taxes and fees for safe conduct, the right to operate, and grants of monopoly upon others engaged in trade within his realm.\textsuperscript{752}

The military was the central instrument of the patrimonial state. It was the ruler’s personal authority over the army and the administration\textsuperscript{753} that enabled him to extend his rule over regions and peoples who were not originally a part of his sphere of power. The military force of a patrimonial ruler was composed of slaves,\textsuperscript{754} and mercenaries.\textsuperscript{755} It was important for

\textsuperscript{749} Weber, \textit{Theory}, 353.
\textsuperscript{750} Bendix, \textit{Max Weber}, 337.
\textsuperscript{753} In the Muslim world, especially in the Mamlūk sultanate, administrative positions were often held by military men.
\textsuperscript{754} Weber also mentions “serfs, peons, coloni, and other personal subordinates,” but in the context of this study it was men of slave origin who formed the personal forces of the Mamlūk sultans. Weber, \textit{Economy and Society}, vol. 3, 1015-117.
the patrimonial state to maintain a permanent standing army because it relied on force to maintain and expand the sovereign’s power.\textsuperscript{756} Therefore, the soldiers had to be full-time professionals often foreigners, who were not dependent on the ruler and who were not tied down or distracted by non-military matters such as agricultural work, which also jeopardized their loyalty.\textsuperscript{757} Weber says that the patrimonial ruler’s administrative staff was composed of his personal retainers rather than trained bureaucrats and administrators.\textsuperscript{758} Through the personal loyalty of the army and the administration to the patrimonial sovereign, Weber argues that the ruler was able to expand and create a “sultanistic regime.” Sultanism, according to Weber, occurs when the absolute authority of the patrimonial leader was maximized.\textsuperscript{759} The military was the personal instrument of the ruler and answered only to him. As mentioned above, he provided for his retainers and officials in a number of ways including maintaining them at his table and in his household, paying them from the treasury, awarding them land in return for services, and granting them the right to collect taxes and fees from certain properties.\textsuperscript{760} So long as the king, sultan, or prince supplied his troops from his own stores and paid them from his own treasury, they retained the character of a private army.\textsuperscript{761} However, when the soldiers were given land\textsuperscript{762} in order to maintain themselves and their equipment in exchange for military service, the sovereign’s direct control over them became less firm. In the case of the Mamlûk regime this phenomenon can be observed among the amīrs and their mamlûks, who were often a force of

\textsuperscript{762} In feudal Europe the nobles and knights who were given fiefs owned the land. However, in the Muslim world the holders of \textit{iqṭā’} did not own the land, but had the rights to collect the revenue from their \textit{iqṭā’}. For a discussion of land grants in various premodern polities see Weber, \textit{Economy and Society}, vol. 3, 1016, 1070-1078, 1073-1077. In the Mamlûk sultanate some rulers, such as Lājīn and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, attempted to control the \textit{iqṭā’} through cadastral land surveys (\textit{rawk}) through which they attempted to concentrate more of the land’s revenues under royal control and regulate the distribution of \textit{iqṭā’} through \textit{divān al-jaysh}. See Ayalon, “Studies II,” 454, 459; Ayalon, “Studies III,” 57, 66; Irwin, \textit{Middle East}, 92-93, 98, 110-114; Northrup, \textit{Slave to Sultan}, 206; Northrup, Baḥrî Mamlûk Sultanate,” 264.
contention against the sultans whose main power base and source of support were the Royal Mamlûks.

The ruler of the patrimonial state often had to struggle with his subordinates to maintain his power. Such conflicts occurred more frequently when the realm grew to a great size and the patrimonial household also expanded in such a manner that several of the ruler’s dependents acquired a considerable amount of power, sometimes enough to challenge their master. Often a “supreme official” arose to occupy a central position in the household in very close proximity to the ruler. Depending on the type of the regime and its location, this individual could have been the executioner, the wazîr (chief administrator), chief hâjîb (grand chamberlain), or the commander of the army. These supreme officials posed a dilemma to the ruler because they formed a major pillar of support for him and without whom the whole state could fall apart. On the other hand, they also had the potential to pose a direct challenge to the ruler’s authority, especially if they were able to create support networks for themselves within and without the patrimonial household and to succeed in enlisting the support of the ruler’s personal followers and his subjects.\textsuperscript{763} In the case of the Mamlûk regime, the supreme official was most often the atâbâk (commander-in-chief of the army) and during the Circassian period the dawâdâr (bearer of the royal inkwell)\textsuperscript{764} sometimes also held an immense amount of power.\textsuperscript{765}

One defining feature of the patrimonial state, especially when it encompassed vast territories, was the struggle that often took place between the ruler and his powerful officials and which often led to the decentralized patrimonial state mentioned earlier. Weber defines Estate-type domination as the “form of patrimonial authority under which the administrative staff appropriates particular powers and the corresponding economic assets.”\textsuperscript{766} This type of domination could be attained by an organized group or by an individual.\textsuperscript{767} The rise of some of the sovereign’s dependents in power and status often led to the decline of central authority,


\textsuperscript{764} Petry defines this position in the Circassian period as the “executive secretary.” See Petry, Twilight, 38. Also see William Popper, Egypt and Syria under the Circassian Sultans, 1382-1468 A.D.: Systematic Notes to Ibn Taghrî Birdî’s Chronicles of Egypt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955), 92.

\textsuperscript{765} I am referring specifically to the case of Yashbak min Mahdî who was the dawâdâr during the reign of Qâytbây. See Ayalon, “Studies III,” 62-63; Petry, Twilight, 43.

\textsuperscript{766} Weber, Economy and Society, vol. 1, 232.

\textsuperscript{767} Weber, Economy and Society, vol. 1, 232.
especially when the officials who were challenging the authority of their master were physically distant from the capital and the ruler (i.e., provincial governors). These struggles often occurred because the officials who were appointed to important posts accumulated benefices and power and wanted to maintain their positions vis-à-vis their peers and their master. How the ruler handled such challenges depended on his personal forcefulness and on the strength of the military forces at his disposal. However, if he lacked the military might or if he had a weak persona, then a sort of compromise had to be reached between the central authority and the local notables in which the two sides coexisted and in which a certain degree of power, authority, and independence was delegated to the challengers in the peripheries of the realm.

3.72 Defining the Patrimonial Household in the Context the Current Study

Based on the definition and discussion of patrimonialism above, the Mamlūk sultanate falls within this category of pre-modern states. However, it has its own characteristics that do not fully fit into the Weberian definition. Weber states that:

Where authority is primarily oriented to tradition but in its exercise makes claim of full personal powers, it will be called ‘patrimonial’ authority. Where patrimonial authority lays primary stress on the sphere of arbitrary will free of traditional limitations, it will be called ‘Sultanism’.

According to P.M. Holt, the Mamlūk sultanate falls outside this definition because even though the Mamlūk sultan was an autocrat he was neither absolute nor sovereign and his position really veiled the ruling oligarchy of great amīrs. Holt also claims that the establishment of a hereditary monarchy failed due to the efforts of this same oligarchy of magnates. This may sound like the decentralized patrimonial state. However, Weber argues that this decentralization

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occurred over time as the polity grew and expanded and as the officials in the ruler’s patrimonial household gained power and independence from their sovereign. In the case of the Mamlûk sultanate, the oligarchy of powerful amîrs was present during the formative period of the sultanate. Marshall Hodgson coined the term “military patronage state” and applied it to all the polities established between the Nile and the Oxus by Turkic and Mongol warlords and conquerors, including the Mamlûk regime. Other scholars such as Michael Chamberlain, and Jo Van Steenbergen have adopted this idea and expanded on it with regard to the Mamlûk sultanate. This type of polity possessed the characteristics of patrimonialism, but managed to ensure the long-term survival of a cosmopolitan universal empire that tended toward fragmentation. Despite this difference, the Mamlûk regime was a patrimonial state that focused on providing for the households and armed retainers of the sultans and the amîrs. Inalcik also emphasizes the military nature of the sultans’ households under the Mamlûks and the Ottomans and says “the Janissary and Mamluk armies, consisting of slaves, were typical examples of such professional armies. They were made part and parcel of the ruler’s household and served him with absolute loyalty.”

In her discussion of Timur and his patrimonial household, Maria Subtelny refers to Weber’s forms of legitimate authority. She states that Timur’s rise to power and his rule were based on charismatic authority. This form of authority was unstable because the leader had to constantly prove himself to his followers in order to maintain his paramount position. Often a potential ruler went through a period of exile and trial known as qazaqliq (political

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776 Inalcik, “Comments on Sultanism, 49-50.

777 Subtelny, Timurids, 11.

vagabondage), which in the Timurid case involved spending time on the fringes of the empire and the assembling of a band of loyal followers (nöker) to form a retinue (keshik), who became his main supporters and the core of his patrimonial household. This experience not only created a retinue for the potential ruler, but also fostered a comrade culture among its members. These supporters were rewarded by their lord for their services through the wealth gained after victories. Thus, the heads of the patrimonial households of the Timurids and other nomadic empires depended on a booty economy to maintain them. Even though the Mamlûk sultanate was not a nomadic steppe empire, but rather a metropolitan sedentary regime, it still exhibited the traits described by Subtelny above. The rulers of the Mamlûk sultanate had to maintain themselves in power through their charisma through victories against both internal and external enemies and by providing rewards for their followers, much of which flowed into the sultanate in the form of booty. Furthermore, some of the most successful sultans went through experiences resembling the qazaqliq of Central Asia. For example, Baybars spent six years in exile in Syria along with many of his Baḥriyya comrades after Aqṭāy’s murder. Likewise, after his second deposition from the sultanate, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad went into exile in Karak where he consolidated his support before marching back to retake Cairo and the throne. Lastly, the comrade culture that developed among the members of a steppe ruler’s retinue (especially during qazaqliq) was also present in the Mamlûk sultanate in the form of khushdāshiyya (solidarity among the mamlûks who formed the retinue of a sultan or an amīr). It can thus be concluded that in the Mamlûk sultanate the ruler operated both as the head of the

779 For a detailed discussion of the concept of qazaqliq see Joo-Yup Lee, Qazaqliq, or Ambitious Brigandage, and the Formation of the Qazaqs: State and Identity in Post-Mongol Eurasia (Leiden: Brill, 2016).
780 The concept of the personal retinue will be discussed in the following section.
781 Subtelny, Timurids, 30-32.
782 Subtelny, Timurids, 30.
783 Subtelny, Timurids, 14, 31.
784 Despite the fact that many of the mamlûks originated from the Kipchak Steppe.
785 Especially due to the fact that the Mamlûk sultanate was not a hereditary dynasty. Discussed in detail in chapters 4-6.
786 See Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir, al-Rawḍ, 51-57; Irwin, Middle East, 28; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 69-72.
patrimonial household and the state and also through his charismatic authority which elevated every successful ruler to the throne and maintained him on it.

The final question that must be addressed here is what was the composition of the Mamlūk sultans’ patrimonial households? The men who formed the Mamlūk regime’s central ruling apparatus were mostly, but not exclusively mamlūks. Rulers created their patrimonial households from two of the closest groups to them, their comrades (khushdāshiyya) and their own Royal Mamlūks, specifically the khāṣṣakiyya. The khāṣṣakiyya formed the sultan’s retinue and bodyguard and were the closest in proximity to him from among all the Royal Mamlūks. For example, before becoming sultan, Qalāwūn was al-Ẓāhir Baybars’ khushdāsh, a member of his personal entourage, and his chief counselor. He was also trusted with military commands on important campaigns against the Mongols and the Armenians. The marriage of Baybars’ heir, al-Saʿīd Berke Khan (r.1277-1279 CE), to Qalāwūn’s daughter, Ghāziya, also confirms the prominent position this sultan’s khushdāsh held in his patrimonial household.\(^{788}\) Qalāwūn, in addition to appointing several of his Bahri comrades to prominent positions upon his accession, also appointed many of his own Manṣūriyya mamlūks to high posts in his government. As Qalāwūn’s reign progressed his Manṣūriyya held most of the administrative household positions in the sultanate. For example, Baybars al-Manṣūrī was appointed to the position of dawādār, ‘Alam al-Dīn Sanjar al-Manṣūrī was made amīr akhūr, and ‘Izz al-Dīn Aybak al-Manṣūrī was given the post of amīr Silāh.\(^{789}\) Another example is that of Sultan Qāytbāy and his promotion of Yashbak min Mahdī and Azbak min Ṭuṭukh, who held the positions of dawādār and atābak (commander of the army) respectively. These officers may not have been Qāytbāy’s khushdāsh, but they became close comrades and associates during the reigns of several of Qāytbāy’s predecessors. Their comradeship and shared experiences created bonds between these men similar to those attained by mamlūks purchased, trained, and manumitted together. Thus, Yashbak and Azbak formed two of Qāytbāy’s strongest pillars of support until the ends of their careers.\(^{790}\) Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s case was different to that of most successful long-reigning

\(^{788}\) See Northrup, *From Slave*, 72-75.

\(^{789}\) For a more complete list of Manṣūrī amīrs who held important posts during Qalāwūn’s reign see footnote 253 in Northrup, *From Slave*, 195. For a more detailed discussion of these posts see Ayalon, “Studies III,” 57-90; Ibn Shāhin, *Zubdat al-Kashf*, 114-120.

\(^{790}\) See Petry, *Twilight*, 42-51.
sultans. Because he was a non-Mamlūk, he depended on other non-mamlūks such as the *awlād al-nās* and *wāfidiyya* in addition to his own mamlūks.\(^{791}\)

Ibn Shāhīn presents a vivid description of the patrimonial household in *Kitāb Zubdat Kashf al-Mamālik wa Bayān al-Ṭuruq wa al-Masālik*. He lists all the positions at court and divides them into two groups, positions that can only be held by amīrs\(^{792}\) and positions to which those not holding the rank of amīr can be appointed.\(^{793}\) He also describes the *khāṣṣakiyya* as those mamlūks who were always in the presence of the sultan, even in his most private moments. These men were those who were closest to the sultan and most likely to be promoted to various ranks of amīrs and given posts at court. Ibn Shāhīn states that during the days of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad there were forty of them, but by Barsbāy’s reign their numbers had grown to one thousand. The author says that there were those among the *khāṣṣakiyya* who held posts at court, whereas others did not. He goes on to list some of these positions during Barsbāy’s reign which included ten *dawādāriyya* (bearers of inkwells), ten *sugāt khāṣṣ* (cup bearers), four *khāzindāriyya* (treasurers), and four *silāḥdāriyya* (arms bearers) among others. Similarly, Ibn Shāhīn also lists some of the positions held by al-Ẓāhir Baybars’ *khāṣṣakiyya* during his reign, which included the posts of *tablāriyya* (axe bearers),\(^{794}\) *silāḥdāriyya*, and *sawāqī al-tayr* (keepers of the hunting birds).\(^{795}\) Thus, the patrimonial household of the Mamlūk sultans were composed primarily of their own mamlūks,\(^{796}\) comrades, or military men whom they attracted to them and with whom they formed close bonds.

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\(^{791}\) For a more detailed discussion of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s appointments to high positions in his household see Chapter 5 pages 274-284.

\(^{792}\) He further breaks this category down into the posts the various ranks of amīrs can be appointed to (i.e. positions that an Amīr of One Hundred can hold, positions that an Amīr of Forty can hold etc.). See Ibn Shāhīn, *Zubdat al-Kashf*, 115.

\(^{793}\) Ibn Shāhīn does not specify if these “non-amīrs” were mamlūks without rank or civilians or both. See Ibn Shāhīn, *Zubdat al-Kashf*, 115.


\(^{796}\) In the case of the mamlūks it must be noted here that these patrimonial households were not composed of slaves because the mamlūks were manumitted at the completion of their training and education.
3.73 The Ruler’s Retinue: Origins and Importance within the Islamic Context

A ruler’s personal retinue was composed of his earliest and most loyal followers. They were the foundation of his patrimonial household and the core of the patrimonial state that this leader established. The practice of a chieftain, warlord, sovereign, sultan, or amīr surrounding himself with a loyal personal retinue and creating a principality, kingdom, tribal confederation, or an empire through these followers became one of the central foundations of state building in the Muslim world. However, the origins of the practice of gathering a band of young warriors who supported and served an aspiring state builder in exchange for material rewards and a position in the polity created by such a leader originated outside the Muslim world and even predated the rise of Islam. This section will discuss the Central Asian origin of the personal retinue, its influence on the Islamic world, and its importance to patrimonialism and state building in the Muslim world.

It was the caliph al-Ma’mūn (r. 813-833 CE) and his brother al-Mu’taṣim (r. 833-842 CE) who recruited large bodies of Turks to form powerful personal guard corps in the Muslim world. The loyalty of these men was to their patrons rather than to the state, religion, or tribal affiliation. Al-Ma’mūn formed his personal guard during the time that he spent in the eastern regions of the caliphate and brought them back to Baghdad with him after the end of the ‘Abbāsid Civil War in 827 CE.797

Several scholars have concluded that the practice of forming a personal guard or retinue came to the Muslims from the Eurasian steppe. The conquest of Khurāsān, which led to raids into and the eventual conquest of Transoxania (ma warā’ al-nahr),798 was initiated during the reign of Mu‘āwiya in the late seventh century CE. It was on the fringes of this eastern region that nomadic steppe culture came into contact with Iranian sedentary civilization both before and


798 The systematic conquest and occupation of Transoxania (the region beyond the Oxus river/Amu Darya which covers much of the region known today as Central Asia) was undertaken by Qutayba b. Muslim in the early eighth century CE. See H.A.R. Gibb, The Arab Conquests in Central Asia (London: The Royal Asiatic Society, 1923), 29-58; Richard N. Frye and A.M. Sayili, “The Turks in Khurasan and Transoxania at the Time of the Arab Conquest,” Muslim World, 35, (Hartford: 1947), 310-311.
This contact led to the fusion of Perso-Islamic sedentary civilization and the nomadic culture of the Turkic peoples who dominated the Eurasian steppe. Central Asia also acted as a buffer zone between the sedentary civilizations to the west and nomadic raiders. This frontier region became a gathering place of ghāzī holy warriors to launch attacks against the infidel nomads and wage holy war. Through such military contacts several groups of Turks converted to Islam and became ghāzīs themselves and launched raids against their non-Muslim brethren. During these wars along the steppe frontier many Turks entered the caliphate either as slaves or converted tribesmen. These Turks were especially renowned for their military skills and dominated the armies of the Muslim world for a millennium.

Richard Frye argues that Turks and their military influences and practices were present in the Middle East even before the Islamic conquests. He mentions that Sasanian kings such as Yazdegird II (r. 440-457 CE) and Piruz (r. 459-483 CE) fought against Turkic incursions into their domains and built fortresses along the frontier to defend against nomadic raids. He also states that Khusraw Anushirvān defeated the Turks and resettled many of them in various parts of his empire. These Turks may have introduced the Central Asian concept of the armed retinue known as the chākar system (also referred to as comitatus by P.B. Golden and C.I. Beckwith), which was mistakenly understood by scholars such as M.A. Shaban to be an Iranian institution rather than one originating in the Eurasian Steppe.

There are several other examples of the use of the personal military retinue or comitatus in several regions outside the Islamic world and before the rise of Islam. For example, the king of the Huns, Attila (d. 453), was guarded by a select group of warriors who were chosen from

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801 Bregel, *Role of Central Asia*, 4-5.

802 Frye, “Turks in Khurasan,” 313.


among the “leading men.” These men took turns guarding the person of the ruler. The Avar Qaghan was guarded by his intimates in a similar fashion.⁸⁰⁵ There are similar examples of war bands and retinues that accompanied chiefs into battle and guarded their persons among the German tribes in the first century CE. Such groups of armed retainers were known by a number of titles including Gefolgshaft (retinue), truth (warband), and gesind (household servant). Among the Slavs and the Rus the term družina was used to describe a group of armed men who were the comrades, retinue, or companions of a prince.⁸⁰⁶ In the Far East in 630 CE the Eastern Turks were defeated by the T’ang dynasty of China and the qaghan and many of his warriors were captured. The prisoners were taken to the imperial capital and within a short period of the time both the qaghan and several members of his royal A-Shih-na clan were recruited into the imperial guard.⁸⁰⁷

It is interesting to note that it was not only the Muslims who used the term “boy” or “youth” (i.e., ghulām) as a designation for the members of an armed retinue. In the Merovingian kingdom the Latinised Celtic term vassus (gwas), originally meaning “boy,” was used. In the Indo-Iranian world mayra (Vedic), mairyā (Avestan), and mérak (Middle Persian) meaning young man, hero, or warrior were used to refer to the members of the professional warrior class.⁸⁰⁸

Beckwith describes the practice of recruiting a military retinue as “a thing totally un-Arab”⁸⁰⁹ and as a practice of Central Asian heritage that was passed on to the Arabs from the Sogdians and Turks of that region. In fact, he argues that during early Islamic history those cases in which an Arab possessed a corps of personal guards usually indicates that he had spent time as a governor in the eastern provinces of the caliphate. He gives the examples of ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād, Sa’īd b. ‘Uthmān, and Qutayba b. Muslim who all led military expeditions in Transoxania and during this time also acquired personal guards. ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād returned to Başra with

⁸⁰⁵ Golden, “Some Notes,” 156.
two thousand archers from Bukhārā, Sa‘īd b. ʿUthmān formed a personal guard of fifty ghilmān, and Qutayba b. Muslim recruited a personal guard of archers who were the sons of Khurāsānī nobles. In another example, the last Umayyad governor of Khurāsān, Naṣr b. Sayyār, made peace with al-Iskand, the king of Kish and Nasaf, who had fought against the Arabs for over a decade. Al-Iskand had a band of chākars who served him. This rebel had caused a considerable amount of trouble for the Arabs through his resistance with his very well-trained and disciplined body of cavalrymen. After reaching an agreement with al-Iskand, Naṣr b. Sayyār created his own retinue of 1,000 mamlūks whom he trained, armed, and provided with horses. The benefits of the Central Asian guard corps system were quickly adopted by the Arabs who were impressed by the military effectiveness, discipline, and personal loyalty of the men who formed the retinues of the Central Asian lords, princes, and chieftains. In fact, Golden states that this system was developed centuries before the Arab conquests and had even been transplanted to the sedentary societies over which the Central Asian tribes gained control. It should come as no surprise that the Arabs adopted the chākar institution and merged it with their walā’ (clientage) system. The system became Islamicized and absorbed into the Muslim world as an integral part of Islamic civilization, especially after its implementation by the caliph, the supreme ruler, al-Ma’mūn, and his brother al-Mu‘taṣim, in the ninth century. Once again the key point in this development was the fact that al-Ma’mūn spent a considerable amount of time in Khurāsān. Even the term chākar was adopted during the Sāmarrā period and Arabicized into Shākirī (pl. Shākiriyya). Prior to the adoption of this system by the caliphs, the Sāmānids of Transoxania maintained a large guard corps of Turks, a practice which they likely continued from their Sogdian predecessors and passed on to their Ghaznavid successors.

The members of the household retinue or personal guard of a Muslim ruler were often slaves or manumitted slaves, but they could also be freeborn. For example, some Iranian groups in the ‘Abbāsid caliphs’ guard, such as the Farāghina and Ushrusāniyya, were free and came into

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the caliphs’ service under the command of their princes. Similarly, a Turkic chieftain’s guard
corps in Central Asia could be composed of the sons of the nobles of the tribe. However, whether
the members of the ruler’s retinue were slaves, prisoners of war, freedmen, or free professional
soldiers, they were not “free” to act as they wished because they were bound by oath to the serve
their liege lord. These warriors also saw themselves as the slaves of the lord, king, or chieftain
whom they served.

The *chākar/comitatus* system was of crucial importance both within and without the
Muslim world. It was the main foundation for the creation of a patrimonial state in which the
members of the ruler’s armed retinue became the core of his patrimonial household. They
owed their loyalty to the ruler, who in turn rewarded them for their fidelity and service with
wealth and high posts in the regime. Despite the differences between the Diversified Army
Model and the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model, the personal armed retinue or *chākar/comitatus* was
central to both, because these military models were both a part of the patrimonial state and their
elites were at the core of the patrimonial households of both the caliphs and the sultans.

### 3.74 Defining State Building in the Context of the Current Study

The Mamlūk sultan was not an absolute monarch. As mentioned above, the amīrs were
also heavily involved in ruling the sultanate. The oligarchy of military officers who stood behind
the sultans was involved in king-making, balancing the internal power structure, and opposing
ineffective sultans or those rulers whose practices did not agree with the interests of the powerful
amīrs and their followers. The successful state building sultan was able to gain the support of
these amīrs, purge and neutralize potential rivals, and increase the influence and power of the
members of his own patrimonial household.

The Mamlūk sultanate was, for the most part, elective. Every sultan who rose to power
did so with the support of the amīrs and the army. Aybak, Baybars, and Qalāwūn all rose to

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power with the blessing and support of the great magnates of the realm. The sultans were usually selected from among the senior amīrs, especially in the later period of the sultanate. Most often it was the atābak (commander in chief of the army) who was raised to the sultanate. In fact, by the later period the position of atābak did not only mean that the holder of the title commanded the army, but also that he was the paramount amīr in the realm.

One of the sultans’ primary roles was that of a war leader. They were raised, educated, and trained in a militaristic society to be elite soldiers or officers in the army. Due to the fact that the sultanate was faced by major external threats when it was established, the military role and nature of the ruler’s position remained intact throughout its existence. In fact, Holt argues that the official and formal presentation of the sultan as a warrior king “was a much more primitive and barbaric concept, of the sultan as a leader of tribal warriors, a Heerkönig, whose authority rested on his acceptance by his companions and was buttressed by his personal prowess.” As mentioned earlier, he was also the “gatekeeper,” who ensured that the wealth and power within the realm was shared in a satisfactory manner based on the seniority of the recipients. Furthermore, a council of senior amīrs, not unlike a cabinet in a modern government, advised the sultan and sometimes even directed his rule. The sultans were constantly in a struggle to maintain their positions on the throne and either had to suppress or appease their former peers.

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824 Clifford, State Formation, 110, 125.
and opponents, constantly managing, recreating, and reforming the power structures and alignments of the factions within their realm in a never ending process of state building and rebuilding. Despite this seeming weakness of the Mamlūk sultanate, it was politically and socially very complex and the internal political system was durable and conducive to the sultanate’s longevity.826 One could say that the state building of every new successful sultan refreshed the sultanate and restructured it in ways to meet the needs of the new ruler and his era. Thus, the Mamlūk sultanate was ever changing, developing, and evolving,827 as was the ruling elite, their patrimonial households, and the army.

Therefore state building in the context of this study should be viewed as the continuous transformation of the Mamlūk sultanate’s ruling apparatus through the restructuring of the sultans’ patrimonial households and the army by every successful and long reigning ruler. Weber states that the administrative staff of a patrimonial ruler consists primarily of his personal retainers. In patrimonial administrations it was a common occurrence for these retainers, who often rose to the highest positions, to have been slaves or freedmen. Thus, this group of personal servants formed the ruling apparatus of the patrimonial polity.828 Therefore, when discussing continuous state building in this study, I am referring to the constant changing or replacement of the individuals and groups that were involved in ruling and administering the domains of the Mamlūk sultanate with the rise of every successful ruler. This point is important because in patrimonial regimes such as the Mamlūk sultanate it was the members of the ruling household that formed the ruling apparatus of the polity. This form of state building will be used here as a tool to trace the structural changes in the Mamlūk military as well as the effects these changes had on its quality. The military and the sultan’s patrimonial household were very closely linked because, as discussed above, the ruler’s personal retinue and the holders of high ranks and positions at court were, for the most part, mamlūks and military men. This form of state building is in line with Clifford’s ideas of promoting and maintaining niẓām because the successful rulers of the Mamlūk regime were able to appoint their followers to the prominent positions and governorships in the sultanate. They were also able to eliminate resistance from other amīrs,

some of whom were potential rivals for the throne. Successful rulers brought most of the amīrs into the fold of niẓām through their inclusion in ruling the sultanate and the sharing of power and resources. In some cases they had to use force to coerce or eliminate their foes. Regarding rival factions (i.e. mamlūks of previous sultans who caused problems for a new ruler), they were sometimes purged. These purges varied in their degrees of intensity from the exiling or imprisonment of some prominent officers of the rebellious faction to wholesale massacres. Such purges were often necessary to create vacant positions for the members of the new sultan’s patrimonial household at court. Regarding fringe groups like the bedouin and the Turkmen, their rebellions were often crushed ruthlessly.

The concept that every sultan was a new state builder is similar to Van Steenbergen’s assertion that every sultan’s reign was his microcosmic dawla within the macrocosmic dawla of Dawlat al-Atrāk, which represented the regime that ruled Egypt and Syria between 1250-1517 CE. The main difference being that Van Steenbergen examines theories of socio-political interactions between individuals and groups and attempts to come up with a framework for these relationships. On the other hand, the current study focuses on the idea of state building as a means for the ruler to implement as much control as possible through promoting members of his personal entourage to prominent posts and ruling through them in addition to coopting potential rivals. Additionally, the sultan’s state building practices extend to the military, the means through which he imposed his will upon his domains, by restructuring it and including within it groups that were more loyal to him and that he could control. As discussed earlier, these practices initially led to the discarding of the Diversified Army Model during the mid-thirteenth century in favor of the Şālḥī Mamlūk Model, which saw the development of a an army that favored mamlūks more heavily than any other group. This model was once again discarded by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, a non-mamlūk, in favor of the Diversified Army Mode. He sought to incorporate others like himself into the ruling elite of his patrimonial state in order to counterbalance the powerful mamlūk amīrs and their followers. In the Circassian period the military fluctuated between the two models, which were eventually merged due to the emergence of several interest groups within the army and the ruling elite. The new military model, although still dominated by mamlūks was diversified because these mamlūks were split into several competing factions. Therefore, one can say that the fifteenth century military of the sultanate took on the form of a Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model. Thus, regarding the idea of multiple
dawlas or every sultan being a state builder, the main difference between these ideas presented by Van Steenbergen and this study is the focus on socio-politics by the former and political relations and the military in the latter.

3.75 The Premodern Polity’s Life Cycle: Ibn Khaldūn’s Theory on State Formation and Collapse

Ibn Khaldūn dedicates a significant part of his Muqaddima to the discussion of the life cycles of dynasties, or dawlas. His ideas are important because they are still being used by historians today. I have mentioned earlier that Loiseau referred to Ibn Khaldūn’s theory on the lifecycle of dynasties to refute the notion of decline in the Mamlūk sultanate. Instead he uses this medieval scholar’s ideas to propose that the Mamlūk sultanate was composed of a number of dawlas that followed one another, each one bringing about a revival until the final conquest of the sultanate in 1517 CE.

Ibn Khaldūn precedes his discussion of the formation of dynasties, their rise, royal authority, and the government ranks with a discourse on nomadic tribes (with a focus on the bedouin) and “savage nations.”829 This is an important starting point for the author because he claims that nomadic tribes preceded sedentary people and it was the energy of these tribes and their survival in harsh and competitive environments that better equipped them to achieve superiority and elevated them to nobility and eventually to royalty.830 Ibn Khaldūn emphasizes the importance of “group feeling” or ‘aṣabiyya among these tribes, a theme that he carries on into his discussion of the formation of dynasties and sedentary polities. He states that this ‘aṣabiyya is of paramount importance because it unites tribes and enables them to survive in the desert against nature’s challenges and those posed by rival groups.831 He goes on to define what causes ‘aṣabiyya in a group and states that it can be found among clansmen who were related by blood and also between tribesmen and their clients and allies with whom they had close connections. The author argues that pedigree is “imaginary and devoid of reality” and is only

829 Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, 91.
831 Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, 97-98.
useful because it implies and cements close contacts between individuals. He also claims that the nobility of a “house” or tribe was transferred not only to its members who can claim blood kinship, but also to its clients and followers through the master whom they served. He states that their sharing in the experience of group feeling made them a part of the collective and transferred the nobility of that tribe to them. This statement is very relevant in the case of the mamlūks who began their careers as slaves. They acquired the nobility of their master who was either the sultan or one of the amīrs. They, therefore, were not permanently stamped with the humble status of a slave for the duration of their lives, but acquired the noble status of their master. Ibn Khaldūn argues that the aim of “group feeling” was to achieve royal authority.

Ibn Khaldūn’s emphasis on the importance of “group feeling” or ‘āṣabiyya is carried over into his chapter on dynasties and royal authority. He begins the section by stating that a ruler or a dynasty could not attain royal authority or establish a polity without a group of supporters with the bonds of ‘āṣabiyya. He states that without such strong links there was no willingness on the part of the individuals who formed such groups to fight and die for one another. Such a group was also in competition with one or more rival factions who were in a struggle to attain (or trying to maintain) the much coveted royal authority. Therefore, this solidarity and strong support for one another among the members of a tribe or a faction not only enabled them to compete for and acquire royal authority, but also ensured their survival against rival groups. This is a type of realpolitik that the Mamlūk factions found themselves facing after the death of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb and the accession of Tūrānshāh and throughout the duration of their dominance in Egypt and Syria between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries. Therefore, according to Ibn Khaldūn, the lifestyle of the nomadic groups prepared them for the struggles that eventually elevated some of them to royal authority. The case of the Mamlūks agrees with Ibn Khaldūn’s theory on the formation of a dynasty with royal authority; they were also captured from fringe regions, often with a tribal social organization. The factions of mamlūks serving under a master formed the

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“group solidarity” that Ibn Khaldūn describes in his work through their close proximity with one another and their patron and through their shared experiences.

A ruler could rise to power on the backs of his “own people” i.e. his fellow clansmen, but he seldom relied on them for very long. Once in power, he might turn on his initial supporters after the first stage of the dynasty. In this initial stage royal authority was established and rivals and rebels were fought off and defeated. The ruler initially promoted his own people to high offices, but in the second stage he started to show himself as independent from his people and concentrated the power in his own hands. He thus turned his initial supporters into his enemies. To defend himself against these new enemies and to maintain his power the ruler had to find new allies and recruit new followers. These new supporters were given lofty positions and shown favor by their master to the detriment of his early supporters. There are several examples of rulers discarding their kinsmen and tribesmen upon whom they had initially relied for their power in favor of new, often alien, elements of support. Such examples can be seen when the Buyids started to favor Turkic ghulāms over their fellow Daylamīs; or when the Seljūks replaced their Oghūz tribal supporters with an army of slave troops; or the Fāṭimids who transitioned away from the Kutāma, their early tribal Berber supporters, in favor of Turkic and black slaves and Armenians; or when al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb elevated his Baḥriyya mamlūks at the expense of his Ayyūbid kin and other factions in the sultanate.

Ibn Khaldūn asserts that every dynasty has a lifespan. He sets this lifespan at three generations. The first of these generations began in the nomadic tribal milieu and laid the foundations of the regime. The second generation transformed the dynasty and society as a whole into a sedentary one. The dynasty or regime was now ruled by an autocrat, who had monopolized power and glory, (previously shared with his peers), and transformed his fellow clansmen from proud superiority into subservient subjects. By the third generation the members of the dynasty had forgotten their tribal origins and lost their nomadic toughness. They had become inured in the luxury with which they were surrounded. They needed protection and took on many new clients and supporters, who gave the dynasty an impression of strength, but in

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837 These dynasties and the composition of their supporting militaries will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.
reality it was dwindling and could not be saved. It is in these stages of deterioration that the writer states that the ‘aṣabiyya, which had given the dynasty its initial strength and impetus, waned and eventually disappeared. Ibn Khaldūn states that wealth and luxury initially strengthened dynasties during the first two generations. Through these means the dynasty was able to recruit more supporters and clients and grew in power. However, when the regime became senile during the third generation, these clients and supporters most often were unable do anything to save it because they were never in positions of real authority and were dependent on their masters.

Ibn Khaldūn does note an exception in which a dynasty or a group could retain royal authority, and that is when there is a continued “group feeling” or ‘aṣabiyya among some of its members. He says that royal authority may disappear in one of the branches of a dynasty, but it can continue in another branch so long as the feelings of solidarity exhibited by ‘aṣabiyya were there. This theory can be applied directly to the mamlūks and the fluctuations that occurred throughout the existence of their regime. Lioseau has aptly made this point and states that what has been perceived as decline during the Mamlūk period was in reality the fall of one dawla and the rise of another. He also points out that each of these dawlas roughly agrees with Ibn Khaldūn’s timeline of three generations for the life of a dynasty. For example, he mentions that with the fall of the Qalāwūnid house a new royal household was established with the rise of Barqūq and the Circassians and strengthened by the renewed mamlūk ‘aṣabiyya exhibited by him and his followers.

The luxury mentioned by Ibn Khaldūn that led to a dynasty’s demise resulted in its main foundations crumbling and led to its disintegration. The first of these foundations was military might which was fueled by the ‘aṣabiyya of the soldiers in the army. The second was an economic foundation that supported the military. Once again the emphasis Ibn Khaldūn places on the solidarity among the members of the dynasty and their supporters as the main pillar for that regime’s survival is central. Once this ‘aṣabiyya disappeared so did the main foundation and strength of the regime. This weakening was first felt in the peripheries that started falling away

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838 Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, 136-137, 141-142.
839 Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, 140.
from central control to rivals or rebels. These enemies continued to advance until they reached the center and put an end to the ruling regime.\textsuperscript{841} Ibn Khaldūn mentions that economic deterioration occurred when the ruling family spent extravagantly on themselves and disregarded their subjects. This led to the extortion of the populace by the rulers and their tax collectors (who were also corrupt and appropriated a lot of the taxes for themselves). He argues that as the dynasty became senile after it had reached the zenith of its power, it attempted to exhibit its strength to the army by generously paying the soldiers. These expenditures often led to the financial ruin of the regime and to the loss of control over the military whose members lost the “group feeling” and respect for their masters.\textsuperscript{842} Another cause given by Ibn Khaldūn for the demise of dynasties is injustice on the part of the ruler toward his subjects. He gives examples such as forced labor, extortion, and the cheap acquisition of land by the ruling class as injustices. These actions, according to the writer, led to the ruin and decay of both urban centers and the countryside.\textsuperscript{843} He also states that it was economically ruinous when the ruler attempted to increase his revenues by participating in commercial activity. Ibn Khaldūn argues that through purchasing agricultural land or livestock the ruler destroyed the competitive environment because his subjects were unable to match his wealth or were too afraid to bid against him. Furthermore, he could appropriate property through force or buy it for lower prices. By monopolizing one or more industries, the ruler drove prices up because he did not sell to the merchants unless he deemed it profitable. This participation in commerce on the part of the ruler thus caused a lot of damage to the economy.\textsuperscript{844}

Many of Ibn Khaldūn’s ideas regarding the dynastic cycle can be applied to the various periods of the Mamlūk sultanate. The early energetic phase of a dynasty can be equated with state building. In this stage the ruler established himself and his supporters in positions of power at the expense of his predecessor’s mamlūks and allies. This study asserts that the turnaround in the changes and shifts in power in the sultanate came at much closer intervals than Ibn Khaldūn’s three generations. I argue that every successful sultan was a new state builder who created his

\textsuperscript{841} Ibn Khaldūn, \textit{Muqaddima}, 246-247.
\textsuperscript{842} Ibn Khaldūn, \textit{Muqaddima},248-249.
\textsuperscript{843} Ibn Khaldūn, \textit{Muqaddima},238-241.
\textsuperscript{844} Ibn Khaldūn, \textit{Muqaddima}, 232-233.
ruling apparatus by appointing his supporters to positions of power and making changes to the military. Thus, there were major shifts or *dawlas* such as the changes wrought by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and the remamlūkization process under Barqūq and his successors. However, there were also many micro shifts and changes that occurred within the regime with the accession of every new successful and long reigning sultan. This study is most concerned with the changes made by the ruler through the officials and officers he promoted to high positions in his court and the military (most often the majority of these were military men) and the effects they had on the structure and efficiency of the army.

### 3.76 State Building in the Mamlūk Sultanate

In *State Formation and the Structure of Politics in Mamluk Syro-Egypt 648-741 A.H./1250-1340 CE*, the late Winslow Clifford provides a detailed exposition of state formation and organization in the early Mamlūk sultanate. He argues that the state established by the Mamlūks was a “rational sociopolitical structure, not an amorphous polity driven blindly by jungle law.” He also states that the Mamlūks were state builders whose main concern was to preserve internal order (*niẓām*) and to ensure an equitable distribution of wealth and power among the socio-military elite that ruled the sultanate. In other words, it was a patrimonial state based on the ruler granting his followers and the military elite favors, wealth, and positions in exchange for service and loyalty. In fact, he argues that even when members of the military elite rebelled, it was a form of controlled and structured violence that symbolized “dissent through limited paramilitary action.” This form of opposition not only limited destruction and loss of life in the sultanate, but also allowed for a resolution to be reached by the parties involved. In other words, Clifford argues that in such cases conflict was constructive and allowed the ruling elite to realign its internal relationships and reorganize the distribution of wealth in the state.

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848 Clifford, *State Formation*, 16.
Clifford places heavy emphasis on the idea of balance and “constitutional” order (niẓām) in the Mamlūk sultanate. He notes that it was Baybars who was the first real ruler of the sultanate and its founder. He claims that this ruler “based the Mamluk state on principles of constitutional order or niẓām.” He created a system of state patronage based on the equitable distribution of wealth and power among the Mamlūk elite. The amount of wealth and the power was distributed based on principles of seniority. Baybars was also astute when it came to conflict resolution. He endeavored to resolve revolts by negotiating with the rebellious amīrs in order to return to a state of order, putting an end to the ritualized opposition that they directed against him in order to prevent the situation from becoming a real civil war. Furthermore, it was only rebellions by marginal groups or weaker individuals that were suppressed violently and whose perpetrators suffered severe punishments. Clifford also claims that the successful rulers who followed Baybars were those who were able to uphold the system that he created, to maintain niẓām, and to uphold the patrimonial rights of the elite. Those sultans who deviated from this system were universally opposed, and often removed from power, by the amīrs who, he states, were aware and conscious of their patrimonial rights. In other words, the members of the mamlūk elite were the guardians and enforcers of Baybars’ system even after his death. Baybars was able to make the amīrs stakeholders in the state by fusing their interests with those of the state. Thus, the welfare of the amīrs, the army, and the state became one and it was in every stakeholder’s interest to cooperate with the sultan, who in this instance became the “gatekeeper” responsible for the equitable distribution of wealth and power rather than an autocrat with unlimited power.

Clifford argues that internal conflict in the Mamlūk sultanate was heavily ritualized and regulated in order to prevent the destabilization and collapse of the polity through uncontrolled internal violence. There is some merit to this statement, especially during the reign of Baybars which, he says, set a precedent for future sultans to follow. However, this theory cannot be upheld for the entire Mamlūk period. For instance, Sunqur al-Ashqar’s revolt had the

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catastrophic potential to destroy the sultanate through the rebellious amīr inviting a Mongol invasion, which can hardly be seen as a ritualistic display of violence and opposition. Furthermore, the Circassian regime rose in the late fourteenth century CE after heavy and destructive fighting between Turkic and Circassian mamlūk factions in Syria and Egypt.\footnote{See Chapter 7 pages 319-322.}

Clifford’s monograph has brought to light several important elements of state building in the Mamlūk sultanate and the internal workings of this regime. His theories emphasize that the successful ruler maintained niẓām through his adherence to the system established by Baybars which involved the equitable distribution of wealth and power and through the minimalization of internal conflict and destruction through conflict resolution. He also stresses the importance of relationships in patrimonial states. The current study places heavier emphasis on a point that Clifford does not really address, which is the almost constant transformation of the military through the creation of new patrimonial households and ruling apparatuses by every successful long reigning sultan as a process of state building.

### 3.77 The Military Patronage State

In his recent article, “The Mamluk Sultanate as a Military Patronage State: Household Politics and the Case of the Qalāwūnid bayt (1279-1382),” Van Steenbergen has renewed the focus on the concept of the military patronage state. This idea was first introduced by Marshall Hodgson who states that it applied to all the polities established between the Nile and the Oxus by Turkic and Mongol warlords and conquerors.\footnote{See M.S. Hodgson, The Venture of Islam, vol. 2, The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1977), 400-410.} Chamberlain also discusses this institution and traces its development in the Islamic world from its inception with the establishment of the Seljūk empire to its most successful and enduring existence under the Mamlūk sultanate. He states that the Seljūks, with whom the military patronage state really began in the Muslim world, should not be viewed “as a unitary state, but rather as a collection of powerful households kept in check by the head of the most powerful among them.”\footnote{Chamberlain, “Military Patronage States,” 142.} Chamberlain concludes that “The military patronage state thus permitted the ideal of the universal cosmopolitan empire to survive
within a political economic context that tended towards fragmentation. Although individual dynasties were short lived, the practices that sustained them were enduring.”857 I should add here that this concept builds upon Max Weber’s patriarchal authority and patrimonialism, but extends the state to a number of powerful households among which the ruler’s household was the most powerful.

Van Steenbergen reiterates Chamberlain’s ideas and extends them to explain the longevity of the Mamlûk sultanate, using the period during which the scions of the House of Qalāwūn held the position of sultan. He states that even after the election of amīrs such as Baybars and Qalāwūn to the sultanate, the regimes that ruled Syria and Egypt during the time continued to operate as a military patronage state, “in which the basic unit of political as much as of social, economic and cultural organisation continued to be the extended military household.”858 The mamlûk households were the building blocks of urban society in Syria and Egypt. The most elaborate of these households was that of the sultan. It was by far the largest, most complex, and most diverse. The senior amīrs’ households were small scale copies of the sultan’s, but still exhibited similar complex relationships between the various members and the chief amīr of the household.859 Overall, in the Mamlûk regime there was no political authority outside the elite households of the sultanate.860

The Qalāwūnid’s were the sole dynasty within the Mamlûk sultanate. Qalāwūn, the dynasty’s founder, was considered a first among equals by his peers throughout his reign. He had to negotiate his power with his Baḥrī khushdāshiyya, who kept him in check.861 These amīrs, who were the heads of the powerful households of the sultanate, were gradually integrated into Qalāwūn’s own household.862 With the death of Qalāwūn and most of his Baḥrī peers a new elite emerged from among the sultan’s own amīrs. Three of them, Kitbughā, Lājīn, and Baybars al-Jāshinkīr, made a bid for the sultanate, but failed to consolidate power vis-à-vis their peers. With

860 Van Steenbergen, “Mamluk Sultanate as a Military Patronage State,” 197.
the failure of the amīrs to gain the sultanate, the only alternative that remained was raising a Qalāwūnid to power; in this instance it was al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. Van Steenbergen contends that this sultan made major changes to the military patronage state. Up until al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s third reign, this system was geared towards balancing the interests of the various military households that formed the elite of the Mamlūk society. This ruler subdued his father’s amīrs through purges and raised his own followers to prominence, bringing them closer to himself through the granting of lavish gifts and promotions. Furthermore, his cadastral survey resulted in a redistribution of resources to the advantage of the sultan and the detriment of the amīrs. Unlike his predecessors, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was an absolute ruler at his death. He had monopolized power in his own hands and those of his chosen commanders, who were no longer the sultan’s peers but his subordinates.

The aftermath of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s death saw a series of struggles between his successors and the amīrs who had formed his household. With the death of most of his senior officers in the ensuing conflicts a second generation of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s men came to the fore. These amīrs were less intimately linked to the late sultan and thus reduced his descendants to puppets. The period between al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s death and the rise of the first Circassian sultan, Barqūq (r. 1382-1389 CE and 1390-1399 CE), is marked by the constant struggles between the Qalāwūnid sultans and the senior amīrs and the infighting among the amīrs themselves for power. The final struggle ended with the fall and death of the powerful amīr, Yalburghā al-‘Umarī, signalling the end of the Qalāwūnid house with the fall of the last generation of amīrs that had served them. The rise of the Circassian amīr Barqūq presaged a new era in which mamlūks from non-royal origins (i.e., Ṣāliḥī/Baḥrī or Qalāwūnid) rose to power.

In his conclusion Van Steenbergen states that “the all-encompassing dynamics of Mamluk socio-political organisation may be considered as oscillating between, on the one hand, the fragmentation of the regime’s elites into the various military households of its senior amīrs

866 Van Steenbergen, “Mamluk Sultanate as a Military Patronage State,” 211.
(“oligarchy”), and, on the other hand, the integrative establishment of the pre-eminence and predominance of one of these households (“autocracy”), these processes merely representing two modes of the Mamluk MPS.  

This observation is very pertinent to and compatible with one of the main arguments of this study, i.e., that the mamlûk military did not go into a downward spiral after the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and due to his choices, but rather mirrored the socio-political situation in the sultanate and the state building practices of the ruling sultan. Rather than taking a certain direction and following it to the end, the mamlûk army, like the mamlûk political society and the households that formed it, was a flexible institution that “oscillated” between the Diversified Army Model and the Şâliḥî Mamlûk Model.

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867 Van Steenbergen, “Mamluk Sultanate as a Military Patronage State,” 214. Van Steenbergen uses MPS as an abbreviation for “the military patronage state” in his article.
Chapter 4

The Diversified Army Model in the Pre-Mamlūk Period

4.1 The Development of the Diversified Army Model in the Muslim World

In the previous chapter I demonstrated that, according to the Persian and Arabic advice literature and military manuals, a ruler should ensure that his soldiers were well-paid and equipped and that the army was composed of different groups of men with varying interests in order for him to maintain a strong, disciplined, obedient, and efficient military. Likewise, the successful sovereign, as discussed by Weber and others, had to create a strong patrimonial household and ruling apparatus also composed of men from various backgrounds in whose interest it was to remain loyal to the ruler. Having such mixed armies also contributed to the efficiency of the army because soldiers and warriors from different regions and backgrounds brought with them a variety of skills and abilities that enabled the militaries that employed them to operate and function in different landscapes, climates, and situations.

4.1.1 The Armies of the Rashidūn Caliphs and the Early Conquests

It is true that the armies that carried out the early conquests of Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Iran, and North Africa were composed predominantly of Arab tribal warriors. However, even at this early stage, the caliphs and the commanders of these armies showed signs of leaning towards a diversified military. Almost immediately after the initiation of the conquests, the Muslim leadership eagerly incorporated non-Arabs and even non-Muslims into the ranks of their armies. These new troops were from among prisoners of war, defectors from enemy militaries, or levied from the local non-Arab populace. There could have been a number of reasons for the incorporation of these troops into the predominantly Arab armies. These include a need for fresh manpower to augment the forces of the caliphate and to fuel the conquests, a desire to incorporate men with new skills and to learn new military techniques, or to co-opt the military elites of the conquered regions, thus decreasing the likelihood of uprisings and resistance to Muslim rule.\(^\text{868}\) The leadership of the early caliphate was aware of all the above-mentioned

\(^{868}\) Ayalon, “Preliminary Remarks,” 44-48; Kennedy, Armies, 4-6.
factors and took measures to deal with them. In the process, however, they also initiated the creation of a future counterweight to the Arab tribal warriors. Whether this was done consciously or was just a by-product of recruiting non-Arabs to meet manpower demands and the need for experienced soldiers is not clear. Moreover, the Arabs may have also observed the practice of large multi-ethnic armies among their enemies, especially the Sasanians, and this may have influenced them. For instance, the contemporary of the Prophet and early Muslim general, Khālid b. al-Walīd encountered resistance from a mixed army of Arabs from the Kinda and Iyād tribes and non-Arabs at Ṣandaudā’ on his way from Iraq to Syria. During the conquests, the Muslims came upon several other cities that were garrisoned by mixed forces. This practice of moving and settling populations as frontier guards and garrisons was especially popular with the Sasanians. It is unclear whether the early Muslim conquerors were consciously imitating the practices of their new subjects when incorporating new non-Arab elements into the army or only doing what was militarily expedient at the time to supplement their forces with the available manpower. However, there seems to have been an awareness and acceptance of non-Arab soldiers joining the army and a clear policy and process through which this integration was carried out as indicated by the treaties and agreements made between groups of renegade Iranian soldiers and the caliphate after al-Qādisiyya and Jalūla.

The largest incorporation of non-Arab troops during the early conquests occurred on the Iraqi front. After the Sasanian defeat at al-Qādisiyya in 637 CE, a special unit of 4,000 crack troops called the jund-i shahānshāh defected to the Muslim army. They were given stipends from the dīwān and became confederates (mawālī) of Banū Tamīm and were settled in Syria and Baṣra. Another unit of 4,000 Daylamī soldiers also defected after al-Qādisiyya and made

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871 An example is the city of Sughdabīl in Juzjān, which was built by Khusraw Anūshrivān and populated with Persians (abnā’ Fāris) and Sogdians (al-Sughd). Al-Balādhurī, Futūḥ, vol.1, 232; al-Balādhurī, Origins, vol. 1, 306.
up a part of one of the seven contingents into which Sa’d b. Abī Waqqās’s army was divided. They were settled in Kūfa after taking part in several campaigns including the siege of Ctesiphon, the Battle of Jalūla, and in the pursuit of the defeated Persians. In fact, a Persian defector, Qubādh, was made the governor of Jalūla after its conquest and his garrison included both Arabs and Iranians.

There were further defections that occurred after the Battle of Jalūla, which took place shortly after the Battle of Qādisiyya. On this occasion, a number of dihqāns converted to Islam, were allowed to retain their lands and titles, and were exempted from the poll tax. In addition to these defections, the asāwira, or the elite Sasanian cavalry, also started to join the Muslims. When the Muslims advanced on the Iranian plateau, Siyāh al-Uswārī and the other commanders of the asāwira sent petitions to the Muslim commanders stating the following conditions: that they would join the Muslim army and fight the enemies of the Arabs; that they would refrain from joining any side if there were an internal struggle; that they would be protected from any further aggression by the Arabs; that they would be allowed to settle

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874 It is unclear in Futūḥ al-Buldān whether this unit is the same as the jund-i shahānshāh or if it is a separate entity. Kennedy states that they were two separate units that joined the Muslims on separate occasions. See Kennedy, Armies, 4-5.

875 Al-Ṭabarī indicates that a group of Daylamī soldiers and garrisons defected after the Battle of al-Qādisiyya and praised their brethren (and bemoaned not having their foresight) who had defected to the Muslims “from the beginning” and decided to follow their example. This indicates that there were groups of defectors to the Arab army before, during, and after the Battle of al-Qādisiyya. See al-Ṭabarī, The History of al-Ṭabarī (Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulāk), vol. 12, The Battle of al-Qādisiyya and the Conquest of Syria and Palestine, trans. Yohanan Friedman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985, 1992), 127; al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Mulāk, vol. 4, (Beirut: Dār al-Qāmūs al-Ḥadīth, 1968), 134.


879 These were the landed gentry of the region. Jamīl b. Buṣbuhrā (the dihqān of al-Falājīj and al-Nahrain), Biştām b. Narsī (the dihqān of Bābil and Kuṭāriyya), al-Rufayl (the dihqān of al-ʿĀl), and Fayrūz (the dihqān of Nahr al-Malik and Kuṭā) are all mentioned by name. al-Balādhurī, Futūḥ, vol. 2, 325; al-Balādhurī, Origins, vol. 1, 421-422.

wherever they wished; that they would join the Arab tribe of their choosing; and that they would be paid stipends. These conditions were all accepted by the commanders, and the caliph and the *asāwira* became part of the Muslim armies and took part in the conquest of Iran. They played a role during some sieges and were reported to have been excellent marksmen. In addition to these elite cavalry men, the Zuṭṭ and the Sayābidja, from Northern India who had been settled by the Sasanians in Iraq and the Persian Gulf and had served as auxiliary troops of the Persian army, also joined the Muslims. They were also incorporated as clients of Arab tribes and settled in Baṣra, Kūfa, and Syria.

Not only were converts in Iraq and Iran incorporated into the armies of the caliphate, but non-Muslims were also admitted into the ranks. The best example is that of the Banū Taghlib tribe who lived in the region of the Lower Euphrates. This tribe had been under the Sasanian sphere of influence and its members were Christians. When the Muslims advanced into their territories and demanded their conversion, the Banū Taghlib were on the verge of leaving and joining the Byzantines. However, on account of their military prowess, the Muslims did not want to drive them into the arms of their enemies. Therefore, `Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb induced many of them to remain in the caliphate by allowing them to pay a double *ṣadaqa* (rather than the *jizya*, thus avoiding the humiliation of paying the poll tax) and to retain their religion and their arms.

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881 Groups of Isfahānī troops were settled in Baṣra along with the *asāwira*. In addition to these soldiers 7,000, Farghānans and Bukhārans were also settled in Baṣra. See Ayalon, “Preliminary Remarks,” 47.


883 Al-Ṭabarī mentions a ruse conceived by Siyāh in which he dressed in Persian attire and tricked the defenders of a fortress that the Muslims were besieging into opening the gates and in effect enabling the Muslims to conquer it without much difficulty. See al-Ṭabarī, *Ṭārīkh al-Umam*, vol. 4, 219-220; al-Ṭabarī, *History of al-Ṭabarī*, vol. 13, 144-145.


885 For other instances when the *asāwira* are mentioned as a part of the Muslim armies in *Futūḥ al-Buldān* see al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ*, vol. 2, 434, 440, 450, 470.


Parts of the tribe joined the Muslim army and participated in the conquest of Iraq. Eventually, these Taghlibīs were settled in Kūfa.\textsuperscript{889}

The Arabs implemented similar policies to those used in Iraq as they advanced into Syria on the Byzantine front. During the early conquests the Samaritans received a favorable deal from Abu ‘Ubayda in that they were only required to pay a poll tax and were exempted from paying the land tax in exchange for acting as guides, scouts, and spies for the Arabs.\textsuperscript{890} The Jarājima (Maradites) who lived at Mount al-Lukām (Amanus) in the Antioch region were hardy men who also joined the advancing Arab forces. These Christian warriors were not forced to convert to Islam. They served the Muslim armies as spies, raiders, and frontier guards in the mountainous regions of Northern Syria.\textsuperscript{891} In exchange for these military services they were exempted from taxation.\textsuperscript{892}

In \textit{Futūḥ al-Shām}, a “legendary” account of the conquest of Syria that focuses on the heroism of the characters, there are further accounts of defections to the Muslim armies. However, the accounts regarding the conversion and defection of Syrian and Roman notables and commanders to the Muslim side, though perhaps exaggerated, may have been based on real defections and are therefore worth mentioning here. According to this source, the first important individual to convert to Islam was Yūqannā, the ruler of Aleppo. Throughout the narrative he valiantly resisted the Arab advance but after putting up a stiff resistance he later converted.\textsuperscript{893} The Arabs eagerly welcomed this seasoned warrior and his followers into their ranks, and he was made a commander in the Muslim army. Yūqannā and his followers subsequently played an important role in the struggle against the Byzantines. In fact they proved pivotal in the Muslim


\textsuperscript{891} The relationship between the caliphs and the Maradites shifted from amiability to hostility during the Umayyad caliphate. At some points they posed a threat as a fifth column within the caliphate for the Byzantines; at other times they reached agreements with the Arabs and joined them. See al-Balādhurī, \textit{Futūḥ}, vol. 1, 189; al-Balādhurī, vol. 1, \textit{Origins}, 247-252.


conquests of both Antioch and Tripoli.\textsuperscript{894} Other Christian commanders who defected to the Muslims were Lawān,\textsuperscript{895} Luke,\textsuperscript{896} (both sons of prominent Byzantines and instrumental in defeating their fathers according to these tales) and Falantius.\textsuperscript{897}

The practice of incorporating the martial populations of the areas conquered during the early conquests set the tone for the future armies of the Muslim world. Even though the Arab tribal element continued to dominate the military, the idea of an army composed of troops from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds was established. This idea only got stronger and furthered the development of the Diversified Army Model with the passage of time. For instance, during the First Civil War ‘Alī’s army is said to have included 8,000 mawālī and slaves out of a total force of 70,000 men.\textsuperscript{898} In fact, mawālī and slaves fought on both sides during the First Civil War, and al-Ṭabarī mentions some of Mu‘āwiya and ‘Alī’s mawāli by name and enumerates their deeds during the fighting that took place at Ṣiffīn and in the skirmishes that occurred before and after the battle.\textsuperscript{899} This is a significant number considering how early this was in Islamic history. As the empire expanded during the Umayyad caliphate, the numbers of these non-Arabs in the Muslim armies likely increased significantly.

4.12 The Armies of the Umayyads

The Umayyad armies saw an increase in the numbers of non-Arabs within the ranks as the expansion of the caliphate continued. However, it must be noted that during the existence of the Umayyad dynasty, the army was still not “balanced” in the way described in the advice literature. The armies of this period were still dominated by the Arabs. More specifically, the Umayyads depended very heavily upon the army of Syria, composed of predominantly Arab


\textsuperscript{895} Al-Wāqīḍī, Futūḥ al-Shām, part 3, 67; al-Wāqīḍī, Islamic Conquest of Syria, 466-468.

\textsuperscript{896} Al-Wāqīḍī, Futūḥ al-Shām, part 3, 69-70; al-Wāqīḍī, Islamic Conquest of Syria, 469-470.

\textsuperscript{897} He brought 30,000 Georgian troops with him to aid the Byzantines, but decided to convert to Islam and defect to the Muslims along with thousands of his men. See al-Wāqīḍī, Futūḥ al-Shām, part 3, 118-124; Wāqīḍī, Islamic Conquest of Syria, 511-516.


\textsuperscript{899} Al-Ṭabarī, Tāriḵ al-Umam, vol. 6, 10, 14; al-Ṭabarī, History of al-Ṭabarī, vol. 17, 40-41, 48-49.
tribesmen, who were extremely well organized and disciplined. Within the Syrian army the Umayyads developed two special units: the *shurta* and the *haras*. The *shurta* acted as a police force and was composed of some of the best troops, while the *haras* served as the caliph’s guard. The *shurta* and the *haras* became two of the most important military units of the Umayyad period. The *shurta* was commanded by and composed of Arabs, whereas the *haras* was commanded by and composed of *mawālī*. Furthermore, it was the soldiers of the Syrian army that formed the core of the troops campaigning in the far-flung reaches of the empire.

The armies of the Umayyads that operated on the frontiers of the caliphate contained a larger number of non-Arab troops than those at the center. One of the main reasons for this difference in composition was that the empire was so large that the commanders had to utilize the manpower in the regions where they campaigned to supplement the Arab troops that were sent from Syria. These local men were also familiar with the regions in which they operated and contributed new military techniques to the Umayyad army. The contributions of these non-Arab troops were important because the Arab forces of the early conquests were inferior when it came to heavy cavalry and siege warfare, but they learned from defectors and non-Arab troops levied throughout the empire. As mentioned above, Iranian troops were incorporated into the Muslim armies as early as 636 CE. This practice continued and increased as the caliphate’s armies expanded into Khurāsān and Transoxania. Shortly after the Battle of Nihāvand in 642 CE, an army of 4,000 Arabs and 1,000 Iranians commanded by al-Aḥnaf b. Qays campaigned in Lower Tukhāristān. In another military expedition in 674 CE the Arab commander, ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Ziyād, defeated the forces of Bukhārā and made the city tributary to the Arabs. He also took

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901 The armies of Baṣra and Kūfā were used to a lesser extent, especially in the Marwānid period because they were “unreliable and incompetent” and eventually only served in Iraq. Kennedy, *Armies*, 18.
902 Kennedy, *Armies*, 13, 18-19, 32.
903 Anatolia, Khurāsān, Transoxania, North Africa, Spain, and India.
2,000 archers from Bukhārā prisoner during this campaign. These men returned to Baṣra with ‘Ubayd Allāh and became his personal guard.  

Even though the incorporation of non-Arabs into the Muslim armies did occur on the eastern frontier during the early conquests, this practice took firm root on a larger scale during Qutayba b. Muslim’s tenure as the governor of Khurāsān from 705 CE to 715 CE. Prior to his governorship, the army in Khurāsān was composed of 47,000 Arab troops and 7,000 mawālī. Qutayba imposed levies of men on every conquered city. These auxiliary corps, operating alongside the Arab troops, usually numbered around 10,000-20,000 men and the raising of Iranian levies became a general practice in Khurāsān. Qutayba not only recruited native troops from the conquered areas to serve both as auxiliaries and regular soldiers in his army, but he also encouraged his Arab warriors to intermingle with the local populations and with their non-Arab comrades in arms, in order to form bonds of fraternity between the conquerors and their new subjects.

The conquests of Qutayba were carried out by mixed forces composed of Arabs and Iranians. For example, in his campaign against Paykand in 705 CE his army contained a large contingent of Sogdian troops. In another campaign against Samarqand in 712 CE his army was composed of Arab troops and detachments from Bukhārā and Khwārazm. In another example, he attacked the cities of Khujanda, Farghāna, and Shāsh when he campaigned in Sogdia during 713-714 CE with 20,000 levies from Bukhārā, Kīsh, Khwārazm, and Nasaf in addition to his

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906 Gibb states that transforming prisoners of war into a personal guard was not an uncommon practice at this time. Gibb, Arab Conquests, 19.

907 Gibb, Arab Conquests, 19; Kennedy, Armies, 3.


909 Kennedy, Armies, 44.

910 Gibb, Arab Conquests, 40-41; Kennedy, Armies, 44; Cobb, “The Empire in Syria,” 238.


913 Gibb, Arab Conquests, 44; Kennedy, Armies, 45.

914 Sughd in the Arabic sources.
Arab soldiers.\textsuperscript{915} When Qutayba unsuccessfully revolted against the new caliph Sulaymān in 715 CE, it was his Iranian troops that remained loyal to him when the majority of the Arabs turned against him.\textsuperscript{916} Despite the inglorious downfall of Qutayba, the practice he instituted of recruiting Iranian troops in the east continued. Thus, the campaign against Khujanda in 722 CE was carried out by an army that was mainly composed of troops from Bukhārā, Khwārazm, and Shūmān.\textsuperscript{917}

The situation in North Africa was similar to that in Iran and Transoxania. The Arab armies conquered large swaths of land and subdued the Berber tribes.\textsuperscript{918} However, there were frequent uprisings that the conquerors had to put down. After al-Kāhīna’s major revolt was quelled, the governor, Ḥassān b. al-Nu‘mān al-Ghassānī, realized that the best way to maintain control over North Africa was to fully assimilate the Berbers by converting them through missionary activities and recruiting them into the army. This policy was so successful that 12,000 Berbers were quickly recruited and put under the leadership of al-Kāhīna’s sons, who had defected during their mother’s rebellion.\textsuperscript{919} Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that Berbers (mainly from the Lawāta tribe) had served in the Muslim armies prior to the institution of these assimilatory policies, as exemplified by the reinforcements of 4,000 Arabs and 2,000 Berbers that Zuhayr b. Qays al-Balawī, the governor of North Africa from 688-690 CE, received to bolster his forces against the Berber resistance led by Kasīla.\textsuperscript{920} When Ḥassān b. Nu‘mān was appointed governor in 694 CE, he was dispatched to North Africa with 40,000 Syrian troops. This army was further supplemented with Berber troops.\textsuperscript{921} Some governors also created personal guard retinues composed of Berbers.\textsuperscript{922}

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\textsuperscript{915} Al-Ṭabarī, \textit{Tārīkh al-Umam}, vol. 8, 91; al-Ṭabarī, \textit{History}, vol. 23, 205; Gibb, \textit{Arab Conquests}, 48-49.
\textsuperscript{917} Gibb, \textit{Arab Conquests}, 63.
\textsuperscript{918} For a more detailed overview of the conquest of North Africa see, ʻAbdulwāḥid Dhanūn Ṭāhā, \textit{The Muslim Conquest and Settlement of North Africa and Spain} (London: Routledge, 1989), 55-76.
\textsuperscript{919} Ṭāhā, \textit{Muslim Conquest and Settlement}, 71.
\textsuperscript{920} Ṭāhā, \textit{Muslim Conquest and Settlement}, 69.
\textsuperscript{921} Ṭāhā, \textit{Muslim Conquest and Settlement}, 69.
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Before moving on, one must also mention here a second work attributed to al-Wāqidi, *Futūḥ Ifrīqiyya*. Like *Futūḥ al-Shām*, this work is highly legendary and inaccurate, but it also describes the conversion and defection of Berber leaders and their troops to the Muslim side. For instance, the ruler of Mahdiyya\(^{923}\) converted to Islam and was allowed to retain his position.\(^{924}\) This same chief came to the aid of the Muslims with 30,000 men during a battle with other Berbers.\(^{925}\) In another example, a bishop accompanying a Berber army, converted to Islam, deceived the commander of the resisting Berber forces and murdered him, then assisted the Muslims in the ensuing battle in which the Muslim army was composed of 80,000 Arabs and 30,000 Berbers.\(^{926}\)

The conquest of Visigothic Spain was undertaken by two major armies led by Ṭāriq b. Ziyād and his superior Mūsā b. Ṣuṣayr (the governor of North Africa). Ṭāriq initiated the attack from Tangiers and was followed by Mūsā with a larger army.\(^{927}\) Ṭāriq crossed the strait of Gibraltar in 711 CE with an army composed of 7,000 troops most of whom were Berbers. This army also included 700 black troops and was later reinforced by 5,000 more men sent by Mūsā.\(^{928}\) In 712 CE Mūsā joined the campaign with an army of 18,000 Arabs and a large number of Berbers. The governor was heavily inclined to recruit Berbers into the army because he was incapable of carrying out any further conquests with the small numbers of Arabs in North Africa and needed to supplement them by using the available manpower in the region.\(^{929}\) In addition to

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\(^{923}\) Al-Mahdiyya was founded by the first Fatimid caliph, Ubaydallāh al-Mahdī, in 921 CE. The mention of this city in *Futūḥ Ifrīqiyyā* confirms Leder and Rosenthal’s assertions that this source was not really written by al-Wāqidi and only ascribed to him, and was probably written by someone else at a later date. See F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden 1968) 186-193; A.A. Duri, *The Rise of Historical Writing among the Arabs*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983), 37-40.

\(^{924}\) Al-Wāqidi, *Futūḥ Ifrīqiyyā*, 22

\(^{925}\) Al-Wāqidi, *Futūḥ Ifrīqiyyā*, 57.

\(^{926}\) Al-Wāqidi, *Futūḥ Ifrīqiyyā*, 81-84.

\(^{927}\) Ṭāhā, *Muslim Conquest and Settlement*, 84-95.

\(^{928}\) Ṭāhā, *Muslim Conquest and Settlement*, 85-86.

\(^{929}\) Ṭāhā, *Muslim Conquest and Settlement*, 94-95.
using armies composed of Arabs, Berbers, and blacks in the conquest of Spain, the Muslims also employed Jews\textsuperscript{930} as a part of the security and defense forces of conquered cities in Iberia.\textsuperscript{931}

As mentioned above, the backbone of the Umayyad army was composed of Syrian soldiers. These troops propped up and supported the Umayyad dynasty and formed the core of the armies in the provinces and on the frontiers of the caliphate. Thus, there was an overdependence on this element of the army. Consequently, when the army of Syria started to become overextended and suffered heavy losses in various parts of the empire, the Umayyads lost their main military support and could not depend on any other groups. The non-Arabs that were incorporated into the armies in the provinces as regular troops and levies were not a part of this central Syrian army that was loyal to the Umayyad dynasty. Even though their numbers had increased during the Umayyad period, these non-Arabs were still an insignificant part of the caliphate’s forces. The Umayyads did have guards and retinues of mawālī in Syria that were instrumental in maintaining the dynasty due to their unquestionable loyalty. However, these units were not very numerous and could not replace or offset the losses to the Syrian army.\textsuperscript{932}

In the last decades of the Umayyad caliphate new military units arose in Syria and Egypt. These regiments were in fact private armies that were named after their leaders. Even though they were paid by the government, they were distinct from the army of Syria and were probably

\textsuperscript{930} Some scholars have argued that the Jews may have been involved in a conspiracy to overthrow Visigothic rule in Spain due to the persecution they suffered under King Roderic. They state they collaborated with the Muslims during the invasion. For a discussion of these scholars and their main ideas see Norman Roth, “The Jews and the Muslim Conquest of Spain,” *JSS* 38, 2 (1976), 145-150 and Solomon Katz, *The Jews in the Visigothic and Frankish Kingdoms of Spain and Gaul* (Cambridge, Mass., 1937; rpt. New York, 1970), 116-117. Roth argues that the Jews were not involved in any such conspiracy, but according to the sources they may have been entrusted with guarding the conquered towns and cities along with the Berber garrisons. See Roth, “Jews and the Muslim Conquest,” 152-155. See also R. Dykes Shaw “The Fall of the Visigothic Power in Spain,” *HER* 21, 82 (1906), 226-227. The role of the Jews during the conquest and the later decline of their status is discussed in Chapter 1 in Darío Fernández-Morera’s *The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise*; see Darío Fernández-Morera, *The Myth of the Andalusian Paradise: Muslims, Christians, and Jews under Islamic Rule in Medieval Spain* (Wilmington, Delaware: ISI Books, 2016).


\textsuperscript{932} Kennedy, *Armies*, 31-32.
more loyal to their own commanders than the caliph. The Waḍḍāhiyya, named after their leader al-Waḍḍāḥ, who was a mawlā of the caliph ‘Abd al-Malik, was one such unit. They helped in quelling Yazīd b. al-Muhallab’s revolt in 720 CE. 3,000 of them played an important role in the retaking of Ḥimṣ in 744 CE for the caliph Marwān II after the city had rebelled against him, and 7,000 of them were then sent to secure Egypt. The governor of Egypt Ḥafs b. al-Walīd also created a private army of 30,000 men composed mainly of non-Arabs called the Ḥafsiyya. The Dhakwāniyya unit consisted of 5,000 men (mainly freedmen, slaves, and peasants) who fought with Marwān II’s army at the Battle of the River Zāb along with other similar units such as the Dāliqiyya, the Rāshidiyya, and the Șaḥṣaḥiyya. The creation of these semi-private armies of retainers is an indication of one of two things: the need for alternative military forces after the disintegration of the Syrian army or the inability to prevent soldiers from forming such units because of the disintegration of the Syrian army.

Thus, it can be concluded that with regard to the armies of the Umayyads, this dynasty really did embark on creating a military that was composed of several ethnic, religious, and interest groups. During this period, these measures were taken mainly in the provinces and the frontier regions of the caliphate, but to a much lesser extent in the center. Therefore, the imperial guard and the main army were still predominantly composed of Arabs and the type of “balance” characteristic of the Diversified Army Model, which the authors of the advice literature advise to maintain, was not a reality at this point.

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933 Kennedy, Armies, 48.
934 Kennedy, Armies, 48.
935 Crone, Slaves on Horses, 54; Kennedy, Armies, 48.
936 Crone, Slaves on Horses, 53.
937 Kennedy, Armies, 48.
938 For a detailed discussion of these private armies and militias, their function, and their composition see Khalil Athamina, “Non-Arab Regiments and Private Militias during the Umayyād Period,” Arabica 45, 3 (1998), 368-375.
4.13 The Armies of the ‘Abbāsids

The Diversified Army Model reached its maturity during the ‘Abbāsid caliphate (750-1258 CE). It is in this era that the armies of the Muslim world most closely resembled those described in the Persian advice literature. It was also in this period that some of the most important of these literary works, which have been discussed above, were written. Furthermore, it was with the military traditions of the Abbāsid caliphate (and by extension the autonomous and semi-autonomous principalities that arose throughout the Muslim world during this period) with which the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model effected a break.

The Diversified Army Model became fully developed after the ‘Abbāsid Civil War of the early ninth century CE during the reigns of al-Ma’mūn (r. 813-833 CE) and his successor al-Mu’taṣim (833-842 CE). However, the ‘Abbāsid army under earlier rulers also exhibited the main feature of this military model because it was composed of several groups, to some extent. The ‘Abbāsids were brought to power by Khurāsānī troops, and it was these forces that moved west and settled in and around Baghdad, supplanted the armies of Syria as the main military supporters of the caliphs, and became known as the abnā’ or abnā’ al-dawla (sons of the regime/dynasty).940 The Khurāsānīyya can be viewed here as an interest group because their ranks contained Arabs, Iranians, and those of mixed Arab and Iranian descent and because their interests were the same and not divided along these ethnic lines. When the abnā’ became established in Baghdad, they represented an interest group of their own, which did not necessarily agree with the interests of their brethren in Khurāsān.

The defeated Syrian forces of the Umayyads were also incorporated into the ‘Abbāsid army. However, they occupied a less illustrious position than the Khurāsānī troops. Several of the Yamanī military elites of the Umayyad regime were given positions in the ‘Abbāsid army. The ‘Abbāsids also made efforts to attract the Qaysī tribesmen. These Syrian soldiers continued to fight on the Byzantine frontier and were also used to suppress Alid revolts, such as the one led by Ibrāhīm b. ‘Abd Allāh in 762 CE. They were even used to suppress revolts in Khurāsān.941

940 Kennedy, Armies, 96-97.
Egypt the Umayyad military elite maintained its pre-‘Abbāsid privileged status during the early ‘Abbāsid period.\footnote{Kennedy, Armies, 97.} Thus, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alī’s army, that initially set out to campaign against the Byzantines and eventually revolted against al-Manṣūr’s accession in 754 CE, was composed of both Khurāsānīs and Syrians.\footnote{For a detailed account of this revolt and the armies involved see al-Ţabarī, Tārīkh al-Umam, vol. 9, 156-159; al-Ţabarī, The History of al-Ţabarī (Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk), vol. 28, Abbāsid Authority Affirmed, translated by Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 8-18; Kennedy, “Prophet,” 128-130.}

After the civil war between al-Amīn and al-Maʾmūn, the army became even more diversified. It was during al-Maʾmūn’s reign that Turks were first introduced into the army in large numbers. Having entered the caliphate as slaves, they formed the new imperial guard and elite corps of the army and were full time professional soldiers. His successor, al-Muʿtaṣim, carried on this policy to an even greater extent.\footnote{Al-Masʿūdī, Murūj, vol. 3-4, 440; al-Masʿūdī, Meadows, 228; Gordon, Breaking of a Thousand Swords, 25.} Initially he had a private army of 4,000 Turks, which formed the basis of his famous Turkic guard. As a matter of fact, al-Muʿtaṣim had begun recruiting and training his new army during al-Maʾmūn’s reign and with his support.\footnote{Gordon, Breaking of a Thousand Swords, 27; al-Bīlī, Prelude, 9, 47.} During the struggle for the caliphate against al-Amīn, al-Maʾmūn had to use the sources of manpower available to him from Khurāsān and Transoxania. He therefore had to depend on Transoxanians, Khurāsānī nobles (dihqāns), Turks, and Iranians in addition to those among the abnāʾ who remained with him in Khurāsān to fill the ranks of his army.\footnote{“Undoubtedly, this ancient Iranian tradition, part of the comitatus institution that was spread across Eurasia, deeply influenced, if it did not actually provide the direct model for the ghulām institution in the Muslim world.” See Golden, “Khazar Turkic Ghulāms,” 146.} To form their new guard, composed primarily, but not exclusively of Turks, al-Maʾmūn and al-Muʿtaṣim followed old Iranian,\footnote{For more on the chākar system see Chapter 3 pages 148-152.} especially Sogdian, models of acquiring and training young Turkic slaves to be soldiers and combined this model with the chākar\footnote{For more on the chākar system see Chapter 3 pages 148-152.} bondage system of Central Asia (“a guard

corps bondage system”) and the Arab tribal/cliental bondage system of walā’. Al-Ma’mūn also enlisted the abnā’, Afāriqa, and soldiers from Kūfa and Baṣra who had served in the army in Iraq before he took power.

Several examples show the types of troops that formed al-Ma’mūn’s armies during his struggle against al-Amīn. For instance, at the Battle of Rayy (811 CE), the vanguard of Ṭāhir b. Ḥusayn, al-Ma’mūn’s general, which launched a “concentrated attack” on the enemy’s center, was composed of 700 Khwārazmian and Khurāsānī cavalymen and was supported by archers from Bukhārā. In addition to these groups, there were also Turks present in Ṭāhir’s army. Towards the end of the siege of Baghdad (812-813 CE) al-Amīn tried to flee Ṭāhir’s forces and save himself by surrendering to another of al-Ma’mūn’s commanders, Ḥarthama b. A’yān, a former friend, who was on the other side of the Tigris River. Ṭāhir sent boats manned by soldiers from Herāt “and other places” to apprehend the fleeing caliph. Moreover, it was a group of Iranian (‘ajam) soldiers who murdered al-Amīn after his capture. All in all, Ṭāhir’s army was a very diverse force composed of troops from a variety of regions such as Būshang, Marw, Badghīs, Bukhārā, Khwārazm, Eastern Tukhāristān, Balkh, and the Eurasian Steppe (Turks) with different specializations. These examples show that even before the establishment of al-Ma’mūn’s reign there was, out of necessity, a strong inclination toward the Diversified Army Model in his armies. Furthermore, in the wake of the ‘Abbāsid Civil War, the armies of the Muslim world became more professionalized and were based on smaller forces composed of better trained and equipped full time soldiers, most of whom were mounted. In contrast to this

950 Amabe, Emergence, 135.
953 Al-Mas‘ūdī, Murūj, vol. 3-4, 390; al-Mas‘ūdī, Meadows, 168; Kennedy, Prophet, 150.
955 Amabe, Emergence, 130.
new professional military, the bulk of the armies of the Rāshidūn caliphs, the Umayyads, and the early ‘Abbāsids had been composed of part time and conscripted infantrymen.956

Perhaps one of the better descriptions of the ‘Abbāsid army and its resemblance to the Diversified Army Model can be found in al-Jāḥiz’s essay on the virtues of the Turks. In this work, the author states that the ‘Abbāsid army was composed of five major groups: the Khurāsānīs, the Turks, the mawālī, the Arabs, and the abnā’.957 Al-Jāḥiz also outlines the functions of some of these groups. For example, he describes the Khurāsānī troops as being heavy cavalry who could also fight on foot and in trenches.958 On the other hand, the abnā’ seem to have been heavy infantry shock troops who fought with axes, daggers, and swords. These soldiers were also experts at siege and amphibious warfare and excelled at fighting in trenches in both rural and urban settings.959 Lastly, he describes the Turks, who were, according to al-Jāḥiz, the best cavalry available to the caliph and who fought both as cavalry archers and melee units. To prove his point, al-Jāḥiz compares them to the Khārijites,960 who were viewed as some of the most formidable fighters, and shows how the Turks excelled over them in speed, bravery, archery, and skill in hand-to-hand combat.961

Al-Jāḥiz’s classifications can be further elaborated upon by looking at other primary and secondary sources. In addition to the Khurāsānīs, Arabs, abnā’, Turks, and mawālī there were also black Africans from Sudan and Ethiopia, Berbers, Indians, and ṣaqāliba.962 As previously noted, these groups were not solely based on ethnicity. In fact, the Khurāsānīs and the abnā’ can

960 The Khārijites were a sectarian group who had seceded from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib’s army during the First Civil War. They and their descendents often rebelled against the caliphate during the Umayyad and Abbāsid periods and were renowned for being fierce warriors. See Patricia Crone, *God’s Rule: Government and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 54-65.
be viewed as regional interest groups as their ranks were composed of Iranians, Arabs, and descendants of intermarriages between these two groups.963

Although the Turks formed the elite corps of the armies of the ‘Abbāsids, there were other powerful units present that allowed for a balance of power to be maintained during the reigns of al-Ma’mūn and al-Mu‘tašim.964 The latter moved his capital to Sāmarrā965 where several strong contingents formed his military. The most famous of these units were the Farāghina (from Farghāna) and the Ushrusāniyya (from Usārūna).966 There were other Iranian units such as the Ṭabariyya and the Ishtīkāniyya.967 In addition to these units from the eastern parts of the caliphate, there was a contingent of westerners known as the Maghāriba. This regiment was created from rebel prisoners who were brought to the capital from Egypt in 823 CE, and it eventually included Arab tribesmen from Egypt, Berbers, and East Africans.968 There were also the contingents known as the jund and the shākiriyya. The former was a unit composed of elements of the abnā’ (after the civil war) and the latter was a special guard made up of free Iranian troops who accompanied al-Ma’mūn from the east after the civil war.969

Above, I have shown that under the ‘Abbāsids, the armies of the Muslim world came to resemble the Diversified Army Model. The main criterion of this military model was diversification, and by the ninth century CE the forces of the caliphate were composed of several different units from all parts of the empire. A few examples showing how the ‘Abbāsid armies operated will also demonstrate that the secondary objective, the utilization of the skills particular to different ethnic/regional groups, was also realized during this time period.

965 According to Ismail, had the Turks been the most dominant and powerful element in al-Mu‘tašim’s army, then this caliph would not have feared for their safety from the other units in the army who were killing them in Baghdad and moved them to Sāmārra. See Ismail, “Mu‘tašim and the Turks,” 269.
967 Gordon, Breaking of a Thousand Swords, 37.
968 Al-Mas‘ūdī, Murūj, vol. 3-4, 440; al-Mas‘ūdī, Meadows, 228; Kennedy, Armies, 125-126; Gordon, Breaking of a Thousand Swords, 38; al-Bīlī, Prelude, 47-48.
969 Manāšir, al-Jaysh, 126-127; Kennedy, Armies, 126; Gordon, Breaking of a Thousand Swords, 40.
Several military campaigns exemplify the composition and operation of the ‘Abbāsid army. These examples show both that the armies involved in these campaigns were composed of several groups, and that some of these groups formed specialized units that carried out specific functions both in battle and on the march. Perhaps one of the best examples of such military action is al-Mu’taṣim’s war against the Khurramī rebel Bābak. Al-Afšīn, the commander-in-chief of the ‘Abbāsid forces, carried out a well-planned campaign against the rebels in which he dug protective trenches for his troops and camps, made sure his armies were well-supplied, and reduced the rebel strong points one after the other between 835-838 CE. Al-Afšīn’s army was composed of abnā’, Turks, Farāghina, Eastern Iranians, kūhbāniyya (mountain guards/mountain watchmen), kilghāriyya (this group seems to have been some sort of logistical support unit of engineers or sappers, which was in charge of supplying the army, clearing paths, sapping, and building trenches and fortifications), mutaṭawwi’a (volunteers). Bābak led a socio-religious revolt in Azerbaijan during the reigns of al-Ma’mūn and al-Mu’taṣim. Due to the remoteness of Bābak’s strongholds and the mountainous terrain in which he operated, it took many years to end the revolt. For more details see al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Umam, vol. 10; al-Ṭabarī, The History of al-Ṭabarī (Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulāk), vol. 33, Storm and Stress along the Northern Frontiers of the ‘Abbāsid Caliphate, trans. C.E. Bosworth (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), Patricia Crone, The Nativist Prophets of Early Islamic Iran: Rural Revolt and Local Zoroastrianism (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 46-79.

Prior to al-Afšīn’s military operations, there had been several attempts to crush Babāk’s revolt, but they failed see al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Umam, vol. 10. Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Umam, vol. 10, 308; al-Ṭabarī, History of al-Ṭabarī, vol. 33, 17.

These troops played an important role during this campaign. They were local men recruited into the ‘Abbāsid army who were familiar with the mountains of the region. Their main function was to secure the mountain tops in order to safeguard the rest of the army from ambushes and attacks from above. They also played a role in communications and used flags and banners to signal the different divisions of the main army below them. See al-Ṭabarī, History of al-Ṭabarī, vol. 33, 38, 48; al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Umam, vol. 10, 314, 318; Kennedy, Armies, 131. The members of this unit also seem to have served as heavy infantry armed with battle axes. In the final assault on Bābak’s stronghold, al-Badhdh, the kilghāriyya, armed with battle axes, were sent to bolster the volunteers. See Al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Umam, vol. 10, 325; al-Ṭabarī, History of al-Ṭabarī, vol. 33, 66; Kennedy, Armies, 131-132.


971 Prior to al-Afšīn’s military operations, there had been several attempts to crush Babāk’s revolt, but they failed see al-Ṭabarī, The History of al-Ṭabarī, vol. 33; al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Umam, vol. 10.


975 Kennedy, Armies, 131.


979 Kennedy, Armies, 131.

980 The members of this unit also seem to have served as heavy infantry armed with battle axes. In the final assault on Bābak’s stronghold, al-Badhdh, the kilghāriyya, armed with battle axes, were sent to bolster the volunteers. See al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Umam, vol. 10, 325; al-Ṭabarī, History of al-Ṭabarī, vol. 33, 66; Kennedy, Armies, 131-132.
and something resembling a mobile field hospital. The commander used to his advantage the strengths of each of the groups that formed this army to tighten the noose around the Khurrāmiyya rebels and put an end to their revolt. After their defeat, some of Bābak’s vanquished forces were also enlisted into the army under the command of his son Layth, adding another valuable element to the already diverse ‘Abbāsid military.

Such diverse armies were also involved in other military operations against both internal rebels and external enemies. For instance, when Mazyār, the ruler of Ṭabaristān, rebelled against al-Mu‘taṣim and his Ṭāhirid overlords in Khurāsān in 839 CE, the armies that put down the uprising consisted of Arabs (and abnā’), Khurāsānīs, and Ṭabarīs (natives of Ṭabaristān) in addition to other groups, including the regular forces sent by the caliph from Sāmarrā. It is important to note that once again, local troops (in this case men from Ṭabaristān) were used to defeat rebels in their homeland. These soldiers also played a vital role in defeating Mazyār’s personal guard of 1,200 Daylamīs, who continued to fight even after their master’s defeat. When al-Mu‘taṣim campaigned against the Byzantines in 838 CE his forces were composed of Farāghina, Turks, and Maghāriba, among others. During the reign of al-Wāthiq (r. 842-847 CE) the Banū Sulaym tribe’s depredations in the Ḥijāz, especially in Medīna and its environs, was creating chaos and insecurity in the region. The Turk commander, Bughā al-Kabīr, was dispatched to Medīna to bring this tribe under control and restore order to the

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981 This unit was composed of physicians and mules carrying litters to transport the wounded from the front lines. See al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Ummam, vol. 10, 324; al-Ṭabarī, History of al-Ṭabarī, vol. 33, 64; Kennedy, Armies, 132.

982 Amabe, Emergence, 121.


985 According to al-Ṭabarī, there were abnā’ present in Mazyār’s army, but this element was viewed as a fifth column that sympathized with and supported the Abbāsids. See al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Ummam, vol. 10, 351,353; al-Ṭabarī, History of al-Ṭabarī, vol. 33, 145, 152.


988 In this case, some of these Ṭabarīyya were part of the regular army and formed a contingent at the caliph’s court. See al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Ummam, vol. 10, 356; al-Ṭabarī, History of al-Ṭabarī, Vol. 33, 149.


990 The Amorion (‘Ammāriyya) campaign of 838 CE. See Kennedy, Armies, 133-134.

region. The army involved in subduing the Banū Sulaym was composed of Shākiriyya, Maghāriba, Turks, volunteers from among the Quraysh and the Anṣār, and their clients and black slaves. The second siege of Baghdad of 865-866 CE should serve as a final example to show that the military of the ‘Abbāsid era closely matched the descriptions given of the Diversified Army Model as reflected in the advice literature and operated successfully in the field. During this siege al-Mu‘tazz’s besieging forces were composed of 5,000 Turks and Farāghina and 2,000 Maghāriba. These units were later reinforced with more Turks, Farāghina and Maghāriba and eventually succeeded in taking Baghdad.

Before proceeding it is important to mention that the Diversified Army Model sometimes failed as a military system for a number of reasons. For this military model to function properly, the different groups that made up the army had to be balanced and had to fear one another. If this balance were broken and one group became too strong, then the whole system might collapse. The other essential ingredient for the success of the Diversified Army Model was a strong, decisive, and assertive ruler. If the above two conditions were not met, then the ruler might lose control of his army and the results could be disastrous for him and for the whole realm.

Two examples illustrate the failure of the Diversified Army Model in this way. The first occurred during the civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma‘mūn, when al-Amīn’s military fell apart. The second occurred when the Turkic guard in Sāmarrā assassinated al-Mutawakkil in 861 CE and initiated a period of chaos in Sāmarrā. After the defeat of the caliphal forces at the Battle

997 Al-Mu‘tazz’s forces grew to the point that the number of Turks, Farāghina, and Maghāriba on the west side of the Tigris numbered over 12,000 men. al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Umam, vol. 11, 105, 118; al-Ṭabarī, History of al-Ṭabarī, vol. 35, 49, 72.
of Rayy, al-Amīn tried to recruit Syrians and Arabs into his army. The attempt at uniting the abnā’ and Khurāsānīs with the Syrians failed miserably in al-Amīn’s service. Instead of forming a united front against al-Ma’mūn’s forces advancing from the east, they fell upon each other due to old grudges and disagreements. From the sources it is quite clear that the abnā’ were the stronger of the two groups, and in the ensuing battles large numbers of bedouin and zawāqīl (Arab brigands from Syria) were killed and their forces disintegrated, putting an end to the idea of a strong and united army of Syrians and abnā’.

It is evident here that, because the abnā’ were so much more powerful as a group than the newly recruited Syrians and Arab tribesmen, the concept of the Diversified Army Model could not succeed, especially since there was bad blood between the two groups. Furthermore, al-Amīn’s leadership faltered during the civil war. He delegated military matters to his officers and spent a lot of his time diverting himself with drink and entertainment while Baghdad was besieged. Thus, in this instance al-Amīn’s army was both unbalanced (because the abnā’ were by far the most powerful group in it) and lacked the strong, decisive, and committed leader who could have possibly pulled it together.

The second major failure of the Diversified Army Model in the ‘Abbāsid armies occurred during al-Mutawakkil’s reign (r.847-861 CE). This time it was the Turkic guard, created during the reigns of al-Ma’mūn and al-Mu’taṣim, that had grown too strong and caused an imbalance in the army. As a result of this increased strength and power, the officers of the Turks began to meddle more frequently and deeply in court and imperial politics. Al-Mu’taṣim had contributed to the dominance of the Turks by relying on them and favoring them over other groups and also by his purge of the army which left the Transoxanian and Khurāsānī elements

998 Al-Ṭabarī mentions that zawāqīl and bedouin Arabs were recruited. Michael Fishbein suggests that the term zawāqīl refers to Qaysī tribesmen who were known for being highwaymen and brigands. See al-Ṭabarī, History of al-Ṭabarī, vol. 31, 104.


1001 For more details on the growth of the power of the Turkish guard and its commanders see al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Umam, vol. 11, 26-69; al-Ṭabarī, History of al-Ṭabarī, vol. 34, 61-191; Gordon, Breaking of a Thousand Swords, 80-90.

1002 Al-Mu’taṣim purged a lot of the Iranian commanders and regiments of the army after their involvement in a plot to otherthrow him and to give the caliphate to al-‘Abbās (al-Ma’mūn’s son). See Golden, “Khazar Turkic Ghulāms,” 154-155.
greatly weakened and diminished.\textsuperscript{1003} To remedy this imbalance, al-Mutawakkil tried to undermine the Turks as much as possible by distributing higher pay to the \textit{jund} and the \textit{shākirīyya}. He also created a new army, which was 12,000 strong, composed of Arabs, Persians, Armenians, and \textit{abnā’}.\textsuperscript{1004} Al-Mutawakkil also wanted to purge the Turkic high command and get rid of the powerful commanders who undermined his authority.\textsuperscript{1005} This plan only failed because the Turks acted swiftly and prevented the caliph from carrying it out. They then placed al-Muntaṣir (the Turks’ favored candidate, whom al-Mutawakkil had deposed, in favor of his other son al-Mu’tazz) on the throne and held al-Mu’tazz (the favored candidate of the new army and groups opposed to the Turks) prisoner,\textsuperscript{1006} which prevented the rivals of the Turks from taking any action.\textsuperscript{1007} The assassination of al-Mutawakkil plunged the army and the ‘Abbāsid caliphate as a whole into a period of chaos and tumult. The Turks became kingmakers and deposed those caliphs whose policies did not agree with their interests. This cycle only came to an end during the reign of al-Mu’tamid (r. 870-892), thanks to the energetic policies and strength of his brother, al-Muwaffaq. Like al-Mu’taṣim, the caliph’s brother was a military man; he had strong ties to the Turks and a considerable amount of military experience that saw him rise to prominence as the commander of the ‘Abbāsid military. He and his son, al-Mu’tadid, were able to restore order to the army. They recruited new troops from a variety of sources. For instance, they enlisted Berber and black infantrymen from the ex-Tūlūnid army, white infantrymen from Baṣra and Baḥrayn, Kurds from the Jibāl region, and acquired new \textit{ghilmān}.\textsuperscript{1008} By this time imperial control over the provinces had been greatly diminished, and al-Muwaffaq dispatched the imperial army (including the Turks) to reassert central control over these regions. Thus, the Turks were involved in fighting several enemies including Zaydī and ‘Alid rebels in Rayy and Kūfa.

\textsuperscript{1003} Golden, “Khazar Turkic Ghulāms,” 154-155.
\textsuperscript{1004} Gordon, \textit{Breaking of a Thousand Swords}, 81-87.
\textsuperscript{1005} Al-Ṭabarī, \textit{Tārīkh al-Umam}, vol. 11, 63; al-Ṭabarī, \textit{History of al-Ṭabarī}, vol. 34, 176.
\textsuperscript{1007} Al-Ṭabarī, \textit{Tārīkh al-Umam}, vol. 11, 66; al-Ṭabarī, \textit{History of al-Ṭabarī}, vol. 34, 61-191 182.
\textsuperscript{1008} Amabe, \textit{Emergence}, 222, 227.
However, the most dangerous of their enemies were the Ṣaffārids in Sistān, Fārs, and Khurāsān and the Zanj rebels in Southern Iraq. Despite the efforts of al-Muwaffaq and al-Mu’taḍid, the ‘Abbāsid army never fully recovered its former strength. As a matter of fact, Kennedy argues that after defeating the Zanj in 883 CE, the army lost its effectiveness. He states that one of the reasons for the weakening of the army was the fact that by this time the ‘Abbāsid military was almost exclusively composed of slave soldiers and “lacked popular legitimacy and military skill.” It can be stated with certainty that such an army was less efficient than the one that served caliphs such as al-Mu’taṣīm because its range of operation was decreased due to the fact that it did not contain several groups, some of which were specialized to operate in specific environments and terrains, and due to its smaller size. One obvious question has arisen from the discussion of the failures of the Diversified Army Model: after the assassination of al-Mutawakkil why did the Turks not set up a polity, in which they ruled directly, similar to that established by the Mamlūks in 1250 CE? This question will be answered in more detail at the end of this chapter. But for now, it should suffice to say that the circumstances for such a move by the Turks were not ripe in 861 CE.

4.2 The Diversified Army Model and the Militaries of the Muslim World

The previous section has demonstrated that the militaries of the caliphates from the Rashīdūn to the ‘Abbāsids developed and transformed to resemble the Diversified Army Model. This military organization became the model upon which the armies of the Muslim world were based to varying degrees of implementation and success. This section will use the armies of

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1010 On a side note, it should be mentioned that al-Muwaffaq was implementing the principles of the Diversified Army Model when he incorporated Zanj defectors into his army to fight their former comrades. These units proved very useful due to their intimate knowledge of the marshy areas where most of the fighting during this war took place. Amabe, *Emergence*, 194-195; Popovic, *Revolt*, 103.


several autonomous and semi-autonomous dynasties and polities to show the similarity between their forces and those described in the advice literature that exemplify the Diversified Army Model. By briefly discussing the armies of the Ṣaffārids, the Sāmānids, the Ghaznavids, the Buyids, and the Fātimids I will show that the armies of the principalities and empires that ruled the Muslim world all resembled the Diversified Army Model to a certain extent.

4.21 The Armies of the Ṣaffārids (861-901 CE)

The Ṣaffārids rose to power in Sistān during the ninth century CE. The founder of this dynasty was Yaʿqūb b. Layth, a coppersmith native to Sistān, who joined a band of ‘ayyārūn (vigilantes/brigands) who fought the Khārijites after the caliphate’s power and authority in the region began to wane. He soon rose to prominence among the ‘ayyārūn and by 861 CE he overthrew the ‘ayyār leader, Šāliḥ b. al-Naḍr, under whom he had served and became the amīr of Sistān. 1013 Yaʿqūb b. Layth and his brother ‘Amr conquered a vast empire that grew to include Sistān, Kirmān, Fārs, Khurāsān, and Eastern Afghanistan. 1014 Although he began his military career leading bands of ‘ayyārūn against the Khārijites, as his successes grew, many Khārijites joined the ranks of his army. As a matter of fact, they formed a special unit (in this case they could be considered an interest group because the Khārijite bands were composed of men from a variety of ethnicities) called jaysh al-shurāṭ. 1015

The Ṣaffārid army was made up of several elements. The ‘ayyārs, mentioned above, probably formed the core of the early army and were soon joined by Khārijite defectors. In addition to these two groups there were the āzādagān (nobles), who were free soldiers, probably

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from among the *dihqāns* (landed Iranian gentry) of the region. Ya‘qūb also purchased and captured a number of slaves (many of Turkic origin) who formed his personal bodyguard and an elite unit in his army. This force is said to have numbered 2,000 troops and may have numbered 10,000 *ghulāms* by the time of his brother ‘Amr’s death in 902 CE. The Ṣaffārid armies also contained Arab, Indian, and black (African) contingents. The variety of soldiers in the Ṣaffārid armies clearly shows that they can be considered as a good example of the Diversified Army Model because they were composed of several different ethnic and interest groups. Furthermore, the meteoric rise of the Ṣaffārids under Ya‘qūb b. Layth and his brother, ‘Amr, through their military victories shows that under these two strong leaders the different elements of the army were held in check and deployed in a way to best utilize their strengths. Bosworth sums up this idea of the Diversified Army Model, which he calls a trend towards multi-racial/diverse armies, as the model for the militaries of the Muslim world:

In welcoming troops of any ethnic complexion, slave or free, the amīrs were simply following a trend of the times. The armies of the ‘Abbasids were already multi-racial, and a peak of diversity was reached in such armies as those of the Fatimids, Ghaznavids, and Great Seljūqs.

4.22 The Armies of the Sāmānids (819–999 CE)

Several members of the Sāmānid family rose to prominence as governors in Khurāsān and Transoxania during al-Ma‘mūn’s reign. In 875 CE, Naṣr b. Aḥmad was recognized by the caliph, al-Mu‘tamid (r. 870-892 CE), as the governor of Transoxania and in 900 CE he was made the governor of Khurāsān (after defeating ‘Amr b. Layth). There were several elements in the Sāmānid military. This dynasty rose to power from the *dihqān* class and the backbone of their armies in the early period of their rule was composed of Iranian *dihqāns*. However, due to their

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military successes against the Turks in Central Asia, their domains soon became flooded with Turkic slaves captured during campaigns and raids, and with Turk converts who had migrated west. These Turks were valued for their martial qualities, trained in special schools, and incorporated into the army to form a second major element next to the Iranian dihqāns.\textsuperscript{1021} In fact, the Sāmānid amīrs had created their slave corps as a counterbalance against the dihqān cavalrymen.\textsuperscript{1022} In addition to these two major elements, there were also ghāzī warriors\textsuperscript{1023} who flocked to the eastern frontiers from all the different parts of the Muslim world and formed a portion of the Sāmānid armies that fought against the Turks and other non-Muslims.\textsuperscript{1024} There must also have been contingents of Daylamīs and other ethnic elements present in the ranks of the Sāmānid military. For instance, the Buyid brothers started their military careers in the army of Mākān b. Kākī (a Daylamī general) who was in the service of the Sāmānids.\textsuperscript{1025}

The balance among the groups within the Sāmānid army did not last very long. In fact, “the downfall of the Samanids, ironically, was the product of their greatest success - their triumphs over the Turks...”\textsuperscript{1026} Due to the great influx of Turks into Transoxania, the army became dominated by this group at the expense of the power and influence of all the others.\textsuperscript{1027} This imbalance of power in the army rendered the Sāmānid amīrs mere puppets in the hands of the Turkic commanders and eventually led to their downfall.\textsuperscript{1028} It is important to note two things here. First, it was the Sāmānids, among the independent dynasties, who first trained and employed Turkic slave soldiers in their armies, possibly continuing this long practiced east Iranian tradition established by the Sogdians.\textsuperscript{1029} Second, the example of the Sāmānids once again, as was the case with the ‘Abbāsids’ Turkic guard, shows that if the balance of the groups

\textsuperscript{1022} Bosworth, The Ghaznavids, 99.
\textsuperscript{1023} These were volunteers who gathered at the frontiers of the Muslim world to join the local rulers in waging holy war. They did not form a part of the regular army.
\textsuperscript{1024} Frye, “Sāmānids,” 155.
\textsuperscript{1026} Daniel, “Islamic East,” 503.
\textsuperscript{1027} Frye, “Sāmānids,” 153.
\textsuperscript{1028} Frye, “Sāmānids,” 150-151, 156-160.
\textsuperscript{1029} Pipes, Slave Soldiers, 162-164; Beckwith, “Aspects,” 40.
forming an army were upset in the Diversified Army Model, the result could be detrimental to the ruler.

4.23 The Armies of the Ghaznavids (977–1186 CE)

The military of the Ghaznavids (in the early period of the sultanate), especially under Maḥmūd of Ghazna, is one of the better examples of the Diversified Army Model as it is described in the Persian advice literature. In fact, both Niẓām al-Mulk and Kai Kāʿūs b. Iskandar cite Sultan Maḥmūd’s military as the prime example for the efficient army of the successful ruler in their works of advice literature.

The most important element of the Ghaznavid Empire was the army, and the administration and economy were developed to support and maintain the huge and complex military that propped it up. The core of the Ghaznavid army was composed of a special unit of slaves (4,000 strong under Maḥmūd) that formed a palace guard called ghulāmān-e khāṣṣ. These troops were mainly of Turkic origin, but there were also some Indians and Iranians within this unit. The Sāmānid army of Khurāsān also constituted an important element of the regular army. Prior to his rise to the sultanate, Maḥmūd had been the commander of this army, which was the most important military force under the Sāmānids. There were several other important elements in the Ghaznavid regular army in addition to the Turks and East Iranians such as Indians, Arabs, Kurds, Daylamīs, and Afghans. The Ghaznavids also employed tribal auxiliaries, especially on the frontiers to fight off other tribes that attempted to enter their domains.

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1032 For more on the Indians in the Ghaznavid army see Bosworth, The Ghaznavids, 110.
1033 For more on the Arabs and the Kurds in the Ghaznavid army see Bosworth, The Ghaznavids, 111-112.
1034 For more on the Daylamis in the Ghaznavid army see Bosworth, The Ghaznavids, 110-111.
The Ghaznavids especially utilized the vast manpower of India where tributary princes had to supply contingents of foot soldiers and elephants to the Ghaznavid army. The fact that the Indian soldiery and the elephant drivers were mostly Hindu did not seem to bother the sultan.\(^{1037}\) In fact, these troops became especially useful as a counter balance to the Turks and other Muslim units as mentioned in the Persian advice literature and in campaigns against other Muslim foes. The Indian war elephants were a very valued part of the Ghaznavid army. They played a major role in decisively defeating Fā′iq and Bektuzūn, rival Turkic officers in the Sāmānid army, in 999 CE and the Qarākhānid invasions of Khurāsān in 1005-1008 CE.\(^{1038}\) Lastly, there was the volunteer and ghāzī warrior element that formed a part of the Ghaznavid army during its campaigns. These fighters flocked to Maḥmūd’s standard from the different parts of the Muslim world in the hope of gaining plunder and participating in holy war.\(^{1039}\) Thus, having such a diverse army with specialized units and effective leadership makes the military of the early Ghaznavids a shining example of the Diversified Army Model, and it should come as no surprise that authors such as Niẓām al-Mulk and Kai Kāʿūs b. Iskandar used it to exemplify the efficient and controllable army in their works.

4.24 The Armies of the Buyids (934-1062 CE)

The Buyids began their careers as soldiers of fortune and served under several masters before they eventually carved out an empire for themselves in Iraq and Western Iran. The Buyid princes were Daylamīs who hailed from humble origins. When they began their careers, their followers were their fellow Daylamī tribesmen who formed the core of their armies during their rise to power.\(^{1040}\) Even though the militaries of the Buyid princes resembled the Diversified Army Model with regard to their composition, they failed to uphold the type of balance and control that other dynasties (i.e. the Ghaznavids) had managed to maintain. The Daylamī warriors, who formed the main element of the Buyid armies, were hardy men who hailed from the rugged and mountainous

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\(^{1037}\) Nāẓim, *Life and Times*, 102, 139; Bosworth, “Early Ghaznavids,” 180.


regions of Northern Iran (just south of the Caspian Sea).\textsuperscript{1041} The terrain and environment of their homelands led most of the Daylamīs to serve as infantrymen in the armies of the Buyids (and in the militaries of other Muslim rulers), much like the Swiss in late medieval and renaissance Europe.\textsuperscript{1042} They were armed with large highly decorated shields, double edged javelins or short spears called \textit{zūpins}, swords, battle axes, and bows and arrows. They were very good at fighting on broken terrain and in confined spaces. In the open field they advanced in a solid line forming a wall of shields from behind which they stabbed their enemies or hurled their javelins.\textsuperscript{1043}

Despite their efficiency as foot soldiers, the Buyid princes recognized that they could not depend on the Daylamīs alone and needed a cavalry force if they were to maintain their power and successfully face their enemies. For this reason, they quickly acquired Turkic \textit{ghilmān} to supplement their armies. Thus, the Buyid armies were composed of two major elements, the Daylamī infantrymen and the Turkic cavalry.\textsuperscript{1044} Despite the rivalry between these two groups, which often erupted into open fighting, the Daylamīs recognized the necessity of the Turks in the army because their archers and cavalry afforded protection to the infantry on the battlefield.\textsuperscript{1045}

The other important reason for the incorporation of Turkic slaves and mercenaries into the Buyid armies was to keep the Daylamī element in check. In fact, the Daylamīs were very rebellious and insubordinate. Therefore, with the establishment of the Buyid Empire, the rulers needed another group in order to counter-balance the power of their Daylamī followers. Thus, they employed the Turks to check them. As a matter of fact, Mu’izz al-Dawla used his Turkic slaves and palace guards (\textit{ghilmān al-dār}) to suppress a major rebellion by elements of the Daylamī army led by Rūzbihān in 956/957 CE.\textsuperscript{1046}

\textsuperscript{1042} C.E. Bosworth, “Military Organization,” 147.
\textsuperscript{1045} Bosworth, “Military Organization,” 156.
The balance between the Turks and the Daylamī soldiers in the Buyid army was not maintained for very long. The Buyids eventually put more trust in their Turkic troops and favored them above the Daylamīs. \textsuperscript{1047} Preferential treatment and reliance on them shifted the balance of power in favor of the Turks at the expense of the Daylamīs. It also seems that the supply of fresh Daylamī recruits was diminishing because they not only served in the armies of the Buyids, but were also spread far and wide in the service of several dynasties, as far west as Fāṭimid territories and as far east as the Ghaznavid realm.\textsuperscript{1048} The result was that the Buyid army became fully dominated by the Turks who became kingmakers.\textsuperscript{1049} Thus, while the early Buyid rulers managed to maintain a balance between the Turkic and Daylamī elements of their armies, they were able to control them, but when this fragile balance was upset, they became dominated by the Turks. It must also be mentioned that there were also Gilite,\textsuperscript{1050} Arab, Kurd, and Zuṭṭ units in the Buyid army.\textsuperscript{1051} However, these groups seem to have been of secondary importance in comparison to the Daylamīs and the Turks, and did not play as prominent a role on the battlefield or in the internal power politics of the military and the empire.

\textbf{4.25 The Armies of the Fāṭimids (909–1171 CE)}

Like the other medieval Islamic dynasties, the Fāṭimids strove to create and maintain an efficient and balanced army composed of several groups. However, the Fāṭimid case differs from that of the dynasties discussed above because of the geographical location of their domains. This dynasty first established itself in the western regions of the Muslim world in North Africa, but moved their center to Egypt after they conquered it in 969 CE and managed to push as far east as Syria. For this reason, the sources of the manpower that composed its military differed from those of the other dynasties in the east such as the Buyids and the Ghaznavids.

The Fāṭimids did manage to create an army composed of many groups. However, it was not a fully balanced military force, and the various elements fought one another frequently,
especially in the later periods of the caliphate. As a matter of fact, after the strong rulers of the early period, there was always one section of the army or the other that dominated politics and the ruler. The main groups that made up the Fāṭimid army were the Berbers, the Arabs, the blacks (also known as sūdān, ‘abīd al-shirā’, zuwaylā, i.e. purchased black slaves), the ṣaqāliba, Turks, Daylamīs, and Armenians.

The Fāṭimids rose to power with the support of Berber tribesmen who had converted to Ismā’īlī Islam in North Africa during the tenth century CE. During the North African phase of the caliphate (909-969 CE), these Berbers, especially the Kutāma, formed the backbone of the Fāṭimid military. Like several other dynasties that rose to power through tribal supporters, the Fāṭimids quickly incorporated other elements into their army. After defeating the Aghlabids, al-Mahdī (r. 909–934 CE) inherited their slave guards and integrated them into his army. These sūdān and ṣaqāliba formed the caliph’s special guard regiments and continued to serve the Fāṭimids as full time professional soldiers. In addition to these slave troops, the Arab soldiers (jund) garrisoning Qayrawān, also became a part of the Fāṭimid army.

With the conquest of Egypt in 969 CE, new eastern elements entered the Fāṭimid army. In 978 CE a Turkic general, Alptegin, who had taken control of much of Syria was defeated by the Fāṭimids at the Battle of Ṭawāhin. The Fāṭimid caliph, al-‘Azīz (r. 975–996 CE), was more than happy to pardon Alptegin and his Turkic and Daylamī followers because he recognized their

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1052 These Berbers were mainly of the Kutāma tribe, but later also of other tribes such as the Sanhaja.
1053 Beshir states that they were referred to as “ zawilalzuwaylā” because they were “brought by the ‘Ibādī merchants of Zawila in Fessān.” Beshir, “Fatimid Military Organization,” 40.
1055 Halm, Empire of the Mahdi, 179, 199, 397; Daftary, Ismā’īlīs in Medieval Muslim Societies, 64, 69.
1056 Halm, Empire of the Mahdi, 122; Brett, Rise of the Fāṭimids, 144-145.
1057 Halm, Empire of the Mahdi, 152.
martial qualities and realized that he needed them to strengthen his army and to maintain his hold on Syria. He therefore came to an agreement with Alptegin through which he enrolled him and his followers into the Fāṭimid army. Later during al-Mustanṣir’s reign (r. 1036-1094 CE), Badr al-Jamālī, the wazīr and commander of the army, brought large numbers of Armenians into Egypt and they became a prominent part of the military.

Even though the Fāṭimids attempted to create a diverse army and to control its varied elements by checking their power one against the other through other groups, for much of their reign they were unsuccessful. Despite the fact that the Fāṭimid army resembled the ideal military of the Diversified Army Model, the Fāṭimid caliphs (especially those ruling after the conquest of Egypt) slowly lost control of the military because it lacked balance between the elements and groups that formed it and was almost always dominated by one of the groups. The early Fāṭimid armies were dominated by the Kutāma tribesmen and regular troops who had been the dynasty’s earliest supporters. However, by the time that the Fāṭimid caliphs had conquered Egypt, this group had become too powerful and al-‘Azīz eagerly incorporated the Turkic and Daylamī troops of the Ikhshīdids into his army to curtail their power. The other reason this caliph desired easterners in his army was that they formed a heavy cavalry force that he lacked because the Berbers fought as light cavalry and infantry and the blacks and ṣaqaλība were foot soldiers. This caliph’s plan worked and the Berbers lost their dominant status with the introduction of these new elements. However, the numbers of the Turks and Daylāṁīs remained low due to hostile powers, such as the ‘Abbāsids and Seljūks, who blocked the land routes to the homelands of these peoples.

During the reigns of al-Ḥākim (r. 996-1021 CE), al-Ẓāhir (r. 1021-1036 CE), and al-Mustanṣir (1036-1094 CE) the number of black soldiers increased and they became the most powerful element in the army. They were especially prominent under al-Mustanṣir because his

1059 Beshir, “Fatimid Military Organization,” 43-44; Daftary, Isma’īlis: Their History and Doctrines, 194, 246, 249.
1060 Beshir, “Fatimid Military Organization,” 38; Brett, Rise of the Fāṭimids, 345; Daftary, Isma’īlis: Their History and Doctrines, 178.
mother was African, and she promoted the purchase of large numbers of black slave soldiers. The black troops frequently rioted, and the rulers were only able to bring them under control through the threat of force or by distributing additional pay. A major power struggle erupted between the Turks and the black regiments as the latter’s numbers and power grew. The Turks, numbering only 6,000, formed alliances with the Daylamī, Arab, and Berber units in order to counterbalance the 50,000 black soldiers in the Fāṭimid military. This conflict ended with the victory and ascendancy of the Turks and the fall of the Africans as the dominant force in the military. However, despite this setback, black regiments continued to serve in the Fāṭimid army.

The defeat of the Africans led to a period in which the Turks dominated the Fāṭimid army and the caliphate as a whole. The commanders of the Turks controlled the caliph and looted his palaces and treasuries, and their troops plundered and pillaged the towns and villages. To rid himself of his new military masters, al-Mustanṣir sought the aid of the Armenian general, Badr al-Jamālī. This commander brought his army, composed mainly of Armenians (most of whom were Christians), from Syria to Egypt and eliminated the Turks. This led to the Armenians becoming one of the most powerful groups in the late period of the caliphate. However, these troops too lost their power and influence after the heavy infighting and power struggles that took place after the death of al-Afḍal, the son of Badr al-Jamālī. Subsequently they were eliminated from the army along with the Africans by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī.

It is clear that the Fāṭimids attempted to maintain a diverse army composed of several different ethnic, religious, and interest groups. Despite these efforts, the Fāṭimids failed to reach the ideal balance in their military as described in the advice literature. In fact, every group they brought in to counter the dominant faction in the army only replaced it, leaving the caliphs as powerless puppets in the hands of the wazīrs and the dominant elements of the army.

4.3 The Armies of the Ayyūbids

Like the dynasties and regimes discussed above, the armies of the Ayyūbids also resembled the Diversified Army Model up until the reign of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb. Although Şalāh al-Dīn and his successors’ armies were somewhat less diverse than those of the Fāṭimids, they still tried to maintain a balance within the army by recruiting men from a variety of ethnicities and creating different interest groups that could be played off against one another. For instance, under Şalāh al-Dīn the Berbers, Africans, and Armenians disappeared from the army. However, there was a shift towards a heavier reliance on Kurds, Turkmen, Khwārazmians (in the later period of the sultanate), and Turkic mamlūks.

A few examples from the late Zengid period and the reign of Şalāh al-Dīn should suffice to show the shift in ethnic preference mentioned above. For instance, the expeditionary force sent to Egypt by Nūr al-Dīn Zengī under Asad al-Dīn Shīrkūh (Şalāh al-Dīn’s uncle) was composed of 6,000 Turkmen and 2,000 professional soldiers (most likely mamlūks and full time paid soldiers). Furthermore, it was the professional element of this army, known as the Asadiyya (the mamlūks of Asad al-Dīn Shīrkūh numbering 500 men), who supported Şalāh al-Dīn in his bid for power and against the Fāṭimids’ black guard regiments after the passing of his uncle. Şalāh al-Dīn also granted one Kurdish amīr the fortress of Ibrīm (in Upper Egypt) as an iqtā’ and he moved there with his Kurdish retainers and carried out raids against the Nubians from this base. Despite their decline in status by the reign of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, the Kurds continued to play an important role in the Ayyūbid army and are mentioned throughout the sources. For example, Abū Shāma describes one instance in which a Kurdish warrior distinguished himself in battle against the Crusaders at Acre and another one in which a group of Kurdish amīrs and their followers dismounted and scaled the defenses of the Frankish camp fortifications when the Muslims were trying to relieve Acre from the Crusader siege (1189-1191

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1067 Some sources do mention blacks in the Ayyubid army. See ‘Imād al-Dīn, al-Fath, 335.
1068 Humphreys, “Emergence,” 73; Nicolle, Arms and Armour, 199; Lev, “Fāṭimid Caliphate,” 214.
Lastly, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn occupied Damascus after the death of Nūr al-Dīn Zengī in 1174 CE, and the army with which he marched into the city was composed of Turks, Kurds and Arabs. Abū Shāma gives an account of the Battle of Ḥaṭṭīn and states that the various forces of the Ayyūbids that came together to fight the Crusaders at this battle consisted of Arabs, Turks, and even Iranians (aʿājim). In another instance, ‘Imād al-Dīn al-Kātib al-Isfahānī also mentions the groups that formed Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s army in a battle fought against the Crusaders outside Acre, which included primarily Turks, Arabs, and Kurds. This writer also states that the army led by al-Malik al-ʿĀdil, which arrived in Syria from Egypt to reinforce Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn against the Crusaders, contained some black regiments. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had defeated the black regiments of the Fāṭimids in a series of bloody battles in Cairo when they revolted against him upon his deposition of the Fāṭimids and his accession to the sultanate of Egypt. Therefore, ‘Imād al-Dīn’s statement shows that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (or his brother) may have recruited new black troops after they had consolidated their power in Egypt. Usāma b. Munqidh also verifies that among the men that served Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, the Zengids, and the later Ayyūbids there were mamlūks, free Turks, Kurds, and Arab auxiliaries.

The various elements that formed the armies of the Ayyūbids were further divided into smaller groups, which could be viewed as interest groups within the army. For instance, the

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1079 It must be noted that Usāma b. Munqidh’s descriptions of armies and battles not only refer to the Ayyūbid period, but also to the late Fāṭimids, Zengids, and Seljūks.
Kurds are sometimes mentioned as a single entity\textsuperscript{1084} and at others as being subdivided into tribal factions such as the Mihrāniyya, the Hakkāriyya, and the Khushtarīn.\textsuperscript{1085} Furthermore, the mamlūk regiments (such as the Asadiyya,\textsuperscript{1086} the Šalāhiyya,\textsuperscript{1087} the Nūriyya,\textsuperscript{1088} and the royal guard\textsuperscript{1089} or the ḥalqa\textsuperscript{1090}) are also sometimes mentioned as separate factions based on the patrons they served.

The Ayyūbid army was very decentralized; composed of several small independent armies commanded by the princes of the Ayyūbid family who ruled the appanages of the sultanate. These armies were called together by the sultan\textsuperscript{1091} during military campaigns and then returned to their homes after service.\textsuperscript{1092} This arrangement further divided the army and made it very difficult for any one unit, faction or prince to impose its/his will on the sultan. This idea of a decentralized army is shown very clearly in the sources. Ibn Shaddād,\textsuperscript{1093} Ibn Wāṣil,\textsuperscript{1094} Abū


\textsuperscript{1087} Ibn Wāṣil, \textit{Mufarrij}, vol. 3, 5.

\textsuperscript{1088} Ayalon argues that there were mamlūks serving within the ḥalqa even in the early Mamlūk sultanate. Therefore, according to him, this unit must have contained a considerable number of mamlūks (while not being fully composed of them) during the Ayyūbid period, because this unit formed the personal guard of the sultans. See Ayalon, “Studies II,” 448-451. Humphreys states that the ḥalqa of Šalāh al-Dīn formed his royal guard and was composed of his Šalāhiyya, his personal guard of Turkish mamlūks, and amīrs from other parts of the army. See Humphreys, “Emergence,” 82-83. Lev also states that the ḥalqa was probably the only unit in the Ayyūbid army composed mostly or entirely of slaves. See Lev, “Fāṭimid Caliphate,” 215.

\textsuperscript{1089} Ibn Shaddād, \textit{al-Nawādir}, 61; Ibn Shaddād, \textit{Rare and Excellent History}, 61.

\textsuperscript{1090} Ibn Shaddād, \textit{al-Nawādir}, 147; Ibn Shaddād, \textit{Rare and Excellent History}, 136.

\textsuperscript{1091} The Ayyūbid sultanate was in fact a family confederation of independent and semi-independent principalities. From the foundation of the sultanate the senior prince/sultan was the ruler of Egypt. The sultan did not always have full authority to command all the other Ayyūbid princes. In fact, the rulers of the various principalities were often locked in power struggles with one another and refused to acknowledge the overlordship of other family members. It seems as though the sultans who ruled/controlled both Egypt and Damascus, such as Šalāh al-Dīn, al-ʿĀdil I, and al-Kāmil, were the ones who were able to exert a certain degree of control over the other members of the Ayyūbid family and to call them and their forces up for military duty. For more on the Ayyūbid confederation in the early period under Šalāh al-Dīn see Humphreys, \textit{From Saladin}, 41-85. For more on the internecine conflicts among the Ayyūbid princes see Humphreys, \textit{From Saladin}, 94-105, 193-208, 239-281.

\textsuperscript{1092} Humphreys, “Emergence,” 76.


\textsuperscript{1094} Ibn Wāṣil, \textit{Mufarrij}, vol. 2, 312, 340.
Shāma,\textsuperscript{1095} and ‘Imād al-Dīn\textsuperscript{1096} all mention the arrivals and departures of different amīrs and their armies at various points during the Ayyūbid sultans’ military campaigns. This decentralized army, formed of elements that could depart in the middle of military expeditions, may be seen as a sign of weakness and lack of central control, but it is also similar to the Diversified Army Model because the small individual forces that composed the whole army were too weak to threaten the power and authority of the senior sultan of the dynasty.\textsuperscript{1097}

The idea of a diverse army composed of a variety of ethnicities, small armies led by Ayyūbid princes, and interest groups is best exemplified by Ibn Shaddād’s description, on two occasions, of the battle formation of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s forces when fighting the Crusaders during the siege of Acre (1189-1191 CE) outside the city. In the first battle formation the sultan was in the center with his personal guard. The right wing was made up of his sons, al-Afḍal and al-Ẓāhir, the troops of Mosul led by Ẓāhir al-Dīn b. al-Balankārī, the troops of Diyār Bakr led by the amīr of Ḥiṣn Kayfā (in southeast modern Turkey), the amīr of Nāblus, the tawāshi\textsuperscript{1098} Qaymūz al-Najmī, and the levies and regular troops of al-Muẓaffar Taqī al-Dīn. The left wing was composed of the Mihrānī and Hakkārī Kurds and their chiefs, the Sinjār troops commanded by Mujāhid al-Dīn Yārunqūsh, detachments of mamlūks, the levies and regular troops of Muẓaffar al-Dīn b. Zayn al-Dīn, and the Asadiyya mamlūks and their leaders.\textsuperscript{1099} The description of the formation taken up by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s army on the second occasion is similar to the one described above.\textsuperscript{1100} However, some of the amīrs and units that were present earlier had departed


\textsuperscript{1097} See footnotes 905-912 above.

\textsuperscript{1098} The term \textit{tawāshi} here could be referring to a eunuch of high rank or a commanding officer of a military unit known as the \textit{tawāshiyya} from the Ayyūbid period. The members of this unit formed a large part of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn’s armies and the soldiers of this unit received a fixed income to maintain themselves, their horses and pack animals, and their servant(s). By the Mamlūk period, this term slowly started to fall into disuse. See Ayalon, “Studies II,” 464-467.

\textsuperscript{1099} Ibn Shaddād, \textit{al-Nawādir}, 110; Ibn Shaddād, \textit{Rare and Excellent History of Saladin}, 102-103. A less detailed description of these formations is also available in, Ibn al-Athīr, \textit{al-Kāmil}, vol. 12, 51-54.

\textsuperscript{1100} See, Ibn Shaddād, \textit{al-Nawādir}, 147; Ibn Shaddād, \textit{Rare and Excellent History of Saladin}, 136.
and new units had arrived. Ibn Wāṣil also describes the battle formations of the Ayyūbid army at Acre, and his account supports the one given by Ibn Shaddād.

Here I must mention some of the other groups that were present in the armies of the Ayyūbids. The sources mention that Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and his successors continued to employ the Arabs as auxiliary forces. The Arabs were used as scouts, outriders, and skirmishers. One account describes how Arab tribesmen engaged the enemy and then retreated and drew them into an ambush. In addition to the Arabs, there were also infantrymen, volunteers, and ghāzī warriors who joined the army on a seasonal basis. It is unclear how effective these troops really were because in some accounts they are described as being a hindrance. For example, in a clash with the Crusaders, a large number of infantrymen and volunteers followed the cavalry into battle and became overzealous and charged the enemy, even though the amīrs and the regular troops tried to hold and even beat them back, only to be routed with great slaughter. In another incident, a group of Anatolian volunteers were encouraged by the successes of the mamlūk troops and charged into battle only to cause more confusion, allowing the enemy to counter attack and defeat the Ayyūbid forces. On the other hand, in another instance the infantrymen are described as fighting more valiantly than the mounted troops in a battle against the forces of the Fifth Crusade in 1221 CE. In both cases, it is clear that large numbers of foot soldiers were used by the Ayyūbids, especially during sieges. It must be mentioned that even though the dominant groups in the Ayyūbid army were the Turks and the Kurds, Iranians were also present. Ibn Wāṣil mentions the exceptional bravery and death of a Mazandarānī warrior in battle. This anecdote shows that there must have been an Iranian element in the army,

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1101 Again, this shows the decentralized and fragmented nature of the Ayyūbid army.
1104 Ibn Shaddād, al-Nawādir, 99; Ibn Shaddād, Rare and Excellent History of Saladin, 92.
1105 Ibn Shaddād, al-Nawādir, 197; Ibn Shaddād, Rare and Excellent History of Saladin, 189.
1106 Ibn Wāṣil, Mufarrij, vol. 4, 95.
1107 Nicolle, Arms and Armour, 199.
even though it was probably a very small one. One last group that will be mentioned here is the Maghāriba. While, it is unclear who formed this unit or whether they were from one or more ethnicities,\textsuperscript{1109} it is certain that these soldiers were not mamlūks but free men.\textsuperscript{1110}

4.4 Al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb’s break with the Diversified Army Model and the Genesis of the Ṣāliḥi Mamlūk Model

The Ayyūbīd military changed drastically during the reign of al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb (r. 1240-1249 CE). This sultan broke with all the military traditions practiced by the Ayyūbīds and their predecessors. As a matter of fact, he destroyed the delicate balance of ethnic, religious, and interest groups that the Diversified Army Model called for by creating very powerful mamlūk units in the army and promoting their members to high positions above others. The favor and preference that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb showed his mamlūks made them the most powerful group in the sultanate.\textsuperscript{1111}

Al-Ṣāliḥ had two main reasons for breaking with the Diversified Army Model. First of all, there was his ambition as an autocratic and centralizing ruler to bring all of the Ayyūbīd domains under his direct control and thus put an end to the fragmented family confederation that had emerged in Syria and Egypt.\textsuperscript{1112} Secondly, the loyalty that his mamlūks showed him at a low point in his career, when all the other elements of his army and his family had abandoned him, left a strong impression on al-Ṣāliḥ. He had been removed from the succession and sent to Ḥiṣn Kayfa by his father, al-Kāmil, at the urging of his brother, al-ʿAdīl, because he was threatened by the strong mamlūk army that al-Ṣāliḥ was creating. Upon the death of al-Kāmil between 1239-1240 CE, al-Ṣāliḥ gained control of Damascus using a force composed of mamlūks, Turkmen,

\textsuperscript{1109} Ibn Wāṣil, Mufarrij, vol. 3, 93.
\textsuperscript{1110} See note 5 in Ibn Wāṣil, Mufarrij, vol. 3, 93-94.

\textsuperscript{1112} Levanoni, “Mamluks’ Ascent,” 120, 126, 127; Loiseau, Les Mamelouks, 30.
Kurds, and Khwārazmians. However, he lost Damascus while he and his forces were away on a military campaign. It was at this point that al-Ṣāliḥ’s supporters abandoned him. He was imprisoned in Karak for six months; during this difficult period only his mamlūks remained by his side. Therefore, upon his accession al-Ṣāliḥ trusted and favored only his mamlūks, and decided to create a strong and loyal force based upon them.1113

Al-Ṣāliḥ began to purchase Turkic mamlūks in large numbers after his accession to the throne of Egypt in 1240 CE. He formed an elite personal guard that was the backbone of his army, which became known as the Baḥriyya regiment.1114 This unit was by far the most powerful of al-Ṣāliḥ’s forces. However, there were probably other mamlūk regiments in this sultan’s army,1115 such as another elite unit known as the Jamdāriyya.1116 The status of the mamlūks as the most powerful unit of the Ayyūbid army was confirmed after the destruction of the Khwārazmians by al-Ṣāliḥ and his allies in 1246 CE because of their constant disobedience and depredations in Syria. These troops had formed the only other powerful force in al-Ṣāliḥ’s armies and the only unit that may have been capable of standing up to the mamlūks.1117

It must be stated here that al-Ṣāliḥ not only broke with the Diversified Army Model by creating an army based more heavily on mamlūks than any other group, but he also set some precedents through his actions which enabled the mamlūks to overthrow the Ayyūbids after the death of their master and to create their own regime.1118 Al-Ṣāliḥ carried out a strong policy of centralization during his reign and did not hesitate to fight or even kill his kinsmen in the

1116 Levanoni, “Mamluks’ Ascent,” 142.
1118 Al-Ṣāliḥ was determined to bring the Ayyūbid princes under his control and to unify Syria and Egypt under his rule. These princes had shown a great deal of resistance to al-Ṣāliḥ and his centralizing policies and even allied with the Crusaders to oppose him. He replaced his unreliable relatives with a powerful mamlūk army that was loyal only to him and not the Ayyūbid family. For more on al-Ṣāliḥ and his attitude and policies toward the other Ayyūbids and how they affected the rise of the mamlūks see Humphreys, From Saladin, 264-265, 275, 283-301.
process. Nevertheless, despite the power attained by the mamlūks and al-Ṣāliḥ’s disdainful treatment of other Ayyūbids, they were kept under control through their loyalty to their master and his authority over them.

The situation changed with the death of the sultan in 1249 CE during the Crusader attack and the arrival of his heir, Tūrānshāh, from Ḫiṣn Kayfa. The new sultan did not retain the loyalty of the Baḥriyya or the other mamlūk regiments. He further alienated them by attempting to promote his own followers at their expense. These actions resulted in his murder by the Baḥriyya. This is a significant moment, because these mamlūks were acting towards this Ayyūbid, who had threatened them, in the same way in which their master had acted towards his own kinsmen. Furthermore, they were able to dispense with the Ayyūbids because they realized that they were militarily the most powerful force in the Muslim world and that they had been able to defeat the invading Crusaders at the Battle of Manṣūra in 1250 CE without the leadership of an Ayyūbid. They thus legitimized their takeover by presenting themselves as the “defenders of Islam” and further justified their actions by the continuation of al-Ṣāliḥ’s practices and the creation of a new military system. No group in the military was strong enough to resist them. For example the Kurds refrained from defending Tūrānshāh when the Baḥriyya murdered him because they were too weak and feared for their own well-being.

One can conclude here that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s break with the military reforms ended the balance of power in his army in favor of the mamlūk element and shifted it away from a force resembling the Diversified Army Model. When he died there was no faction or Ayyūbid prince

1120 Levanoni, “Mamluks’ Ascent,” 129. When he felt powerful enough he even had his brother, al-‘Ādil, whom he had imprisoned when he seized the sultanate, murdered without any regard to the blood ties between them. Thus, he set an example for his mamlūks in spilling Ayyūbid blood. See, Ibn Iyās, Badā’i’, vol. 1 Part1, 277; Humphreys, From Saladin, 300-302.
1121 Humphreys, From Saladin, 302-303; Levanoni, “Mamluks’ Ascent,” 133-134.
1122 Levanoni, “Mamluks’ Ascent,” 142.
1123 Ayyūbid princes still held power over some of their domains in Syria in the first couple of decades after the rise of the Mamlūk sultanate. Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 151.
1124 Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 152-153; Levanoni, “Mamluks’ Ascent,” 136.
strong enough to face the mamluks. Therefore, they were able effectively to put an end to the Ayyūbid dynasty in Egypt and to start a new regime. The early mamluks continued to implement al-Ṣālih’s practices and built their new military model upon them. Thus, by Baybars’ reign a new Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model had developed that differed greatly from the Diversified Army Model that had dominated the armies of the Muslim world up to this point. It must be noted here that although the murders of Tūrānshāh and al-Mutawakkil almost four centuries earlier by slave soldiers are very similar, the circumstances under which the two assassinations occurred were very different and will be discussed below.

4.5 The Political and Military Circumstances that Allowed for the Rise of the Mamlūk Sultanate and the Establishment of the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model

The Mamlūks were able to dispose of the Ayyūbids and establish their regime due to the political and military circumstances that affected the region during the middle of the thirteenth century. The constant struggle against the Crusader States and the renewed offensive against Egypt in the form of the Seventh Crusade led by Louis IX of France was a danger to the Muslim rulers of Syria and Egypt. Furthermore, the westward advance of the seemingly undefeatable Mongols was an even greater threat. These attacks posed an unprecedented challenge with the potential to fully destroy Muslim political power and control over the core regions of the Islamic world. The inability of the other Muslim powers to successfully counter them gave the mamluks, headed by the Bahriyya, the opportunity to rise to the occasion and assume the role of the defenders of Islam.

In 1244 CE Louis IX of France took the cross and made Egypt the target of his campaign in order either to permanently occupy it or to pressure the Ayyūbids to make concessions in the Holy Land. He and his army landed on the coast of Egypt in 1249 CE and quickly took Damietta. The situation for the defenders became even more difficult when al-Ṣālih Ayyūb died from an illness that same year. His wife, Shajarat al-Durr, and his confidants kept his death a secret to maintain the morale of the army until the arrival of his heir, Tūrānshāh, from Diyār Bakr. The main French assault was delayed for several months due to the flooding of the

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1126 Irwin, Middle East, 19.
1127 Irwin, Middle East, 20; Levanoni, “Mamluks’ Ascent,” 129-130.
Nile. The French vanguard, under the leadership of Robert of Artois, attacked the Egyptian army, which was camped at Manṣūra and forced its way across the fords. They managed to kill Fakhr al-Dīn b. al-Shaykh, the commander-in-chief, put the Egyptians to flight, and penetrated deep into the town. At this point the Bahriyya rallied and established a strong defense and counter-attacked. Robert of Artois, and many of his knights were killed in the ensuing battle that took place in the narrow streets of Manṣūra. The remnants of the French vanguard either fled or were taken prisoner. The position of Louis IX and his forces after this point went from bad to worse. Having lost a large section of his army, the French king did not have sufficient men to take Manṣūra, and his supply lines were vulnerable to attacks by the Egyptians. As a result of this situation, he ordered a retreat to Damietta, but it quickly turned into a rout in which the king and most of his army were captured.\textsuperscript{1128}

In addition to the Seventh Crusade’s attack on Egypt, the Muslim domains in Syria were also constantly under threat from the Crusader States. As a matter of fact, Syria was the battlefield on which the struggle between the Ayyūbids and the Franks unfolded. In addition to Frankish and Ayyubid armies raiding and battling one another, Syria also suffered from a state of decentralized chaos, which increased the depredations of robbers, bands of masterless mamlūks, and Arab and Turkmen tribes.\textsuperscript{1129} Thus, it is clear that the Crusader States and the Seventh Crusade\textsuperscript{1130} still constituted a serious threat to the Muslim rulers of Syria and Egypt in the mid-thirteenth century.

The Mongols posed an even greater threat to the Muslim world than the Crusaders. The Mongols had started their westward advance under Genghis Khan in 1219 CE against the


\textsuperscript{1129} Irwin, Middle East, 22, 30; Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 24.

Khwārazmian Empire. This western push was resumed during the reign of Mongke Khan (r.1251-1259 CE), who sent his brother Hūlākū (Hūlēgu) Khan with a large force, numbering around 120,000-300,000 Mongol and vassal troops, to subjugate the Iṣmaʿīlī’s of Alamūt, the Lurs, the ‘Abbāsid caliphate, and the lands of Syria and Egypt. Hūlākū set out with his army in 1251 CE and by 1258 CE he had destroyed the Iṣmāʿīlīs and sacked Baghdad, killing the last ‘Abbāsid caliph and putting an end to the caliphate. The Mongols were then set to move on to their next objective which was Syria and Egypt. They were able to conquer Syria and secure the submission of several of the Ayyūbid princes and the Crusader States. Thai captured and sacked Aleppo terribly after the defenders put up a stiff resistance in the citadel for one month. They then moved on to occupy Ḥimṣ, Ḥamā, and Damascus unopposed. However, the Mamlūks, who now ruled Egypt after assassinating Tūrānshāh, refused to submit and met the Mongols at the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt in 1260 CE and won a decisive victory.

During this time of crisis, the Mamlūks were the only force that was able successfully to face both the crusade of Louis IX as well as the Mongols. Thus, they presented themselves as the defenders and saviors of Islam. Another major factor that contributed to and legitimized the rise of the mamlūks in Syria and Egypt was the fact that the Ayyūbids of Syria had submitted to

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1132 Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 15; Irwin, Middle East, 31; Waterson, Knights, 69.

1133 For a detailed study of the ‘Abbāsid caliphate in Cairo during the Mamlūk period see Mustafa Banister, The Abbasid Caliphate of Cairo (1261-1517): History and Tradition in the Mamluk Court (PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2015).


1136 Ayalon, “Aspects,” 27; Irwin, Middle East, 33-34; Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 11-13, 17, 26-35, 39-45. Also see Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhīr, al-Rawḍ, 63-67; Baybars al-Mansūrī, al-Tuhfā, 40-46; Baybars al-Mansūrī, Zubda, 78-80; Ibn Iyās, Badā ’i’, vol. 1, part 1, 306-307; Sadeque, Baybars I, 39-4; Taqqīsh, Tārīkh al-Mamālīk, 66-83; Turnbull, Genghis Khan, 56-60; Morgan, Mongols, 128-139; Waterson, Knights, 75-80.

the Mongols and thus given up their role as the defenders of the faith, leaving a vacuum that the Mamlūks filled, giving them yet another reason and justification for their usurpation of power.\textsuperscript{1138} As a matter of fact, the Ayyūbids had given up this position long before the Mongols arrived on the scene during their squabbles for supremacy against one another. Just one example to demonstrate this is the Battle of Gaza/La Forbie which took place in 1244 CE. In this battle al-Śāliḥ Ayyūb and his mamlūk army and Khwārazmian allies defeated a coalition of Syrian Ayyūbids and Crusaders.\textsuperscript{1139} The fact that some of the scions of the Ayyūbid house were allying themselves with the Crusader States and submitting to the Mongols tainted their image.

Even though the early Mamlūk rulers presented themselves as the new defenders of Islam, they did not fully sever their links to the Ayyūbids and also presented themselves as the heirs of their former master, al-Śāliḥ Ayyūb.\textsuperscript{1140} At the same time it must be stated that the Mamlūks’ policies were also a continuation of al-Śāliḥ Ayyūb’s hostility against the other Ayyūbid princes of Syria and his undermining their rule. The Mamlūks also continued to build upon al-Śāliḥ’s military reforms, which saw the rise of a new model army based primarily on mamlūks to the exclusion of any other groups.\textsuperscript{1141} This move signifies the continuation of the break with the Diversified Army Model and the strengthening and formalization of the Śāliḥī Mamlūk Model.

It should not come as a surprise that the early Mamlūk sultans chose this course of action. Both the Mongols and the Crusader States remained a threat for several decades after the establishment of the Mamlūk sultanate and thus an effective army was needed to deal with these external challenges. The Mamlūks were the ones who carried the day at the battles of Manṣūra and ‘Ayn Jālūt, so in this sense they were only implementing military policies that they believed would ensure their survival. Furthermore, they continued the centralizing policies of their

\textsuperscript{1138} Irwin, Middle East, 32-33; Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 20-21.

\textsuperscript{1139} Ibn al-Furāt, Ayyūbids, Mamluks and Crusaders, 1-9; Abū al-Fidā, al-Mukhtaṣar, vol. 3, 209; al-Maqrīzī, al-Sulūk, vol. 1, part 2, 314-319; Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya, 164-165; Irwin, Middle East, 19; Waterson, Knights of Islam, 57.

\textsuperscript{1140} Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 154; Ayalon, “From Ayyūbids,” 43-57; Ayalon, “Studies II,” 448-473. Also see Broadbrige, Kingship and Ideology, 6-63.

\textsuperscript{1141} Levanoni, “Mamluks’ Ascent,” 121-122.
mentor, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb\textsuperscript{1142} and thus created a strong and united military under central control. What made this move possible was the fact that there was a great abundance of slaves of Turkic origin in the Middle East because they had been driven out of their pasturelands by the Mongol advance.\textsuperscript{1143}

Thus, it can be concluded that the Mamlūks were able to seize power from the Ayyūbids and to establish their sultanate, break with the Diversified Army Model and adopt, strengthen, and formalize the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model because of the political and military situation in the Middle East during the middle of the thirteenth century. I have mentioned earlier that this event could be construed as being similar to the case in which the Turks murdered the caliph al-Mutawakkil. However, at that point the Turks could not have usurped the throne because they could not legitimize themselves due to the fact that the caliphate and the Muslim world as a whole was still relatively stable compared to the far-more fragmented situation in the mid-thirteenth century. Furthermore, there were several forces within the Muslim world that would have challenged such a move. The best they could do was to install one of the scions of the ‘Abbāsid family as a puppet caliph in the hope of maintaining their lofty positions in the army and at court. On the other hand, when the Mamlūks seized power and consolidated their position as the rulers of Egypt and Syria, the Muslim world was in a state of flux, confusion, and chaos. The Mongols killed the caliph and abolished the caliphate in Baghdad shortly after the mamlūks murdered Tūrānshāh and the Ayyūbids (who were themselves usurpers) no longer fulfilled the role of defenders of the faith.

There could not have been a better time for the mamlūks to establish themselves as sultans or to continue creating armies based primarily on mamlūks. In fact, at this point it was the most logical thing that could have been done, because to survive at this precarious time, the Mamlūk sultanate needed a large and powerful army and what could have been more powerful than a force composed mainly of mamlūk soldiers? One might ask, what about the “balance” in the composition of the military that was required for the ruler to maintain control? At this point, I do not believe that this was a major concern because the early mamlūk sultans and their troops

\textsuperscript{1142} Humphreys, \textit{From Saladin}, 239-281; Northrup, “Bahṛī Mamlūk Sultanate,” 246-247.

were preoccupied with their wars against the Mongols and the Crusader States in a struggle for their very survival. Despite a few occasions of rebellion, there were no instances in which the successful rulers of the early sultanate lost control over the army. However, this situation changed after the disintegration of the Ilkhanate and the expulsion of the Franks from the Levant. With the disappearance of these external foes, the Mamlūk army started focusing its attention inward and there were more internal struggles between the rulers and the army. It is at this point that some of the sultans such, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in particular,1144 attempted to more overtly re-diversify the army.

The diversification of the Mamlūk army may have started as early as Qalāwūn’s reign. He attempted to acquire mamlūks from several different sources, his mithāl states that he wanted mamlūks from Hind, Sind, and China.1145 His Burjiyya regiment, which was 3,700 strong, was composed primarily of Circassians and Armenians who were purchased “as a result of preference or availability.”1146 An even more radical diversification took place during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign. Unlike his father, who purchased mamlūks of various racial origins, this ruler broke with the Şaliḥī Mamlūk Model and started to include great numbers of non-mamlūks in the army. Whereas Qalāwūn’s objectives may have been simply to acquire as many mamlūks from as many sources as possible, perhaps to increase the size of the army or replenish it after losses suffered in battle, and not necessarily to diversify,1147 al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who had been twice

1144 Qalāwūn had started this rediversification within the ranks of the mamlūks during his reign. See notes 1145 and 1147 for more details on this.
1145 Qalāwūn’s mithāl of 1288-1289 CE states that he welcomed the importation of slaves from far and wide (including Hind, Sind, China, and Yemen) and gave the merchants importing them safe conduct to increase the size and quality of his army. This sultan may have started the racial diversification of his mamlūk corps, but they still belonged to the “mamlūk interest group.” This can be seen as a first step towards what al-Nāṣir attempted to do with the changes that he wrought in the military of the sultanate. For more on Qalāwūn’s mithāl see, Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 150.
1146 Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 191. For a detailed study of Qalāwūn’s mamlūks (i.e. the Maṣṣūrīyya) see Amir Mazor, The Rise and Fall of the Muslim Regiment: The Maṣṣūrīyya in the First Mamluk Sultanate, 678/1279–741/1341 (Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2015).
1147 Northrup presents a translation of a report found in al-ʿUmarī’s al-Taʿrīf of Qalāwūn’s organization of the administrative structure of the sultanate after his victory at the Battle of Ḥimṣ. In the report, the sultan holds private audiences with three of his most prominent senior amīrs Ḥusām al-Dīn ʿUmarī, Alam al-Dīn Sanjar al-Shujāʿī, and Shujāʿ al-Dīn Tughrīl al-Shiblī, whom he had appointed to the important positions of nāʿib al-ṣalṭana, wazīr, and the amīr in charge of dār al-ʿadl al-sharīf respectively. During these meetings Qalāwūn urges each amīr to watch over the other(s). This document shows that the sultan was playing one powerful amīr against the other just as the advice literature states that the ruler should play one faction of the army against the other to maintain control over it. Based on this evidence, one can also argue that Qalāwūn may have been trying to diversify for the same
deposed by his father’s amīrs, clearly aimed to control the army during his third reign and maintain the balance of power in a way that no individual or group could ever threaten his position again. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s changes are what several scholars have called the break with mamlūk traditions. The scholarship has attributed the Mamlūk army’s waning to the policies of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. This chapter has demonstrated that this premise is somewhat flawed, because it was the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model that broke with the long-established Diversified Army Model. The forthcoming chapters will show that the break with the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model (or mamlūk traditions as some scholars call it) was in fact a reversion to the Diversified Army Model after the state of emergency created by the Mongols and the Crusaders had subsided.

reason. However, such an assertion can only be made in conjecture because there is no concrete evidence to support this idea. See Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 200-202.
Chapter 5

The Mamlūk Army in the Period of Early Mamlūk Sultanate

The army that was built up by the early Mamlūk sultans did not resemble the Diversified Army Model. Attempts to link the Mamlūk sultanate and its army to its predecessor, the Ayyūbid dynasty and its military, have been made by both Ayalon and Humphreys. These scholars try to show continuity (Ayalon) and change (Humphreys) with regard to the development of the Mamlūk army during the transition from the Ayyūbid dynasty to the Mamlūk regime. It must be stated here that neither of these scholars is entirely correct or incorrect. In fact, the Mamlūk army exhibited some signs of continuity. However, this was not a continuity from the Ayyūbid period as a whole, but rather from the reign of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, who had broken with the traditions of the Diversified Army Model that had dominated the Muslim world up to his reign. On the other hand, the changes in the Mamlūk army that were introduced, or further developed, based on those initiated by al-Ṣāliḥ, cannot be denied, because these differences are what distinguish the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model from its predecessor.

5.1 The Early Mamlūk Army: Structure, Training, and Composition

The army was the central institution of the Mamlūk sultanate, which in essence was a military society. The social and military elites were, for the most part, members of the military, and the whole regime and society were organized in a manner to support and maintain the army, which was an extension of the sultan’s household. The sultans and the ruling elite depended on a full-time professional army, which was sometimes supplemented with irregular troops levied from the nomadic tribes living within the boundaries of the sultanate and sometimes also from the urban centers and rural areas. This professional army was composed primarily of Turkic

\[\text{1148} \quad \text{Ayalon argues that there was quite a high degree of continuity between the armies of the Ayyūbid and the Mamlūk sultanates. He argues that the overwhelming superiority of the mamlūks (Turks) in the Ayyūbid armies was already present before the rise of the Mamlūk sultanate. He also states that the army’s structure and loose organization (at least outwardly) did not change much, because he says that the Mamlūks were trying to show that they were continuators of the Ayyūbids’ legacy. He also argues that the ḥalqa continued to be a very important element in the army in the early Mamlūk period. On the other hand, Humphreys points out that the army changed significantly after the establishment of the Mamlūk sultanate. He states that it grew in size, became more centralized, developed a more complex hierarchy for the officer corps, and switched from being a bi-national army to one that was dominated by one ethnicity, the Turks. For a more detailed discussion of these arguments see Ayalon, “From Ayyūbids,” 43-57; Ayalon, “Studies II,” 448-473; Humphreys, “Emergence,” 67-99; Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 147-182.}\]
mamlūks (mamlūks of other ethnicities were also present, but in the early period the Turks from the Kipchak steppe were the most significant group). During and after Qalāwūn’s reign mamlūks of other ethnicities (i.e., Mongols and Circassians) began to appear in larger numbers. However, in the Šāliḥī Mamlūk Model loyalties did not always lie with one’s ethnicity, but rather with the mamlūk faction to which one belonged. Qalāwūn’s mithāl, granting safe conduct through the territory of the sultanate to traders from several distant lands, who were encouraged to bring mamlūks to the sultanate from various regions, indicates that this ruler was in fact a state-builder and was creating a new power base and patrimonial household upon which he could depend. Furthermore, Qalāwūn must have felt a little more secure by 1288 CE (the date of the mithāl), because he had defeated a major Mongol invasion of Syria in 1281 CE at the Battle of Ḥimṣ.

The regular Mamlūk army was composed of three major groups: The Royal Mamlūks (al-mamālīk al-ṣulṭāniyya), the amīrs’ mamlūks (mamālīk al-umarā’), and the free soldiers of the ḥalqa. The primary units that formed the regular army have been discussed in several studies in detail and therefore will be described here briefly. The majority of the soldiers that formed

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1150 See Reuven Amitai-Preiss, “Mongol Occupation,” 21-41. In the case studied in this article the main subject of the study, Qipchāq al-Manṣūrī, a mamlūk of Mongol origin, defected to the Mongols prior to the Battle of Wādī al-Khazindār and the subsequent Mongol occupation of Damascus. However, his true loyalties lay with the Mamlūk sultanate and he played an important role as a “fifth column” for the Mamlūks until they were able to reoccupy Damascus.

1151 See Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 150.

1152 Northrup brings to light Qalāwūn’s mithāl, in which he addressed the rulers and notables of several distant lands such as Sind, Hind, China, and Yemen and guaranteed safe passage to merchants, especially those bringing slaves. This is a definite step towards the diversification of the ethnic composition of the mamlūk regiments. However, the largest and most important part of the army was still composed of mamlūks, who were raised, trained, and educated to be loyal to their comrades and their master regardless of their race and origins (refer to footnote 974 for an example of how this loyalty worked). In fact, it is unclear if Qalāwūn was attempting to diversify his army consciously. This sultan’s attempts to find slaves in other regions may have been a measure he was taking to find alternate sources of manpower or just to replenish the ranks of his army, in addition to creating a new mamlūk power base of support for himself. On the other hand, al-Nāṣir Muhammad’s policies made radical changes of a different sort to the army that broke with the Šāliḥī Mamlūk Model due to the inclusion of several non-mamlūk elements even in the highest echelons of the officer corps.


1154 For a more detailed discussion of these elements of the Mamlūk army see Ayalon, “Studies I,”; Ayalon, “Studies II,”; Ayalon, “Studies III”; Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion)”; ‘Adwān, al-‘Askariyya, 33-36; Ṭaqqūsh, Tārīkh
the sultanate’s military were mamlūks. According to Loiseau, they not only formed the core of the army, but were also the substance and essence of the Mamlūk dawla. The Royal Mamlūks formed the backbone of the army. They were the sultans’ personal regiment and were composed of those mamlūks whom he had acquired. In the later period of the sultanate they were referred to as julbān or mushtarawāt. Among the Royal Mamlūks were also those mamlūks who passed to the ruler from previous sultans and deceased/disgraced amīrs. In the later period of the sultanate they were often referred to as the qarāniṣa or mustakhdamūn. These troops received the best training, weapons, armor, and the highest wages. The khāṣṣakiyya (the sultan’s retinue and bodyguard) were selected from among the Royal Mamlūks. These mamlūks always accompanied the sultan in his public appearances and were also guarded him and had access to him in the privacy of his chambers. These favored troops also had a better chance of being promoted to high posts in the army and the administration and being appointed as governors and viceroys throughout the sultanate. The mamlūks of the amīrs were inferior in quality, equipment, and training to the Royal Mamlūks. They were in the service of the amīrs, and their masters did not have access to the vast resources of the sultan, and their troops did not have access to the military schools and training grounds used by the Royal Mamlūks. As a matter of fact, Qalāwūn issued decrees (tadhkira) containing a clause to guarantee that he would have the first choice when purchasing new slaves when they arrived in Egypt. Lastly, the halqa was the unit of the regular army that was composed of non-mamlūk freeborn cavalrmen. It will be discussed in more detail in section 4.3.

References:

Loiseau, Les Mamelous, 89-90.
Loiseau, Les Mamelous, 148-149.
Ayalon, “Studies I,” 204-228; Levanoni, Turning Point, 8; Waterson, Knights, 92-134; Amalia Levanoni, “The Halqah in the Mamluk Army: Why was it not Dissolved when it Reached its Nadir?” MSR, XV, 2011, 37-65.
Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 190.
In addition to creating a strong and centralized standing army, the early Mamlūk rulers also developed a hierarchy of ranks and positions within the officer corps and at the court. Under the sultan, the supreme commander of the army, there were four major officer ranks in the Mamlūk military society: Amīr of One Hundred (amīr mi’a), Amīr of Forty (amīr ṭablakhāna), Amīr of Ten (amīr ’ashara), and Amīr of Five (amīr khamsa). The numbers denoting these ranks indicate the number of mamlūks the holder of that rank was entitled to have in his service. However, these numbers were not set in stone, and it is not uncommon to see the sources mention amīrs of fifteen, twenty, or thirty.  

On the other hand, Loiseau contends that these numbers indicate the minimum number of mamlūk cavalrymen the officer was expected to maintain and states that some of the wealthy and powerful high ranking amīrs could have had significantly more than one hundred mamlūks in their service. Furthermore, court and administrative positions were also usually held by amīrs and high ranking members of the military, most frequently from among the ranks of the Royal Mamlūks. Positions such as the nā‘ib al-ṣalṭana (vice-sultan/viceroy of Egypt or the Syrian provinces), the atābak (commander in chief of the army), the amīr silāh (master of the armor), the ḥājib al-hujjāb (grand chamberlain), the ustādār or ustādh al-dār (grand major domo), and the khazindār al-kabīr (grand treasurer), among others, were all held by members of the army, especially the Royal Mamlūk corps.

The early Mamlūk sultans went to great length to enlarge the size of their army to counter the threat posed by both the Crusader States and the Ilkhanate. Most estimates for the strength of the regular army of the early Mamlūk sultanate put it at 40,000-60,000 men (although the lower estimate seems to be the more accurate one). Even if the lower estimate is taken as the correct one for the strength of the Mamlūk army, it shows a four-fold growth from the Ayyūbid

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1160 For a more detailed discussion of these ranks see Humphreys, “Emergence,” 148-149; Levanoni, Turning Point, 10-11; Irwin, Middle East, 39-40; Amitai-Preiss, “Rise and Fall,” 26-27. Northrup gives a good example of an amīr’s progression through these ranks when describing Baybars al-Mansūrī’s career see Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 38-40.

1161 Loiseau, Les Mamelouks, 93.


army. The Royal Mamlûks comprised a considerable percentage of these figures. For instance, Baybars is said to have had between 4,000-16,000 Royal Mamlûks, whereas Qalâwûn had 7,000-12,000 Royal Mamlûks. These figures indicate that the Royal Mamlûks were not merely the sultans’ special bodyguard unit, but rather that they formed a significant division of the whole army. To the standing army of Egypt, the Mamlûks could also add the armies of Syria and tribal auxiliaries.

The Şâliḥî Mamlûk Model created a standing army that had a disproportionately large number of mamlûks. These mamlûks (especially the Royal Mamlûks) not only formed the largest units, but also the most efficient ones. The sultans of the early period focused very heavily on enlarging their mamlûk regiments, but increasing the size of the army was not enough. These mamlûks had to be trained in the art of war and horsemanship. Military schools and hippodromes were established in which the mamlûks underwent a curriculum of rigorous training. Furthermore, during times of peace, the sultans frequently went on hunting expeditions and held military reviews and inspections as well as war games and tournaments to keep their armies on a constant war footing.

Ideally, mamlûks were purchased at a young age, when they were most impressionable. Generally, the novices began the furûsiyya (equestrian and martial skills) training and practices when they had completed their religious education and reached maturity (around the age of 14). The first thing the novice learned was how to ride and care for his horse. This training involved riding a horse with and without a saddle at different speeds. The trainee also learned to groom and saddle his own horses and to care for his mount if it got sick. The mamlûks then

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1165 Ayalon, “Studies I,” 222-223. The disparity and inconsistency of these figures in the sources as presented by Ayalon could be due to exaggerations by the authors, inaccurate information, or they could indicate the strength of the unit of Royal Mamlûks at different times during the reign of the sultan(s) being discussed.
1167 Levanoni, Turning Point, 8, 13-14; Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 73-74.
1168 Levanoni, Turning Point, 17; Waterson, Knights, 114.
learned how to fight with the lance (in the birjās game a lance had to be hurled through metal rings at a gallop), how to become proficient in archery (the qabaq game, which involved shooting a gourd through a wooden circle on a high wooden beam from horseback, was popular), and swordplay and fencing. In addition to learning these martial skills, the mamlūks were drilled in group exercises so that they could learn to maneuver in battle as units.

This training created a disciplined and skilled army. However, the sultans made sure that even after the completion of training their troops were always well-equipped and combat ready through hunts, military reviews and parades, war games, and tournaments. The primary sources describe military reviews and parades that were often held by sultans such as Baybars, who timed such events to coincide with the arrival of foreign embassies in order to awe the visiting dignitaries with the size, discipline, and fine armor and weaponry of his army. For example, Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir states that every Tuesday and Saturday were set aside for playing polo, and Baybars made sure that Berke Khan’s ambassadors saw these games, in which his troops displayed their equestrian skills. During other embassies, dignitaries from the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanate witnessed military reviews of the whole Mamlūk army and once again watched them display their equestrian and martial skills in the hippodromes.

Military reviews served as a propagandistic tool to awe both enemies and allies, but their primary purpose was to ensure the ruler that his army was in good shape. Therefore, the early Mamlūk sultans, especially Baybars, inspected their armies frequently and not only when they wanted to impress their visitors. During such inspections the whole army was assembled before the sultan and every regiment marched by him one after the other. In some cases such inspections lasted several days or even weeks and in others the whole review was carried out in a single day. The one-day reviews served to make sure that the entire army was assembled and fully equipped without giving the opportunity for any of the soldiers to borrow arms or armor from their comrades. Tournaments and war games were often held after the inspection of the

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1170 For more details on mamlūk training in the maydāns (hippodromes) see al-Sayyid al-Bāz, ‘Arīnī, Al-Mamālīk (Beirut: Dār al-Nahda al-‘Arabiyya li al-Ṭibā’a wa al-Nashr, 1967), 84-128; Rabī‘, “Training,”155-163; Waterson, Knights, 115-123.
1172 Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir, al-Rawḍ, 171.
army, in which the troops competed in lance games, archery, the *qabaq* game, and fought mock battles. The winners of these games were richly rewarded. The early sultans occasionally participated in these competitions to show off their martial skills to their followers.\textsuperscript{1174}

Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir, Baybars al-Manṣūrī, and al-Maqrīzī describe such reviews and tournaments through the reigns of Baybars, Qalāwūn, and al-Ashraf Khalīl.\textsuperscript{1175} Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir also mentions one instance in which the sultan ordered all his troops to busy themselves with making arrows (which he also did) and then practicing archery.\textsuperscript{1176} This statement shows that the mamlūks not only had to be skilled at the use of their weaponry, but also had to have the knowledge and craftsmanship to make weapons or mend them (this is similar to the requirement to learn to care for their own horses in addition to perfecting riding skills). In another instance, in 1264 CE Baybars ordered his troops to assemble fully equipped. When these orders were issued, the amīrs and soldiers rushed to the blacksmiths and weapon makers in order to have old and worn out equipment mended and to purchase new arms for the review. The demands of the army were so high that the prices of iron increased as did the wages of the blacksmiths.\textsuperscript{1177} This episode shows that these military reviews were taken very seriously by the sultan, his officers, and the rank and file soldiers and that such events forced the mamlūk soldiery to constantly maintain their weapons and armor.

Another form of training for the army was to embark on mass hunting expeditions with the sultan. Such hunts could involve thousands of horsemen. The exercises required a high degree of coordination between the different units that formed the hunt, which drove the animals in one direction and then closed around them and formed a ring of death from which there was no escape for the trapped beasts.\textsuperscript{1178} These hunts must have been similar to the great hunts of the

\textsuperscript{1174} Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, part 2, 626.


\textsuperscript{1177} Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, part 2, 512.

\textsuperscript{1178} Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, part 2, 481, 523.
Mongols (also called the *nerge*),\(^{1179}\) which were also mass hunts and military exercises that involved large numbers of warriors carrying out complex maneuvers to trap game. It should come as no surprise, given the nomadic background of the Mamlūks, that they also combined military exercises with hunting.

The early Mamlūk army had to be efficient and combat ready due to the threat to the sultanate from external enemies. It can be concluded from this section that the early Mamlūk army was large (at least much larger than the armies of the Ayyūbids), well-trained, well-equipped, well-organized, professional, and in a constant state of battle-readiness. There seems to be unanimous agreement among scholars regarding the high efficiency of the military in the early Mamlūk sultanate. However, the question remains: how loyal and disciplined was this army?

### 5.2 Mamlūk Loyalty and Discipline in the Early Period

Historians of the early Mamlūk period have characterized the early Mamlūk army as one that was loyal and disciplined in contrast to the army in the later period of the sultanate. I have previously suggested that one of the inherent weaknesses of employing military slaves was the limited nature of their loyalty. This fidelity, such as it was, was often limited to the mamlūk’s patron (his *ustādh*) and to his comrades, but was not guaranteed to be passed on to the patron’s successor(s). We have seen that this was the case with the ‘Abbāsid caliph, al-Mutawakkil, and the last Ayyūbid sultan, Tūrānshāh, who were both murdered by the mamlūks of their predecessors. It should therefore come as no surprise that this weakness was present in the Şāliḫī Mamlūk Model. The lack of loyalty necessitated that every successful Mamlūk sultan should become a state-builder and start creating his own support base from the ground up.

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The situation only worsened with the passage of time as more and more mamlūk factions formed in the sultanate (especially within the ranks of the Royal Mamlūks), whose loyalty to the sultan was always questionable. At a glance, one might equate the existence of several such factions or interest groups in the early Mamlūk sultanate as something resembling the Diversified Army Model. However, this is an oversimplification because these groups of mamlūks formed a single body when they faced an external foe or a threat to their existence and status as the socio-military elite within the realm.

P.M. Holt is correct in his observation that the sultans were not absolute rulers because they could not fully depend on the entire army or the great amīrs. As a matter of fact, their position was rather precarious because they only directly controlled a fraction of the revenues of the sultanate and a part of the entire army. One might recall the example of Maḥmūd of Ghazna who managed his army by manipulating the different groups, such as the Turks and the Indians, against one another to maintain control over them. Most of the Mamlūk sultans could not do this because the groups and factions that formed their armed forces had complex loyalties that frequently shifted and depended mainly on self-preservation and advancement. The distribution of power was very uneven within the ranks of the Mamlūk army. Of the various units that formed the army, the Royal Mamlūks held the most power and prestige, and within the ranks of the Royal Mamlūks the ruling sultan’s personal mamlūks were usually more privileged than the mamlūks who had served previous sultans.

The remainder of this section will show that the loyalty and discipline of the early Mamlūk army was not impeccable in comparison to that of the army of the later period of the sultanate. The examples of several unfortunate sultans who were deposed or murdered including al-Muẓaffar Quṭuz (r. 1259-1260 CE), al-Saʿīd Berke Khān (r.1277-1279 CE), al-ʿAdīl Sulāmish (r. 1279), al-Ashraf Khalīl (r.1290-1293 CE), al-ʿAdīl Kitbughā (1294-1297 CE), al-Manṣūr

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1180 These groups included the sultan’s comrades (*khushdāshiyya*), the mamlūks of his predecessors, the mamlūks of amīrs who came into his service, and the sultan’s personal mamlūks.

1181 The sultans could only fully depend on their personal mamlūks and perhaps the members of their own *khushdāshiyya*, although the sultan’s comrades often saw themselves as having equal rights to power as the sultan (will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6).

1182 P. M. Holt, “Position,” 247-249. The idea that the sultan was a representative of his Khushdāshiyya and that the senior amīrs not only advised, but also directed the sultan, is mentioned by Robert Irwin in his discussion of al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh and the Mu’ayyadiyya faction. See Irwin, “Factions,” 231-232.
Lājīn (r.1297-1299 CE), and al-Muẓaffar Baybars al-Jāshinkīr (r. 1309-1310 CE) demonstrate that loyalty and discipline did not reign supreme in the early Mamlūk army.\textsuperscript{1183}

Al-Muẓaffar Quṭuz was murdered in 1260 CE, shortly after his victory against the Mongols at the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt. A group of amīrs, including both Baḥriyya and Muʿizziyya (Quṭuz’s own khushdāshiyya) among others, seized the opportunity to murder the sultan when he was separated from his army and retinue during a hunt. The future sultan, Baybars, played a prominent role in this plot. Several reasons were cited for the murder. Among them were the Baḥriyya’s fear of the sultan with whom they had been enemies until the Mongol invasion forced them into an uneasy alliance. The Baḥriyya also wanted to take revenge on Quṭuz because he had murdered their former commander, leading to their subsequent exile from Egypt. Furthermore, some of the leading amīrs did not receive the governorships and rewards that Quṭuz had promised them prior to the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt. Whatever the case, this group of amīrs, representing several factions of the army, murdered the sultan and put one of their own, Baybars, on the throne.\textsuperscript{1184}

Al-Ẓāhir Baybars was able to consolidate his rule and maintain control over his domains and his army, but his sons al-Saʿīd Berke Khān (r. 1277-1279 CE) and al-ʿAdīl Sulāmish (r. 1279) were deposed in quick succession within a few years of their father’s death. Upon his accession to the throne, Berke Khān found himself facing two powerful mamlūk factions: the Baḥriyya/Ṣāliḥiyya and the Ẓāhiriyya. He tried to elevate his own mamlūks to positions of power and undermine the power of the amīrs. Upon verifying the intentions of the sultan, the powerful magnates banded together and openly resisted Berke Khān, whose policies alienated much of the army, which defected to the amīrs. Berke Khān and a few of his mamlūks were eventually

\textsuperscript{1183} I have not included al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in this list because in Chapter 5 I will discuss the cases of his two depositions before he managed to consolidate his rule during his third reign in detail.

besieged in the citadel of Cairo and he was forced to abdicate and was exiled to Karak. The conspirators replaced Berke Khān with his brother al-ʿAdil Sulāmish, but this young sultan was a puppet in the hands of the atābak, Qalāwūn (a powerful Baḥrī mamlūk amīr). His few months as sultan served as a transitional period in which Qalāwūn consolidated his strength before usurping the sultanate for himself. During this transitional period Qalāwūn had done much to strengthen the Šāliḥī amīrs, which in turn weakened the Žāhirīs.

One of the leading reasons for al-Malik al-Saʿīd Berke Khān’s deposition was the unbridled behavior of his khāṣṣakīyya. This sultan’s mamlūks behaved with impunity towards the senior Baḥriyya amīrs and even their most outrageous actions went unpunished. Berke Khān is alleged to have “spoiled” his mamlūks and granted them whatever they desired in the form of money, rewards, and positions. This sultan’s extreme favor towards his mamlūks predates al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s, which makes the argument that the latter sultan initiated a change/shift in mamlūk traditions, and the consequent dwindling of the mamlūk army’s efficiency and discipline, through his laxity towards his mamlūks difficult to support. Berke Khān’s khāṣṣakīyya had also been opposed to Shams al-Dīn al-Furqānī and Sayf al-Dīn Kunduk, who held the position of nāʿib al-ṣalṭa in Egypt consecutively, when they attempted to put a check on their excesses. Shams al-Dīn al-Furqānī was seized by the sultan’s mamlūks and dragged into the citadel where he was beaten, tortured, and then murdered. The perpetrators of this crime were not punished. As a matter of fact, the sultan acquiesced to their choice of one of the khāṣṣakīyya, Sayf al-Dīn Kunduk, to be the next nāʿib al-ṣalṭana in Egypt. However, when Kunduk attempted to stop vast amounts of money from reaching the khāṣṣakīyya, they had the sultan remove him from office and attempted to kill him, but he managed to escape. It was also the

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who played a major role in convincing Berke Khān to have several of the senior Baḥriyya, including Qalāwūn, arrested and their iqtā’ā reassigned to themselves. The sultan’s compliance with the desires of his mamlūks was probably one of the leading causes for his deposition.

Qalāwūn proved an effective sultan and managed to reign until his death in 1290 CE. He had been able to build up his power and to create a strong patrimonial household and a powerful mamlūk corps through which he was able to maintain his rule. He was succeeded by his son al-Ashraf Khalīl, who like Berke Khān, had to contend with strong mamlūk opponents upon his accession. He quickly had his father’s powerful viceroy (nā’ib al-ṣalṭana), Ṭurunṭāy, arrested and killed when he accused this amīr of plotting against him. To further secure his position, al-Ashraf had several amīrs, including some Baḥrīs, arrested and strangled in his presence. A number of amīrs then conspired to murder al-Ashraf because some of them believed that they were the next to be purged and have their wealth confiscated. Among them was the future sultan Lājīn. In a scenario eerily reminiscent of Quṭuz’s assassination, the conspirators approached al-Ashraf while he was hunting after he had become separated from his mamlūks and retinue and, having surrounded him, attacked the sultan and cut him to pieces.

After al-Ashraf Khalīl’s death, his younger brother, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, was proclaimed sultan by the mamlūks. In the next seventeen years al-Nāṣir was deposed and exiled to Karak on two occasions before returning to power in 1310 CE for his third and longest reign. During al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s periods in exile the Mamlūk sultanate was ruled by three different sultans. Each of these three rulers had rather short reigns and was deposed by the discontented and

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1191 There had been enmity between al-Ashraf and Ṭurunṭāy even before his accession to the throne. It could be that the sultan framed his enemy in order to have him arrested and killed, or Ṭurunṭāy may indeed have been plotting to remove the sultan and replace him with someone more favorable. See Baybars al-Manṣūrī, Zubda, 274; Northup, Slave to Sultan, 143; Ṭaqqūsh, Tārīkh al-Mamālīk, 202-203.
1192 Baybars al-Manṣūrī, Zubda, 290-291; Ibn al-Furāt, Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt, vol. 8, 145-146. The future sultan, Lājīn was one of the amīrs arrested and was to be strangled, but he was pardoned after some of al-Ashraf’s amīrs begged the sultan to spare his life. See Baybars al-Manṣūrī, Zubda, 290-291; Ibn al-Furāt, Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt, vol. 8, 145-146.
power-hungry amīrs. The first of these sultans was al-ʿAdīl Kitbughā, who had been one of Qalāwūn’s mamlūks and had led the faction that avenged the death of al-Ashraf. He alienated the amīrs by trying to elevate his own mamlūks to positions of power and by favoring Mongol mamlūks and wāfidiyya over the other mamlūks and the amīrs. He was deposed by the amīrs whereupon al-Manṣūr Lājīn replaced him as sultan in 1297 CE. Lājīn did not rule for very long. His cadastral survey (al-rāwk al-Ḥusāmī) and plans to redistribute newly created iqṭāʿāt to a new ḥalqa unit, drawn from the townspeople and villagers of Egypt, in order to strengthen his position may have been one of the reasons for his deposition and murder. Instead of strengthening the ḥalqa, the rawk ushered in the beginnings of its end since the mamlūk amīrs seized much of the reorganized land parcels. It must be noted here, that Lājīn was already attempting to reform the military and adopt a system that more closely resembled the Diversified Army Model by strengthening the ḥalqa to counterbalance the power of the mamlūks. When Lājīn discovered that some amīrs had plotted to depose him, he locked himself up in the citadel instead of taking action against them because he probably did not trust his troops; his army had mutinied earlier during a campaign in Syria because they had not received their pay. In any case, he was murdered by some of his khāṣṣakiyya.

This sultan’s measures to bolster his support through the creation of a new army loyal to himself and to promote his loyal followers to high positions are a good example of state building within the context of this study. This ruler attempted to create a new ruling apparatus and an armed force loyal to him through which he could enforce his will and safeguard his position. Although he failed, Lājīn tried to create a whole new army and ruling apparatus to prop up his position. Unlike sultans such as Qalāwūn,

1194 For more on the wāfidiyya see Section 4.3.
1197 The holders of iqṭāʿāt were not granted land (unlike the fiefs of feudal Europe), but rather the right to the revenues of that land.
1198 al-Ṣafadī, Nuzha, 176; Irwin, Middle East, 93-94.
who successfully built up a strong patrimonial household and military backing for themselves, Lājīn departed from the use of mamlūk s and tried to replace them with free soldiers. With regard to al-Mużaffar Baybars al-Jāshinkīr, who ruled for less than a year after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s second deposition, it should suffice to say that when al-Nāṣir moved out of Karak, Baybars al-Jāshinkīr’s army melted away and the former sultan entered Cairo unopposed.\textsuperscript{1200}

Of the first twelve sultans of the Bahri period, excluding al-Nāṣir Muḥammad whose third reign will be discussed in the next chapter, only Baybars and Qalāwūn were able to consolidate their power without being deposed or assassinated. But even these strong sultans had to contend with plots and rebellions against their authority by factions in the army and some leading amīrs. As a matter of fact, an angry amīr attacked Baybars with his sword in the camp shortly after Quṭuz’s death. The new sultan was able to fend off his assailant and even forgave him. Whether this was a display of his magnanimity or an indication of his inability to take action at this point is unclear because it is apparent that his claim to the sultanate was not unchallenged.\textsuperscript{1201}

Baybars had to deal with two serious revolts in Syria early during his reign. The first rebellion by Sanjar al-Ḥalabī, who had been appointed as viceroy (nā’ib) of Damascus by Quṭuz occurred in 1260 CE. Upon hearing of his sovereign’s murder and Baybars’ accession to the throne, al-Ḥalabī proclaimed himself the independent ruler of Damascus and took the title al-Malik al-Mujāhid, and his followers flocked to swear allegiance to him. Baybars tried to buy him off with gifts and robes of honor in order to return him to obedience, but this ploy failed. An army was sent from Egypt which defeated the rebels and captured al-Ḥalabī along with several amīrs putting an end to the uprising. What is interesting is that the sources state that the rebels were not punished or reprimanded, not even the Arab chiefs who had joined the revolt. According to Baybars al-Manṣūrī, al-Ḥalabī was imprisoned for a short period of time before he was released and returned to favor.\textsuperscript{1202} Baybars continued trying to win over the defeated rebels


\textsuperscript{1201} Thorau, Lion, 91-92.

\textsuperscript{1202} Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, al-Rawd, 94-95; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, Zubda, 59-60; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, al-Tuhfa, 45-46; Sadeque, Baybars I, 118-119; Abū al-Fidā, al-Mukhtaṣar, vol 4, 248-249, 250-251; Ibn Khalḍūn, Tārīkh Ibn Khalḍūn, 381-382; Irwin, Middle East, 45; Ṭaqqūṣh, Tārīkh al-Mamālīk, 90-91; Waterson, Knights, 88.
with forgiveness and kindness. Al-Ḥalabī was even put in command of a force that was sent to Syria to put down another revolt not too long after these events.

Aqūsh al-Burlī, another amīr, revolted in Central and Northern Syria the same year. He was supported by several mamlūk factions. Prominent among these were the mamlūks of some of the former Ayyūbid rulers such as the Nāširīyya, the ‘Azīziyya, and the Ashrafiyya, who had played an important role in repelling the Mongol incursion into Syria at the First Battle of Ḥimṣ in 1260 CE. The rebels attempted to gain the support of the remaining Ayyūbid princes in Syria. Both al-Ashraf Mūsā, the ruler of Ḥimṣ, and al-Manṣūr of Ḥamā refused to join the rebels who tried to entice them by promising to put them back on the throne and make them sultans. Having failed at gaining the support of the Ayyūbids, Aqūsh al-Burlī burned and pillaged throughout the region between Ḥamā and Aleppo and occupied the former until he was forced out by the arrival of government forces. He then marched to the Euphrates and occupied the frontier fortress of al-Bīra from which he raided both Syria and Iraq. Baybars did not waste time in sending out his armies, but these were unable to win a decisive victory against the rebels. Baybars then attempted to win al-Burlī over with forgiveness and enticed him with offers of gifts and good iqṭāʾ. Al-Burlī was eventually convinced and the sultan honored his word and made the rebel chief one of his close confidants while pardoning the mamlūks who had joined him. However, this was only a strategy to keep his enemy close to him. Baybars bided his time and had al-Burlī arrested at the first chance in 1263 CE. The sources do not state the reason for his arrest; they only say that he did something that made the sultan change his attitude towards him.

Baybars also had to contend with attempted palace coups and conspiracies closer to home which may have posed a greater danger than provincial revolts. In 1261 CE, a group of Muʿizzī amīrs, led by Bahādur al-Muʿizzī and Baktūt al-Muʿizzī (both participants in Quṭuz’s murder),

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plotted to overthrow Baybars. The sultan was warned about the coup and had the conspirators arrested.\textsuperscript{1207} He also had to deal with another conspiracy to overthrow him that same year. This time a group of Şāliḥī amīrs, his own *khushdāshiyya*, plotted against him. They were led by two senior amīrs, Balabān al-Rashīdī (one of the candidates for the sultanate after Qūṭūz’s murder) and Aybak al-Dimyāṭī. However, Baybars had intelligence on the plans of this group too, and was able to put an end to the movement before it could even begin.\textsuperscript{1208}

Al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn also had to contend with opposition to his reign, plots, and disobedience from his army. Upon hearing of Qalāwūn’s accession to the throne, the viceroy (*nā’ib*) of Damascus, Sunqur al-Ashqar, a Şāliḥī and one of Qalāwūn’s *khushdāshiyya*, challenged him and declared himself the independent ruler of al-Shām (Greater Syria), taking the title of al-Malik al-Kāmil in a move reminiscent to that of Sanjar al-Ḥalabī’s revolt against Baybars. Sunqur al-Ashqar was supported in his revolt by the Žāhiriyya, whose status was threatened by the rise of Qalāwūn. The new sultan acted quickly and decisively and the army of Egypt, led by none other than the previous rebel, Sanjar al-Ḥalabī, defeated Sunqur al-Ashqar’s army at Gaza and then again at al-Jāsūra on the outskirts of Damascus. After this second clash, the rebel army melted away. Most of the rebel amīrs returned to Damascus, under safe conduct, after the city and its citadel were surrendered to the Egyptian army, and received pardons. Sunqur al-Ashqar and some of his close associates fled to Şahyūn, which he occupied and from where he wrote to the Mongols urging them to invade Syria. Qalāwūn was only able to reach reconciliation with him before the decisive clash with the Mongols in 1281 CE.\textsuperscript{1209}

The defeat of Sunqur al-Ashqar did not free Qalāwūn of internal opposition to his rule. He had to deal with other threats to his position while at the same time preparing for the Mongol invasion. A group of Žāhiri amīrs, led by Sayf al-Dīn Kunduk, hatched a plot to murder the sultan while he was preparing for the Mongol incursion into Syria in 1281 CE and negotiating treaties with the Crusader States for their neutrality in the upcoming clash. The plotters not only

\textsuperscript{1207} Thorau, *Lion*, 94.  
\textsuperscript{1208} Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, vol. 8, 96; Amitai-Preiss, “Mamluk Officer Class,” 278.  
planned to kill the sultan, but had also sent a message to the Franks telling them not to agree to the treaty proposed to them by Qalāwūn because he would soon be dead. The sultan was informed of this plot by both his own spies and by the Franks. The conspirators were apprehended and brought before the sultan who had them executed. This harsh measure on Qalāwūn’s part, in comparison with his leniency towards the rebels who had joined Sunqur al-Ashqar, may have been a result of the dire situation in which the sultan found himself between the Mongol invasion, the Crusader States, and the traitors within his own army.\textsuperscript{1210}

The Mamlūk army and its leading amīrs directly disobeyed Qalāwūn prior to the Battle of Ḥimṣ and even threatened to remove him from the sultanate. The sultan and some of his senior amīrs disagreed on the strategy to be used against the invading Mongol army and the location of the battlefield. The sultan, possibly skeptical of his army’s ability to defeat the Mongols, opted to await their arrival on a plain near Damascus. Qalāwūn’s reasoning was that if the Mamlūks were defeated they could take refuge in the citadel of Damascus. On the other hand, most of the senior amīrs wanted to march to Ḥimṣ to meet the Mongols there. The sultan could not budge the resolve of his generals and the disagreement became an outright challenge to his authority. These amīrs said that they would march out and fight the Mongols without the sultan and if they were victorious they would return and appoint another in his place. They then left with their troops and Qalāwūn had no option but to follow them in order to maintain his position.\textsuperscript{1211}

The challenges to his authority may have been one of the factors that drove Qalāwūn to establish his Burjiyya regiment of Circassian mamlūks as a measure to strengthen his own position against the powerful amīrs and to safeguard against future plots and revolts. Having such a unit, which was both an ethnic faction and an interest group of its own, within the Mamlūk sultanate helped to create a balance of power and give the sultan more coercive authority. The Burjiyya were stationed in the towers of the citadel, so they were close at hand whenever the sultan needed them.\textsuperscript{1212} This successful sultan had to establish a whole new guard


\textsuperscript{1212} Taqqūsh, *Tārīkh al-Mamālīk*, 175; Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan*, 189, 191, 195.
and patrimonial household because those that he had inherited from his predecessors were not dependable. Qalāwūn also purchased large numbers of “Mongols and others” in addition to Turks, indicating that his mamlūk regiments were more diverse than those of his predecessor. Qalāwūn’s mithāl, which was mentioned earlier, is another indication of this trend. However, as discussed above, it is unclear whether Qalāwūn was attempting to diversify his army consciously or trying to find alternate sources of manpower to replenish the ranks of his army while creating a new mamlūk power base of support for himself. During Qalāwūn’s reign the army continued to be dominated by mamlūks, with no other groups or individuals powerful enough to pose a challenge to the Mamlūk military elite. This form of military organization under Qalāwūn maintained the dominant mamlūk element of the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model and at the same time started the ethnic diversification of within the ranks of the mamlūks to a greater extent than under previous rulers. This type of diversity (both ethnic and factional) will also be observed in the Circassian period. This form of military organization falls between the Diversified Army Model and the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model and I have mentioned it earlier as a third form of military organization which I have labeled the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model.

One more point must be made here regarding the discipline of the army. Based on the accounts of the primary sources of the riots and mutinies of the Mamlūk army during the later period of the sultanate and its depredations against the civilian populations of the realm, many scholars have come to the conclusion that the Mamlūk army became less disciplined. However, one of the characteristic problems of having an army of slave soldiers from fringe regions was the incompatibility of many of the new arrivals with the civilian population. In fact, the Baḥriyya committed depredations against the populace of Cairo in the early thirteenth century.

1213 Amitai-Preiss, “Mamluks of Mongol Origin,” 120.
1214 On Qalāwūn’s purchase of mamlūks of Mongol origin see Amitai-Preiss, “Mamluks of Mongol Origin,” 119-137.
1215 This problem had been present even during the reign of al-Mu‘tasim who had to establish a new city for his army and to segregate the Turks in Sāmarrā because of the conflicts that arose between his Turkic soldiers, other military units, and the local population of Baghdad. See al-Ṭabarî, History of al-Ṭabarî, vol. 33, 26-28; Ayalon, “Military Reforms,” 26-29.
They looted the markets taking money and property for themselves, entered the bathhouses and abducted women and children by force. They caused a lot of damage and harm and nobody was able to stop them. The Bahri were a very well-trained and disciplined unit. Yet in this episode they behaved in a manner similar to the seemingly undisciplined and untrained Julban of the sultans of the Circassian period. The similarity between the two groups in these different time periods is that they were not engaged in all-out war with anyone; thus the standing army of Mamluks directed its energy in both cases upon the civilian population.

The Mamluk soldiers were able to focus their energies and aggression against external foes during the decades of warfare with the Crusader States and the Mongols. As it happens, much of this occurred during the reigns of Baybars and Qalawun, the period in which the Mamluk army is considered by most historians to have been at its peak with regard to training, obedience, and discipline. However, I contend that Baybars’ and Qalawun’s armies were no more or less disciplined than the Bahri described above or the Mamluks of the Circassian period; they merely had an outlet for their energies and aggressions in the form of external foes.

The sources describe the taking of Crusader cities and strongholds by the Mamluks. Most of these victories were accompanied with massacres, pillaging, looting, and the taking of female and child prisoners. The attack on Lesser Armenia (Cilician Armenia) in 1275 CE provides an example of the behavior of the Mamluk army during a campaign. Baybars’ forces defeated the Armenian army, captured the capital, Sis, and put the city to the torch. After this victory his

\footnote{Al-Maqrizi, *al-Saluk*, vol. 1, part 2, 389-390. Although al-Maqrizi’s work has been criticized by scholars such as Bauden and Amitai-Preiss, this account cannot be discounted or ignored because it falls into the pattern of behavior exhibited by slave soldiers. As mentioned in the previous note, al-Mu’tasim’s Turks did not blend well with the populace of Baghdad and often came to blows with them. See al-Tabari, *History of al-Tabari*, vol. 33, 26-28; Ayalon, “Military Reforms,” 26-29. Similarly, the Fatimids’ black and Turkic regiments rioted often and caused a great deal of damage in Cairo and subjected its populace to their depredations. See De Lacy O’Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Kaliphate* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1923), 126-127, 283-184, 206; Fatima Mernissi, *The Forgotten Queens of Islam*, trans. Mary Jo Lakeland (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2006), 166-168, 175. Likewise, the Ottomans’ janissaries revolted and rioted on several occasions acting in a manner similar to the mamluks and the Fathimids’ slave soldiers. For example, in 1446 CE the janissaries rebelled against prince Mehmed after Murad II had abdicated in favor of his son and pillaged and terrorized Edirne until the old sultan came out of retirement. They also rioted and pillaged parts of the capital in 1481 CE after the death of Mehmed II. In 1572 CE, 1584 CE, 1589 CE, 1593 CE, and 1606 CE the janissaries rioted after the debasement of the silver akche which devalued the coins in which they were paid. See Caroline Finkel, *Osman’s Dream: The Story of the Ottoman Empire 1300-1923* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 46-101-102; Colin Imber, *The Ottoman Empire: 1300-1650 The Structure of Power* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 27, 116, 159, 211, 258. For more on the Bahriyya’s riotous behavior during times of peace also see Irwin, *Middle East*, 27-28.}
troops spread out across the land burning, looting, and pillaging. This campaign resulted in vast amounts of booty in the form of goods, livestock, and slaves for the Mamlûks, which were divided up among the army upon the return of all the divisions from their raiding activities. In another episode, upon returning from raiding Lesser Armenia, Baybars commanded the army to pillage Qârâ, a Christian village between Ḥimṣ and Damascus. This order was given because the people of Qârâ were said to have robbed and kidnapped Muslims and sold them into slavery. The leaders of the town were massacred, their wealth was confiscated, and their young boys were taken to Egypt and raised as mamlûks. Thus, through exercises such as the campaign against Lesser Armenia and the pillaging of Qârâ, rulers such as Baybars were able to satisfy the warlike aggression and pillaging mentality of the mamlûks, and in effect spared themselves the trouble that such men could cause at home. One could say that, in a way, the sultans of the early period were lucky because they were at war and through martial activities they were able to keep their soldiers busy, direct their aggression outward, and keep them satisfied while boosting their own economy through despoiling their defeated enemies.

This section clearly shows that the Mamlûk army of the early period of the sultanate was not as obedient and disciplined as it may seem to have been at first glance. The mamlûk amîrs constantly plotted against the sultans, and most of the rulers of this period were either deposed and exiled or murdered by their followers. Even the most successful sultans of the Bahrî period had to contend with rebellions and plots against their rule and to remain constantly vigilant. The rank and file mamlûks were also prone to rioting and committing atrocities against the civilian population, very much like the mamlûks during the Circassian period. However, the early sultans who ruled successfully were able to deflect the aggression and warlike behavior of their followers against their external foes of whom there was no shortage in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Thus, during this period it was the defeated peoples of the Crusader States and Lesser Armenia who suffered from the depredations of the mamlûks and this took the
pressure off the people of the sultanate. This situation changed when the external enemies of the Mamlūks disappeared by the mid-fourteenth century.

5.3 Non-Mamlūks in the Early Mamlūk Army (The Ḧalqa)

As mentioned earlier, the regular Mamlūk army was dominated by mamlūks. However, the ḥalqa, an important unit of the military of the early sultanate, was composed of freeborn cavalrymen. Baybars created a new ḥalqa when he became the sultan, but it held a position of secondary importance to the mamlūk regiments. Ayalon states that the ḥalqa’s “free soldiers who were not greatly inferior to the mamlūks” in the early period. This statement shows that even though the ḥalqa was composed of well-trained and reliable men, it was still considered somewhat inferior to the mamlūk regiments. Humphreys describes it “as a second class of royal troops distinguished from the mamālīk šulṭāniyya chiefly by recruitment and training.” Levanoni agrees with Humphreys regarding the secondary status of the ḥalqa in the army and states that “its status in the Mamluk army was secondary, since the sultan naturally fostered the Royal Mamluks,” and that although it “was under the sultan’s direct control, its troopers did not share a common living quarters financed by the sultan, as was the case with his recruits. The ḥalqa troopers also had to provide their own equipment, again unlike the sultan’s mamlūks.” Comparing the members of the ḥalqa to the mamlūks Levanoni also states that they “lacked their military vigor and solidarity (khushdāshīyah).” Under Baybars this unit may have numbered up to 24,000 soldiers in Egypt. In addition to the Egyptian ḥalqa, there were similar units in Syria that formed a portion of the armies of the Syrian provinces such as the ḥalqa of Aleppo and the ḥalqa of Damascus, but these were smaller in size than their Egyptian counterpart.

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1219 Ayalon and Humphreys have discussed the nature and transformation of the ḥalqa during the Ayyūbid and early Mamlūk periods. See Ayalon, “From Ayyūbids”; Ayalon, “Studies II”; Humphreys, “Emergence”; Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion).


1221 Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 163.

1222 Levanoni, Turning Point, 8.


1225 Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 160; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 198.
The ḥalqa was a powerful and much needed unit in the early period of the Mamlūk sultanate. Initially it served as an effective way to group together all the disparate freeborn and mamlūk units and regiments that the Mamlūks inherited from the Ayyūbids in Egypt and Syria. These well-trained and experienced soldiers were an asset to the Mamlūk army at a time when it needed such troops to supplement the Royal Mamlūks and the amīrs’ mamlūk units and regiments to fight the Mongols and the Crusaders. In addition to utilizing them, it was also important to “institutionalize these disorganized military groups, which could have otherwise turned into anarchist elements in the realm.”

The ḥalqa was composed of several different groups. Prominent among them very early on were some Syrian troops such as the freeborn Kurdish Shahrazūriyya and the Syrian Ayyūbid ʿAzīziyya and Nāṣiriyya mamlūk regiments. The awlād al-nās (the sons of mamlūks) formed another important element of the halqa. Having been born and raised within the Islamic world, they did not qualify to join the mamlūk regiments and were relegated to the ḥalqa if they chose to pursue a military career. These sons of mamlūks were provided for by the amīrs or the sultan until they came of age and were enlisted in the ḥalqa and received iqtāʾāt to support themselves. Having the sons of mamlūks and sultans serving in the halqa also linked this unit more closely to the sultan. Another important group that swelled the ranks of the halqa was the wāfidiyya (refugees) who came to Egypt from the Ilkhanate and Anatolia seeking asylum. These warriors entered the Mamlūk sultanate in several waves that ranged from large groups such as the 10,000-18,000 Oirats who defected to the Mamlūks during the reign of al-ʿAdil Kitbughā to groups numbering as few as two hundred horsemen (these smaller groups trickled in during the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad); other significant groups entered the sultanate earlier.

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1226 The Syrian regiments were partially absorbed into the Egyptian ḥalqa and the remainder formed the Syrian ḥalqa. Ayalon, Studies II,” 450-451; Levanoni, “Ḥalqah,” 38.
1227 Levanoni, “Ḥalqah,” 38.
1230 Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 198-199.
during the reigns of Baybars and Qalāwūn. Upon their arrival in Egypt and Syria, most of these Turkic and Mongol warriors were integrated into the halqa. One thing that most of the soldiers who formed the halqa in the early period had in common was the fact that they were for the most part freeborn and fully trained soldiers when they were recruited.

Even though the halqa was of lower status compared to the mamlūk regiments, it was still a well-trained and efficient fighting force during the early period of the sultanate. The role that the halqa played at the Battle of Ḥimṣ in 1281 CE provides an example of its importance. At this decisive encounter the Mamlūk army was weaker than in Baybars’ days because Qalāwūn’s own mamlūks were still young and untried and the ranks of the veteran Zāhirīyya had been purged by the sultan. The soldiers of the halqa were present in the most important sections of the army, bolstering the right and left wings as it deployed for the battle. An additional 4,000 halqa troopers were stationed in the center with the sultan and 800 of his Royal Mamlūks. It is quite clear that the halqa played an important part in winning this battle against the Mongols since not only were they present in all of the major battle formations, but they were also deemed skilled and disciplined enough to supplement the mamlūk regiments.

Despite the halqa’s strength during the early Mamlūk sultanate, it was still a force of secondary importance compared to the mamlūk units and could not be used by the sultans as a counterbalance against the mamlūk regiments. Furthermore, the halqa’s decline began rather quickly and it continued to lose prominence and military efficiency throughout the Mamlūk period. Levanoni states that this occurred because the halqa lacked the solidarity and military vigor of the mamlūks. For example, as mentioned above, they were not quartered together in barracks and were only mustered for campaigns. This lack of solidarity and vigor could also

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1233 Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 163; Levanoni, “Ḥalqah,” 44.

1234 Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 218.

1235 Baybars al-Manṣūrī, Zubda, 196-197; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 110; Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 191-192.

1236 Levanoni, “Ḥalqah,” 38.
explain why this unit posed no threat to the hegemony of the Mamlūks and why there was no vigorous opposition to Baybars on the part of the mamlūks when he created the *halqa*. This is contrary to the opposition on the part of the Turkic guard of the Abbāsid caliph, al-Mutawakkil, when he attempted to enlist free troops to create a counter balance to their power and influence and to bring them under control. Both al-ʿAdīl Kitbughā and al-Manṣūr Lājīn (mentioned above) attempted to base their power on the *halqa* in order to bring the mamlūks under control, but both of these attempts failed miserably. This lack of solidarity is also probably the reason why the members of the *halqa* were unable or unwilling to present a strong united front to oppose the Ḥusāmī and Nāṣirī *rawks* (cadastral surveys) that resulted in them losing a large proportion of their income. The result of these *rawks* was that several of the *halqa*’s members became so destitute that they could no longer maintain their arms and mounts or function efficiently as soldiers.

As a matter of fact, after the fifteenth century, various sections of the *halqa* eventually fell under the patronage and control of powerful amīrs.

At first glance, the Mamlūk army does seem to adhere to the Diversified Army Model because it was composed of both mamlūk regiments and the freeborn *halqa*. Nakamachi Nobutaka has fallen into this trap and goes even further by claiming that the *halqa*, the Royal Mamlūks, and the *Khāṣṣakiyya* all “constituted one royal troop, and there was no distinction among the terms.” This statement cannot be substantiated as the sources mention both the mamlūks and the *halqa* as distinctly separate units. Upon closer examination it becomes clear that the *halqa* was always a unit of secondary status and importance that did not have the power or solidarity to stand up to the mamlūks and could not be used by the ruler to bring them more firmly under his control. This conscious relegation of free-born troops to a secondary unit, inferior to the mamlūk regiments, reinforces the idea that al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s break with the

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1242 Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 164.
Diversified Army Model was continued by his mamlük successors in the early period of the sultanate. But as the danger from external threats began to subside, some of the sultans who preceded al-Nāṣir Muḥammad such as al-Manṣūr Lāţīn and al-ʾĀdil Kitbugha, attempted to restore the type of balance accorded by the Diversified Army Model to the army in an attempt to build up new patrimonial households and new power bases using the ḡalqa. Their attempts to strengthen the ḡalqa were fueled by their desire to bring the mamlük amīrs and soldiery more firmly under their control and to avoid being deposed, but these pre-Nāṣirean attempts were either too miniscule to have an effect or failed.

5.4 Auxiliaries in the Early Mamlük Army

In addition to the regular army, the Mamlük sultanate could also call upon several groups to supply auxiliary forces during campaigns. The most important and prominent of these groups in the early period of the sultanate were the Turkmen, the Arab tribes of Syria and Egypt, and the Kurds. During major campaigns when there was a need for extra manpower, elements of these peoples with strong military traditions were mobilized to assist the regular forces. Some of these irregular forces continued to carry out certain functions in the service of the mamlük sultans even during times of peace.1243

5.41 The Turkmen

According to Ayalon, the most important auxiliaries of the Mamlük armies were the Turkmen. The sultans went to great lengths to treat them well. For instance, the taxes they paid were reduced or sometimes Turkmen tribes were fully exempted from tax payment. Ayalon states that one of the reasons for this preferential treatment and for their importance is that they were from the same Turkic ethnic background as the ruling military elite of the Mamlük sultanate (during the early period). Ayalon also mentions that there may have been a real or imagined feeling of kinship between the two groups based on this supposed close ethnic relationship.1244 Another reason for their preferential treatment was the fact that they were settled in large numbers in Northern Syria and along the coast. This meant that they were on the fringes

1244 Ayalon, “Auxiliary Forces,” 13, 16.
of the realm and it was difficult for the central government and the regular army, centered in Cairo, to exert direct control over them if they decided to become disobedient or to rebel. Thus, due to their geographical position, large numbers, and military qualities, they were treated preferentially by the government and in a sense were semi-independent. The precarious control exercised by the Mamlûk sultans over the Turkmen became a problem in the later periods; it resulted in a series of bloody wars against the regional rebel, Shâh Suwâr, which eventually led to the direct conflict with the Ottoman Empire that, in turn, brought about the end of the Mamlûk sultanate (to be discussed in detail in Chapter 6).

Amitai-Preiss paints a different picture of the Turkmen in his book. He states that in comparison to the Arab tribes in Syria, they only played a secondary role in the war against the Mongols, the Mamlûks’ primary and most dangerous foe. In his view, the reason that the Mamlûks did not mobilize the Turkmen against the Mongols is probably due to the fact that the Mongol armies of the Ilkhanate and in Anatolia also contained large numbers of Turkmen, and thus they could probably not be depended upon in such circumstances. Consequently, the early mamlûk sultans diverted the Turkmen away from the frontier and used their military capabilities against the Crusader States instead. Nevertheless, there are some instances when the Turkmen were mobilized to fight the Mongols. They formed a part of the army that sultan Quṭuz led against the Mongols at the Battle of ‘Ayn Jâlût. They are also mentioned as forming a part of the armies of al-Mustanṣir in his bid to reestablish the ‘Abbāsid caliphate in Baghdad in 1261 CE. However, at the first sign of the Mongols they fled and left al-Mustanṣir to fight them with a much reduced force. The Turkmen also joined Baybars during his Anatolian campaign of 1277 CE towards the end of his reign. During this campaign some of them attached

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1247 Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 69-70.
1248 Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 70-71.
1249 Ibn al-Dawâdârî, Kanz, vol. 8, 48; Thorau, Lion, 75; Levanoni, Turning Point, 8; Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 36.
1250 This caliph was not acting independently. Baybars and the other high ranking Mamlûk amîrs had urged him to carry out this mission. For a detailed discussion of Baybars’ restoration of the ‘Abbâsid caliphate in Cairo, al-Mustanṣir’s appointment as caliph, and this caliph’s failed mission to retake Baghdad see Banister, Abbasid Caliphate, 43-59.
1251 Ibn al-Dawâdârî, Kanz, vol. 8, 82-83; Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 58-62.
themselves to his forces, while others raised the banners of revolt against the Mongols in Anatolia. After this campaign as many as 50,000 Turkmen (20,000 horseman and 30,000 infantrymen) emigrated to the Mamlūk sultanate with Baybars’ army. Lastly, Turkmen auxiliaries were placed in the left wing of the Mamlūk army, the part of the army that was broken by the Mongol charge, at the Battle of Ḥimṣ.

The Turkmen appear more prominently in the accounts of the campaigns in Syria. Large numbers of Turkmen were settled in Syria, especially in the northern regions around Aleppo, particularly during the reign of Baybars. Many other Turkmen were settled along the coast between Gaza and Lesser Armenia as guards. Their primary function as military settlers was to protect the coastal area from Crusader attacks. There are several accounts of Turkmen operating in this region. For example, in 1275 CE the army of Aleppo and the Turkmen were ordered to attack al-Quṣayr, which they captured. In another instance, the Turkmen were involved in operations against the Armenians in 1281 CE. Lastly, it was the Turkmen who launched an extensive operation against a rebel or a bandit chief in 1284 who had grown very strong in the mountainous regions of Tripoli. They captured him and brought him to the sultan in chains.

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1252 Ibn al-Furāt, Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt, vol. 7, 80; Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 176.
1255 Ibn al-Dawādārī, Kanz, vol. 8, 120, 204; Ibn al-Furāt, Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt, vol. 7, 30; Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 69, 135, 228.
1256 They actually formed a part of the army of Gaza.
1257 Ayalon, “Auxiliary Forces,” 15; Thorau, Lion, 188; Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 70.
1258 Ibn al-Furāt, Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt, vol. 7, 34
1259 Ibid.
1260 His name is unclear in Ibn al-Furāt’s chronicle, possibly “Sirk” or “Sark”; see Ibn al-Furāt, Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt, vol. 7, 277.
5.42 The Arab Tribes

The Arab Bedouin tribes (especially those inhabiting Syria) were an important auxiliary force for the Mamlūks. Ayalon gives the Arab tribes a tertiary role as auxiliaries after the Turkmen and the Kurds. However, Amitai-Preiss states that in reality they played a more prominent role than any other auxiliary force in the wars against the Mongols. He states that the Arab tribes of Syria were important because they controlled the frontier regions on the Euphrates between the Mamlūk sultanate and the Ilkhanids. Thus, they were both militarily capable and geographically positioned to be one of the most important auxiliary forces that could be called upon to support the regular army in the war effort against the Mongols.

The Arabs contributed to the Mamlūk war effort by maintaining their communication network in the region, by patrolling the Euphrates frontier and raiding across the river into Mongol territories, by acting as scouts and intelligence gatherers for the sultans, and by forming a part of the Mamlūk army during military campaigns. It must be noted here that it was mainly the Arab tribes of Syria who were involved in the fight against the Ilkhanids and not those of Lower and Upper Egypt because it was more practical to mobilize the Arabs of Syria due to their geographical proximity to the war front. However, in one instance when a report reached Baybars that a major Mongol expedition had set out to attack Syria in 1273 CE, even the Arabs of Lower and Upper Egypt were mobilized along with the whole army. In addition to supporting the war effort against the Ilkhanids, the Arab tribes of both Egypt and Syria were also responsible for keeping the roads safe throughout the sultanate and for capturing and punishing

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1263 Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 64, 70.
1264 Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 64, 203, 205.
bandits and highwaymen. They were also in charge of supplying horses for the Royal Post.\textsuperscript{1267} Baybars also utilized some tribes in Iraq as spies.\textsuperscript{1268}

Arab auxiliaries played an active role in several military campaigns alongside the regular Mamlūk army. They were present at the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt (although the extent of their role in this battle is unclear).\textsuperscript{1269} They played an important role at the First Battle of Ḥimṣ in 1260 CE, when they appeared at the rear of the Mongol army at a decisive moment and insured a victory for the armies of Ḥamā and Aleppo.\textsuperscript{1270} The Arabs were also involved in border skirmishes and raids along the frontier. For instance, they were dispatched, along with a force of mamlūks, as the vanguard of the Royal army to al-Bīra to fight a Mongol force that was gathering on the east side of the Euphrates in 1272 CE.\textsuperscript{1271} A detachment of Arab tribesmen was sent to fight the vanguard of an invading Mongol army at al-Anbār in 1274 CE and emerged victorious after half a day of heavy fighting. This victory not only broke the Mongol advance units, but also discouraged the full invasion and resulted in a complete Mongol withdrawal.\textsuperscript{1272} Arab tribesmen also formed a part of the vanguard of the force that was sent to relieve al-Bīra when the Mongols besieged it again in 1275 CE.\textsuperscript{1273} The Arabs of Egypt were also mobilized for campaigns against the Nubians to the south. Ibn al-Furāt mentions at least two such campaigns in 1276 CE and 1289 CE in which the tribesmen formed a considerable part of the expeditionary forces. For instance, in the 1289 CE campaign 40,000 tribesmen were mobilized.\textsuperscript{1274}

The best example of the Arab tribes as important auxiliary units of the Mamlūk army was their crucial contribution at the Battle of Ḥimṣ in 1281 CE. At this battle they formed a part of

\textsuperscript{1268} Al-Maqrīzī, \textit{al-Sulūk}, vol. 1, part 2, 476.
\textsuperscript{1270} Al-Maqrīzī, \textit{al-Sulūk}, vol. 1, part 2, 442; Amitai-Preiss, \textit{Mongols and Mamluks}, 51; Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 89-90.
\textsuperscript{1271} Amitai-Preiss, \textit{Mongols and Mamluks}, 130; Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 141.
\textsuperscript{1272} Ibn al-Furāt, \textit{Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt}, vol. 7, 6.
\textsuperscript{1273} Ibn al-Furāt, \textit{Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt}, vol. 7, 29.
\textsuperscript{1274} Ibn al-Furāt, \textit{Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt}, vol. 7, 46; Ibn al-Furāt, \textit{Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt}, vol. 8, 83. Baybars al-Manṣūrī also mentions the 1276 CE campaign and states that the Arabs composed a part of the army that was sent to attack the Nubians. See Baybars al-Manṣūrī, \textit{Zubda}, 148.
the right wing of the army. They not only stood firm in their assigned positions (whereas the left wing and the Turkmen broke and withdrew from the battle), but also dealt the killing blow to the Mongol left wing performing an enveloping maneuver and striking the enemy in the rear. This maneuver by the Arab tribesmen helped to ensure a Mamlūk victory and completed the Mongol rout.

The Arab tribes of Syria were so important that the post of amīr al-ʿarab, first introduced in the Ayyūbid period by Ṣalāh al-Dīn’s brother and successor al-ʿAdīl, was maintained by the Mamlūks. The holder of this position commanded the tribes of Syria and was appointed by and answered to the central government (i.e., the sultan). However, the Ayyūbids of Syria, and not the chief sultan of Egypt, appointed these amīrs. This institution became more centralized under the Mamlūks and the holder of the post of amīr al-ʿarab became more closely linked to the central government and even received iqṭāʿ. ʿĪsā b. Muhannā was made the amīr al-ʿarab by Qūṭūz in 1260 CE after the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt. He was the chieftain of the Āl Faḍl, the most powerful tribe of Syria. He and his sons monopolized this position for most of the early Mamlūk period. Since this is not the place for an in-depth examination of this post and its development, suffice it to say that the Mamlūk authorities realized the importance of the Arab tribes of Syria and adopted and further developed this post to bring them under central control and utilize them during times of need.

Both al-ʿUmarī and al-Qalqashandī have commented on the role of amīr al-ʿarab and by extension on the importance of the Arab tribes of Syria for the Mamlūk war effort against the

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1279 Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 65.
1280 Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 65; Hiyari states that it was Baybars who appointed him see Hiyari, “Origins,” 516.
Mongols. Al-ʻUmarī’s, *al-Taʻrif bi al-Muṣṭalah al-Sharīf* mentions that the Arabs are a people whom one cannot afford to disrespect or to belittle.\(^{1282}\) This author adds that of all the Arabs those of *al-Shām* (Greater Syria) are the loftiest in rank and the most distinguished.\(^{1283}\) He then states that at the head of these tribes is the Āl Faḍl. According to al-ʻUmarī, this clan was a small one, but they were of the noblest and proudest of the Arabs. Through their high rank and position they united multitudes of tribes whom they either used or permanently absorbed into their tribal following. Al-ʻUmarī mentions that Āl Faḍl were very important because they had immense wealth and manpower at their disposal and also because they controlled the areas that bordered the Ilkhanate. Thus, they were granted higher honors and given more *iqṭāʿāt* than others.\(^{1284}\) In another section of his book, al-ʻUmarī gives a wasiyya\(^{1285}\) for the holder of the office of *amīr al-ʿarab*. It exhorts him to be ever vigilant and watchful over the enemy and his movements on the frontiers of the realm and to report on all the information that could be gathered; to remove everything from his thoughts, except for those actions that could benefit Islam; and he is advised that the healing of the heart and the soul comes with *jihād*. This amīr is also instructed to prevent the entry of anyone into the lands of Islam, even if it were a ghost in his dreams. He is commanded to stand firm in any encounter and to strike his tents on the roads in every direction.\(^{1286}\) Al-ʻUmarī’s wasiyya confirms the importance of the Arab tribes and their chief and that their duties included guarding the roads and borders; reconnoitering the enemy’s positions and movements and reporting back to the authorities; fighting the enemies of the realm; and uniting the Arab tribes and bringing them, through himself, under central control.

Al-Qalqashandī’s *Subḥ al-Aʿshā* includes two documents of investiture for the post of *amīr al-ʿarab* for the two sons of ʻĪsā b. Muhannā, Faḍl b. ʻĪsā and Muhannā b. ʻĪsā. The duties of *amīr al-ʿarab* are outlined in the last sections of both documents, that of Muhannā b. ʻĪsā being a little more detailed. The last section of the first document states that the newly appointed *amīr al-ʿarab* is to watch over the enemies (Mongols) at all times and to observe the movements

\(^{1282}\) Al-ʻUmarī, *al-Taʻrif*, 100.


\(^{1284}\) Al-ʻUmarī, *al-Taʻrif*, 104.


\(^{1286}\) Al-ʻUmarī, *al-Taʻrif*, 145-146.
of their armies. His troops should always be ready and watchful at the doorstep of the foes of the Mamlûks so that they think that they are being watched from all sides. The amīr and his forces should always be prepared to respond to even the smallest enemy incursion. He should inspire his followers to carry out the jihād constantly.\textsuperscript{1287} Similarly, the last part of the second document also outlines the roles and the duties of the new amīr al-ʿarab. The document states that he was expected to carry out jihād and to be the one who gathered the forces and supplies necessary for such undertakings. He was also expected to be watchful of the enemy and to spy on them and know everything about their movements and reveal any traps or attacks being prepared by them. Among the other duties of the amīr al-ʿarab was to defend the frontier or frontier marches (thughūr) and attack the enemies even before they approached them.\textsuperscript{1288} Therefore, these documents and the evidence presented above from the chronicles and secondary sources show that the Arabs were in fact an important auxiliary force in the early periods of the Mamlûk sultanate.

5.43 The Kurds

The Kurds had been prominent in the armies of the Ayyūbids, but even then there was a marked preference for Turkic mamlûk soldiers, especially during the reign of al-Ṣâliḥ Ayyūb. With the rise of the Mamlûk sultanate the status of the Kurds was further diminished.\textsuperscript{1289} The Kurds did not form a significant force in the Mamlûk army. In the early periods they were able to survive as a military group because they had been strengthened by the influx of the Shahrazūriyya refugees (numbering around 3,000 horsemen).\textsuperscript{1290} Most of these Kurds were relegated to the auxiliary forces of the sultanate and lost their status in the regular army. Even in the Ayyūbid period, the Kurds were enrolled in the armies of Syria and Egypt as individuals and therefore “coherent [Kurdish] tribal or regional units are not found.”\textsuperscript{1291} Nevertheless, some

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\textsuperscript{1287} Al-Qalqashandî, \textit{Ṣubḥ}, vol. 12, 20.
\textsuperscript{1288} In the text it says that the enemies should be attacked even before they set eyes upon the frontier marches. al-Qalqashandî, \textit{Ṣubḥ}, vol. 12, 123.
\textsuperscript{1289} Ayalon, “Auxiliary Forces,” 21; Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 150; Irwin, \textit{Middle East}, 11-12. Thorau states that al-ʿAdīl was deposed by Turkic mamlûks (this allowed al-Ṣâliḥ to take the throne) and the Kurdish contingents who were loyal to him were unable to counter the Turks and fled. See Thorau, \textit{Lion}, 16.
\textsuperscript{1291} Humphreys, “Emergence (Conclusion),” 149.
\end{flushright}
Kurdish amīrs were able to maintain high positions in the Mamlūk military during the reign of Baybars.\footnote{For information on some of these amīrs see Amitai-Preiss, “Mamluk Officer Class,” 283-284, 295-299.}

The Kurds are mentioned in the sources, but are not as prominent as the Turkmen or the Arabs. They were present at the Battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt, but probably played a role secondary to the mamlūks and the other units that formed Qutuz’s army.\footnote{Shāfi’ b. ‘Alī, \textit{al-Faḍl}, 80; Ibn al-Dawādārī, \textit{Kanz}, vol. 8, 48; Thorau, \textit{Lion}, 75; Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 75.} Most of the sources do not mention the Kurds as being present at the Battle of Ḥimṣ in 1281 CE. However, al-Maqrīzī mentions that there were some Kurdish officers in Qalāwūn’s army, but does not mention where they were positioned during the battle.\footnote{See footnote 49 in, Amitai-Preiss, \textit{Mongols and Mamluks}, 192.} Ayalon states that the Kurds were among the unemployed soldiers who were called up to service during an emergency when it was feared that the Ilkhan Ghazān was going to invade the sultanate. He also mentions that despite being present in large numbers in the Aleppo region, their military impact was not felt even there.\footnote{Ayalon, “Auxiliary Forces,” 22.} Thus, it is quite certain that the Kurds became militarily insignificant shortly after the rise of the Mamlūk sultanate.

The Kurds did attempt to reassert their position in the army and the sultanate in the latter half of the thirteenth century, but they failed. In 1270 CE the Shahrazūriyya plotted to murder Baybars and either to place one of their own number or the Ayyūbid al-Mughīth (son of al-‘Azīz) on the throne. This plot was foiled and Bahā’ al-Dīn Ya’qūb, the leader of the Kurds, and the other ringleaders of the conspiracy were arrested.\footnote{Ibn al-Furāt, \textit{Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt}, vol. 8, 180; Ayalon, “Auxiliary Forces,” 22.} The Kurds found their next big opportunity to rise to prominence during the reign of Kitbughā who attempted to shift the monopoly of power away from the Mamlūk amīrs by basing his power on the \textit{halqa}, the Mongol \textit{wāfidiyya}, and the Shahrazūriyya. However, as mentioned earlier, this scheme failed, Kitbughā was deposed, and the Kurds along with the other groups that had supported him continued to exist as soldiers of secondary quality, power, and influence in the sultanate.\footnote{Ibn al-Dawādārī, \textit{Kanz}, vol. 8, 151; Thorau, \textit{Lion}, 231.}
5.44 Not a Counter-balance

In the previous sections I have discussed the irregular troops that formed the auxiliary forces of the sultanate. Some of these forces were quite large and militarily effective. They fulfilled important roles during both times of peace and war. At first glance, the diversity of these auxiliary troops indicates that the Mamlūk army of the early sultanate was one that resembled the Diversified Army Model. However, nothing could be farther from the truth. Despite the diversity found among these auxiliary forces, it must be remembered that these troops were part-time soldiers who were called up for service during times of need. The groups that formed these auxiliary units inhabited areas on the fringes of the sultanate such as Northern Syria, the Syrian Desert, the Euphrates frontier, the coastal regions of the Levant, and Upper Egypt. Therefore, they were not active players at the center of the sultanate and could not influence the politics and power struggles at the center.

During the early periods of the sultanate these groups either rebelled or fled, or threatened to flee, to the enemies of the Mamlūks if they felt that they had been wronged or wanted their demands to be met. For example a group of Turkmen who had inhabited the Golan region fled to Anatolia when they incurred the displeasure of Baybars. In 1271 CE, ‘Īsā b. Muhannā threatened to defect to the Mongols when he and some of the other Arab chieftains had been deprived of some of their lands. Upon hearing of this threat, Baybars went to Syria and met with these chieftains, pardoned them, and returned their lands to them. In a similar scenario in 1280 CE, Qalāwūn was able to bring ‘Īsā b. Muhannā back to obedience after he had joined Ṣunqur al-Ashqar’s revolt and threatened to defect to the Mongols by pardoning him and assuring him that he would maintain the position and title of amīr al-‘arab. These Mamlūk sultans did their utmost to maintain the support and obedience of the Arab tribes of Syria. However, the detrimental effects of their defection were strictly limited to their locales and did not affect the internal politics and power structure at the center of the sultanate.

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1298 Baybars al-Manṣūri, Zubda, 69; Ibn al-Furāt, Ayyubids, Mamlukes and Crusaders, 49.
1300 Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 185; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 95, 99.
The Arab tribes of Egypt also revolted against Mamlûk authority. The tribes of Upper Egypt were less important to the Mamlûks militarily than the Syrian tribes and were consequently dealt with very harshly. The Arabs of Upper Egypt rose in rebellion shortly after the victory at Manṣūra in 1250 CE. Baybars, at this point, still a Bahri amîr, was sent to quell the uprising. The rebel forces were shattered by the Mamlûks. Similar defeats were also inflicted on the tribes of Lower Egypt shortly after this victory. Sultan Aybak destroyed the leadership of the Arab tribes of Egypt when he invited them to a meeting and then had all of the chieftains executed. This treacherous act and the defeats suffered at the hands of the Mamlûk army ensured that there were no significant uprisings in Egypt until the Mamlûks were defeated by Ghazān at the Battle of Wādī al-Khazindār in 1299 CE.

In the later parts of the Kipchak period of the sultanate and during the Circassian period Arab revolts became a more common occurrence and the central authorities’ suppression of these revolts became even harsher. Captive rebels were impaled on stakes, flayed alive, roasted alive, buried alive, their severed heads were hung on the gates of Cairo, their bodies and skins were displayed in the domains of their tribes, and their women and children were sold into slavery. Furthermore, in 1281 CE the sultan ordered that hostages were to be taken from among the tribes of Upper Egypt to ensure their good behavior, and he also put out an order that their weapons were to be confiscated and that any one of them found bearing sword or spear was to be punished. The brutal quelling of these revolts and the confiscation of arms from certain tribes shows that the relationship between groups such as the Arab tribes and the Mamlûks was far from equal and that the tribes that furnished the auxiliary forces of the sultanate did not in any way constitute a counter-balance to the mamlûks in the army.

The Turkmen became a great menace to the Mamlûk sultanate in Northern Syria during the Circassian period. The wars against the Turkmen Dhū al-Qâdrîd principality will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6. It should suffice to say here that the Turkmen resorted to guerilla tactics when facing the Mamlûk army during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and

1302 Ayalon, “Auxiliary Forces,” 28; Waterson, Knights, 214.
fled to the mountains whenever a major expedition was sent to Northern Syria, only to return when the Mamlūk forces had departed. Ayalon’s remarks best exemplify the weakness of the Turkmen vis-à-vis the Mamlūks when he says: “they [the Turkmen] could never equal, let alone replace, the Mamluks even in the best of circumstances…As far as vying with the Mamluk aristocracy or influencing it are concerned, their geographical position was a source of weakness.”

5.5 The Performance of the Early Mamlūk Army

The purpose of this study is to show that the performance and effectiveness of the Mamlūk army did not worsen in the later period of the sultanate. To successfully demonstrate this point the performance of the military of the early sultanate must be examined in order to successfully draw a comparison between the early and late Mamlūk armies. The early Mamlūk army was a very effective fighting force and performed consistently well against all of the enemies that it confronted. The two primary threats it faced were the Crusader States and the Mongols. The Mamlūks took the offensive against the Franks and by 1291 CE had completely ousted them from the Levant. They established a defensive policy (for the most part) against the Mongols and maintained the military frontier along the Euphrates as a front line of defense and also used Syria as a buffer against several Mongol invasions between 1260 CE and 1312 CE. Thus, most of the decisive encounters between the Mamlūks and the Mongols took place in Syria and most of these clashes ended with a Mamlūk victory. It is as a result of this very real danger faced by the early Mamlūk sultanate that the break with the Diversified Army Model, initiated by al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, was continued during the early Mamlūk sultanate due to the need for a well-trained elite army in order to survive.

5.51 The Crusader States

The Mamlūks put an end to the Crusader States, which had been established in the early twelfth century CE, within the first few decades of the establishment of their sultanate. The struggle with the Franks consisted, for the most part, of a series of siege operations against their

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1305 Waterson, Knights, 234.
fortified cities and castles and a number of small scale skirmishes, clashes, and raids. There were no major pitched battles and the Crusader States were in a constant struggle to survive and to hold on to their territories against Mamlūk military might in the last few decades of their existence. The Franks’ military capabilities had been broken in two major battles a few years prior to the rise of the Mamlūk sultanate at the Battle of Gaza (La Forbie)\textsuperscript{1307} in 1244 CE and the Battle of Manṣūra in 1250 CE. It is important to mention these two battles, even though they were fought at the end of the Ayyūbid period, because the Baḥrī mamlūks played a decisive role in defeating the Franks on both occasions.

The Battle of Gaza took place in 1244 CE near the village of La Forbie (Ḥarbiyya) northeast of Gaza. An alliance of the Ayyūbids of Syria (the armies of Damascus, Ḥimṣ, and Karak), the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and the knightly orders formed one side and al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, his Egyptian army (including the Baḥrī mamlūks), and his Khwārazmian allies the other. The Franks mustered a force of 1,500 knights and over 10,000 infantry, the largest force they had put in the field since the Battle of Ḥaṭṭīn. During the fight, most of the Syrian Ayyūbid forces were put to flight and a large proportion of the Crusaders were trapped and massacred. After this defeat the Franks lost their striking power and the ability to raise an army of significant size again. The victory in this battle can be attributed to both the mamlūks’ discipline and steadfastness in facing the Frankish knights and the ferocity of the Khwārazmian charge that put the Ayyūbid armies of Syria to flight and allowed for the encirclement and destruction of the Frankish forces.\textsuperscript{1308}

The Seventh Crusade, which culminated in the defeat of the Crusaders at the Battle of Manṣūra in 1250 CE, was a response to the defeat suffered by the Franks and Syrians at the Battle of Gaza. King Louis IX took the cross and invaded Egypt in 1249 CE. He captured Damietta easily and advanced south to Cairo, but his path was blocked by the Egyptian army at Manṣūra. It seemed as though the crusade was going to succeed because of the ease with which Damietta was taken. In February 1250 CE the Frankish cavalry vanguard, led by Robert of Artois (Louis IX’s brother), forded the Nile after its waters had receded and launched a surprise

\textsuperscript{1307} Sometimes referred to as the Battle of Ḥarbiyya.

attack on the Egyptian camp. Most of the Egyptian army scattered in panic in the face of the powerful charge of the Frankish knights. The assault carried the knights into the heart of the town where they came face to face with the Baḥrī mamlūks and were massacred in the ensuing battle. Over the next few weeks al-Ṣāliḥ’s mamlūks and the rest of the Egyptian army managed to encircle Louis IX’s forces killing and capturing almost everyone including the king and putting an end to the threat posed by the Seventh Crusade.

The Battles of Gaza and Manṣūra destroyed the Crusaders’ ability to muster any significant offensive forces against the Mamlūks and also confirmed the value and prowess of the mamlūk soldiers, justifying the early sultans’ purchase and training of even more mamlūks, at the expense of the other free units in the army. Thus, from the establishment of the Mamlūk sultanate in 1250 CE to the fall of Acre in 1291 CE, the Franks were on the defensive and apart from small raids and skirmishes, they were never again capable of mustering a force large enough to seriously threaten the Mamlūks.

Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir mentions a couple of these raids. In 1266 CE a Frankish force of 1,200 horsemen raided the Tiberius region. They were pursued by a Mamlūk army which caught up to them and defeated them in the ensuing skirmish. He also describes a raid in 1271 CE, in which a Frankish force of 1,500 cavalry and many infantrymen raided the al-Shāghūr and al-Ba‘na regions and succeeded in devastating the area and capturing a considerable amount of spoils. Al-Maqrīzī also describes an incident in which Baybars went out to hunt (hunting was}

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1309 In his Chronicle Joinville states that Robert of Artois was in fact leading the second division of the army behind the vanguard which was led by the Templars. After fording the river both divisions charged the Egyptians and routed them, but in turn became trapped in the narrows streets of the town and were massacred by a counter attack. Villehardouin and De Joinville, Memoirs of the Crusades (London: Dent, 1926), 188-190. Joinville describes the disastrous retreat from Manṣūra and the subsequent capture of King Louis IX and most of his army, including the author. See Villehardouin and De Joinville, Memoirs, 190-228.


often used as a decoy for military operations). He concealed his forces in the woods and used the small army of Ṣafad to lure the Franks into a trap that he had laid for them.1313

The limited scope of these raids and skirmishes and the small numbers involved in them confirm that the Franks’ offensive abilities had been broken by Mamlūk military might even before the sultanate was established. Nevertheless, they remained a constant thorn in the side of the early sultans, and there was always the threat of their coordinating operations with the Mongols. But such a concerted effort between the Mamlūks’ two primary enemies never materialized.1314 The one time that the Franks caused Baybars some concern was during his campaign to conquer Tripoli (Lebanon) in 1271 CE, when the Ninth Crusade, led by Prince Edward, arrived in the Levant. The sultan was compelled to halt his campaign due to the influx of reinforcements from Europe and to sign a truce with the Crusader States.1315 However, even with these reinforcements, the Franks were not able to effect a change in the balance of power in the region and only managed to buy themselves a little more time before the inevitable.1316

The greatest part of the war between the Mamlūks and the Crusaders took the form of a series of siege operations in which the Franks gradually lost ground. The Crusaders suffered the largest number of and most significant losses during Baybars’ reign. Among the important castles and towns that fell to this sultan were: Caesarea,1317 Arsūf,1318 Ṣafad,1319 Jaffa,1320 Antioch,1321 and Crac des Chevaliers.1322

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1315 Thorau, *Lion*, 206.
The siege of Caesarea will be taken as an example of how these operations were conducted. The target was quickly encircled after the arrival of the Mamlûk army. Siege engines such as trebuchets (manjanīq) and cats (dabbāba/zahhāfa – a protective shed on wheels that could be pushed up to the wall) were assembled. The assault then started with a bombardment of the city with both the heavy siege weapons and arrows and with attempts to sap the walls. In most cases, as in the example of Caesarea, the city fell quickly. The defenders then withdrew to the citadel, which was more difficult to attack. During the siege of Caesarea, Baybars personally examined the mining work by advancing to the walls under the protection of a cat (dabbāba). He, along with his personal retinue, also climbed a high church tower adjacent to the citadel and showered the defenders on the wall with arrows. Baybars also personally participated in the fighting and the storming of the citadel. Seeing that fighting was hopeless, the defenders of Caesarea fled under the cover of darkness and the Mamlûk army took control of the whole city. In other instances the defenders either sued for peace when they saw that fighting was useless or were overwhelmed by the attacking army.

During the reigns of Qalāwûn and al-Ashraf Khalīl the Crusaders were permanently expelled from the Levant. During Qalāwûn’s reign the most important Frankish city to fall, among other conquests, was Tripoli. Qalāwûn also planned an assault on Acre, the last major Frankish stronghold in the region, but he died before it came to fruition. His son and successor, al-Ashraf Khalîl, carried out his father’s plans. His army’s performance was similar to that of

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1327 For a detailed account and analysis of the siege see Little, “Fall of ’Akkā,” 159-183.
Baybars. It surrounded the city, assembled siege engines and began a systematic assault on several weak points. When the walls of the city were breached, the sultan rushed to the breach in person along with his retinue. They were able to take the city, and ten days later its embattled defenders surrendered the citadel.\textsuperscript{1327} It is interesting to note the enthusiasm with which rulers such as Baybars, Qalāwūn, and al-Ashraf Khalīl personally participated in these sieges. The effect on the morale of the troops must have been very positive. It also symbolizes the fact that the Mamlūk sultans knew that they had to set an example for their army and that they were fighting for the very survival of the realm in the early period. Furthermore, Baybars al-Manṣūrī and Abū al-Fidā, who were both present at Acre, describe the role they played during the siege. Abū al-Fidā was involved in direct assaults on the walls using a cat (\textit{dabbāba}) and in beating back sorties of defenders,\textsuperscript{1328} and Baybars al-Manṣūrī claims to be the one who spotted a weak point in the walls, which eventually became a breach and a point of entry for the Mamlūk army.\textsuperscript{1329} This enthusiasm and energy on the one hand, and the knowledge that defeat was not an option on the other, must have been present in many of the other members of the early Mamlūk army and it drove this elite force to focus its energies against its external foes.

The final defeat of the Crusaders and their expulsion from the Holy Land shows that the early Mamlūk army was indeed a formidable fighting force. The Mamlūks won almost all of their encounters with the Franks both on the field and during sieges and gradually wore them down until they were reduced to nothing. The mamlūk horsemen were more than a match for the vaunted and formidable knights of the west, but in addition to the training and military prowess, they were also disciplined even during the hardest of times.\textsuperscript{1330} Lastly, with their victory over Crusader States, the Mamlūks were able to eliminate the second front on which they faced enemies and were after this point able to focus their attention on their primary enemies, the Mongols.


\textsuperscript{1328} Abū al-Fidā, \textit{al-Mukhtaṣar}, vol. 4, 34.

\textsuperscript{1329} Baybars al-Manṣūrī, \textit{Zubda}, 279.

\textsuperscript{1330} As exemplified above with their victory at the Battle of Manṣūra despite the fact that the rest of the Egyptian army had been put to flight.
5.52 The Mongols

The Mongols were the Mamlūk’s most powerful and dangerous enemy during the early period of the sultanate. They posed a constant threat on the Euphrates frontier that did not subside until the early fourteenth century. One can argue that it was the peril posed by the Mongols that was one of the chief factors that drove the early sultans to continue al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s military policies and the break with the Diversified Army Model in order to create a military machine that was strong enough to face this threat. In this section I will discuss the performance of the Mamlūk army against their most formidable foe in the first six decades of the sultanate.

The Mamlūks, for the most part, practiced a defensive strategy against the Mongols. Most of the major military campaigns that ended with a pitched battle between the two sides, with the exception of Baybars’ expedition to Anatolia, were Mongol attacks on Syria. Of the six large-scale offensives launched by the Mongols in 1260 CE, 1281 CE, 1299 CE, 1300 CE, 1303 CE and 1312 CE, the Mamlūks were victorious in all but the 1299 CE campaign, which ended with the Mongol victory at the Battle of Wādī al-Khażindār. But even after this defeat, the Mamlūks were able to quickly regroup and pushed the Mongols out of Syria the following year. In addition to these important military encounters, there were numerous raids by both sides across the frontier and a considerable amount of espionage.

The Mamlūks took the Ilkhanid threat very seriously, and early sultans such as Baybars reacted decisively to any rumors of a Mongol invasion. For instance, in 1262 CE Baybars received word from his spies that Hūlākū (Hūlēgu) was gathering a large force. However, these agents were not able to determine the objective of this Mongol army (Syria or the territories of the Golden Horde). Rather than risk being caught unprepared, Baybars sent scouts and Arab tribesmen to reconnoiter and raid along the frontier. He also made preparations to evacuate the

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1331 Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 1.
1332 For a more detailed discussion of the border skirmishes between the Mamlūk sultanate and the Ilkhanate see Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 106-179.
civillian population of Syria and had the grasslands in the Aleppo region burned. However, no
attack came that year.\footnote{1333}

News of impending Mongol incursions did occasionally materialize during Baybars’
reign. For instance, the Mongol attack of 1264-1265 CE was very real. An Ilkhanid army
besieged the important frontier fortress of al-Bīra, which guarded one of the fords on the
Euphrates. Baybars immediately dispatched a force of 4,000 light cavalry from Syria and another
force of 4,000 the following day and personally began mobilizing the main army to ride to al-
Bīra’s relief. The Mongols failed to take the fort, which was defended stubbornly by the garrison
and fled at the first sign of the reinforcements sent by the sultan.\footnote{1334} In 1272 CE the Mongols
made another attempt on al-Bīra. This time Baybars rode out to relieve the fortress in person.
The Mongol commander, Durbai, sent a contingent of 5,000 men to block the fords on the
Euphrates and force the Mamlūk army to fight its way across. The Mamlūks crossed the river
under fire and fought their way onto the bank where they engaged the enemy and forced them to
withdraw after a bloody battle. The Mongol units besieging al-Bīra also took flight when they
received news that the Mamlūk army had successfully forded the river.\footnote{1335} These examples not
only show how seriously the Mongol threat was taken, but also exemplify the discipline, high
quality, and flexibility of the early Mamlūk army.

The Mamlūks and the Mongols fought several major campaigns against one another that
usually ended with a decisive battle. As mentioned above, the Mongols launched six large-scale
expeditions against the Mamlūks, and were defeated in all but one of these. The first decisive
encounter (and probably the most famous one) occurred in 1260 CE at ‘Ayn Jālūt. However, the
Mamlūk victory at this battle should be considered a psychological victory rather than a military
one because Sultan Quṭuz’s force of up to 100,000 men (granted only about 12,000 of them were
mamlūks) faced Kitbughā,\footnote{1336} Hūlākū’s lieutenant, and his small army of about 10,000-20,000

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\footnote{1333} Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 107.
\footnote{1334} Baybars al-Manṣūrī, Zubda, 95; Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 111-112.
\footnote{1335} Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhīr, al-Rawḍ, 405-409; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, Zubda, 137-138; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, al-Tuhfa, 75-
\footnote{1336} This is not the same Kitbughā who became a Mamlūk sultan.
The real test of the Mamlūk army occurred at the Battle of Ḥimṣ in 1281 CE, during the reign of Qalāwūn. The Mamlūk army, which numbered around 40,000-50,000 men (the lower estimates are probably more accurate) met a large Mongol army, numbering 80,000-120,000 troops, at Ḥimṣ. Baybars al-Manṣūrī provides a detailed description of the deployment of the Mamlūk army. The center, vanguard, and the right and left wings of the army were composed primarily of mamlūk contingents, including the Royal Mamlūks, mamlūks of the amīrs, and the units of the ḥalqa. In addition to these, the right wing was reinforced by the armies of Damascus and Ḥamā. The auxiliary forces composed of the Arabs and the Turkmen were placed on the far right and far left flanks of the army respectively. Initially, the battle hung in the balance as the Mongol right wing broke the Mamlūk left and pursued it off the field, while the Mamlūk right wing put the Mongol left to flight. Rather than give pursuit to the fleeing Mongols, the Mamlūk right wing turned around and attacked the Mongol center and destroyed it. The Mamlūk army then pursued the defeated Mongols from the field. When the Mongol right wing returned to the field and saw that their comrades had been driven off, it also retreated.

In 1299 CE the Mamlūks suffered their first and only major defeat at the hands of the Mongols at the Battle of Wādī al-Khazindār. Several factors contributed to the Mamlūk defeat. First of all, there had been a major rebellion within the army. The Oirats had plotted to rise up and murder the sultan and to return Kitbughā to the throne. These plans were discovered, the revolt was put down, and hundreds of Oirats were executed. Secondly, there was a significant amount of movement in the Mongol camp; the left wing was sent on a wide detour to outflank the Mamlūks, who thought the Mongols were either withdrawing or preparing to attack. Meanwhile, the remainder of the Mongol army had dismounted to rest. The Mamlūk charge initially drove the surprised Mongols back, but it lost its momentum as the Mongols created a wall of horses from behind which they fired arrows at the Mamlūk soldiers. The killing blow

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1337 Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 27, 36-37; Irwin, Middle East, 32-33.
1338 Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 194-195; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 183-184.
1339 For a more detailed description of the deployment of the Mamlūk army see Baybars al-Manṣūrī, Zubda, 196-197; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, al-Tuhfa, 99-100; ‘Ulabī, Ma‘ārik al-Mughūl, 90; Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 191-192; Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 110.
landed when the Mongol left wing struck the Mamlūk army in the rear. Despite this defeat, the army was able to disengage in relatively good order, so much so that the Mongols only followed cautiously fearing a trap.\footnote{1341} This defeat, despite being a heavy blow, by no means destroyed the Mamlūk army which returned to retake Syria the following year.

The Battle of Marj al-Ṣuffar was fought in 1303 CE. This clash is probably one of the better examples of the Mamlūk army performing at its best. Baybars al-Manṣūrī’s description of the deployment of the Mamlūk army is similar to its disposition at the Battle of Ḥiṃṣ. The main formations were occupied principally by the Royal Mamlūks, the amīrs’ mamlūks, and the ḥalqa; and were supported by the armies of Syria and the auxiliaries.\footnote{1342} The major difference between this battle and the victory at Ḥiṃṣ is that at Marj al-Ṣaffār the Mamlūk army operated flawlessly. The Mongol left wing attacked the Mamlūk right which held. The Mongols then shifted more troops from the center to support this attack on their left and pushed the Mamlūk right wing back. This strong advance, however, allowed the Mamlūk center and left to envelope the Mongols, forcing them to retreat to a hill where they spent the night and were completely encircled. On the following day, the Mamlūks opened up a gap in their lines to lure the hungry and thirsty Mongols out. The bait worked and groups of Mongol warriors tried to make a run for the nearby stream, where they were slaughtered. Those remaining on the hill were also attacked and routed.\footnote{1343}

So far the campaigns and battles that have been discussed were defensive operations. However, the early Mamlūk army was more than capable of offensive operations against the Mongols (their offensive capabilities against the Crusaders have already been discussed). In the early Mamlūk period there was only one such offensive operation and that was Baybars’ Anatolian campaign which culminated in the Battle of Abulustayn (Elbistān) in 1277 CE.

\footnote{1341} Baybars al-Manṣūrī, Zubda, 331; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, al-Tuhfa, 157-158; Abū al-Fidā, al-Mukhtaṣar, vol. 4, 55; Ibn al-Dawādārī, Kanz, vol. 9, 15-17; Irwin, Middle East, 100; ‘Ulabī, Maʿārik al-Mughūl, 105-108; Waterson, Knights, 205-207.

\footnote{1342} For more details see Baybars al-Manṣūrī, Zubda, 375-376; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, al-Tuhfa, 165.

reasons for and objectives of the campaign are not entirely clear. Baybars occupied the Seljuk capital of Caesarea in Anatolia after his victory, had himself proclaimed sultan, and struck coins in his name. He may have wanted to make a show of force by launching a massive raid to destabilize the Mongol hold on Anatolia, gain military support from some of the inhabitants of the region, or maybe even to occupy the region permanently. However, he died that same year and could not follow up on the gains he had made. This campaign ended with a major Mamluk victory against the Mongols at the Battle of Abulustayn. The Mamluk soldiers’ more accurate and longer range archery, their heavy armor, and their larger and stronger war horses all contributed to the outcome of the battle in which 6,770 Mongols were killed as opposed to a relatively small number of mamluks. Furthermore, al-Maqrizi states that the Royal Mamluks were in the thick of the fighting in this battle and their skills and discipline were instrumental in gaining this victory.

The early Mamluk army was developed by the sultans to fight two prominent enemies who threatened the very existence of the Mamluk sultanate. The creation of this army contradicted the principles of the Diversified Army Model. Even though the initial break with this military model had been initiated by al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, his policies were continued by his Mamluk successors who saw the growing need for a powerful army composed predominantly of mamluks. This break with the Diversified Army Model ushered in a new military system, the Ṣāliḥi Mamluk Model that dominated the military practices and organization of the early sultanate. The army that the early Mamluk sultans created was a powerful one with disproportionately large mamluk contingents vis-à-vis other interest groups. This army was also very well-trained and superbly equipped, and as we have seen, disciplined, so long as its soldiers were kept busy and well-paid (or allowed to plunder enemy territories). The Mamluks proved

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1344 Amitai-Preiss says “Baybars’s goals are not known. Perhaps he had hoped to wrest Seljuk Rum from the Mongols, thinking that he would find significant support from various military elements in that country. Possibly, however, his plan was more modest, and he had only launched a massive raid in order to destabilize the Mongols, test their reactions and try his own troops.” See Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 157.

1345 Irwin, Middle East, 57; Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 157. Also see, Ibn Taghri Birdi, al-Nujum, vol. 7, 168-170.

1346 Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 214-216.


themselves and their military superiority against the Crusaders in two battles and in a series of sieges which saw the conquest of all Frankish territories in the Levant. The Mamlūks also proved to be more than a match for the Mongols, whom they defeated in all but one of the major battles they fought. Furthermore, the early Mamlūk army also demonstrated that it could operate both as an offensive and defensive force and in different environments and situations.
Chapter 6

Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and the Break with the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model

During al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s third reign (1310-1341) CE the political and military situation in the region shifted drastically with the elimination of the Crusader States and the Ilkhanate as the major external threats to the Mamlūks in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, like al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, had lived through some traumatic experiences in his youth that shaped his internal policies. These experiences included the brutal murder of his predecessor and older brother al-Ashraf Khalīl, and his own experience of becoming a puppet in the hands of the great amīrs, and losing the sultanate on two occasions. Just as al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s betrayal by most of his military and relatives, with the exception of his own mamlūks, had prompted him to create a powerful mamlūk army, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s experiences at the hands of the powerful mamlūk factions planted the seeds of mistrust, even paranoia, in him towards them and prompted him to make changes in the military and at court in order to secure his position as the undisputed ruler of his realm.

In A Turning Point in Mamlūk History, Levanoni describes this sultan’s changes to the military as a break with Mamlūk traditions and views them negatively. As a matter of fact, there was no real break with “tradition.” Rather al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was moving towards a more diversified, balanced, and controllable army that resembled the Diversified Army Model.1349 Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s change was as drastic as the one initiated by al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb that had given rise to the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model, and that had been shaped by al-Ṣāliḥ’s personality, experiences, and the political and military situation in the region. Similarly, it was al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s experiences and personality as well as the shift in the balance of power in the region stimulated by the elimination of both the Ilkhanate and the Crusader States as rivals that led to the reestablishment of the Diversified Army Model in the Mamlūk sultanate. During this sultan’s reign the sultanate’s military can be considered as falling under this model, and not the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model or the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model, because al-Nāṣir Muḥammad did not only diversify the mamlūk element of his army, but also incorporated large

1349 As stated earlier the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model can be seen as a break with the Diversified Army Model that was implemented by al-Ṣāliḥ and the early Mamlūk sultans out of the necessity for survival.
numbers of non-mamlūks into the ranks and into the officer corps. This major change in the structure and composition of the army led to its temporary “demamlūkization” until the reign of the first Circassian sultan Barqūq.

Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s policies should be viewed as a state building process entailing the creation of a strong power base in the form of a patrimonial household. This ruler should be seen in the context of the Mamlūk sultanate as the state-builder par excellence, because he was obliged to build his power base from nothing since he could not depend on the mamlūks of his predecessors. Furthermore, he was at a double disadvantage because, unlike all the other successful rulers of the Mamlūk sultanate, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was not a mamlūk, which meant that he did not have the support of a khushdāshiyya group like Baybars or his father, Qalāwūn. He created a ruling apparatus that kept him in power as the undisputed absolute sovereign of his realm for three decades. This sultan’s reign and practices reinforce the idea that in the Mamlūk sultanate, every successful ruler was a state-builder who could not depend on any foundations laid by his predecessors and who had to establish his own power base in order to ensure survival and the longevity of his rule.

6.1 Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s Experiences during his First Two Reigns

Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad went through a series of negative and traumatic experiences during his first two reigns. Notable among these are the murder of his brother, al-Ashraf Khalīl and his own deposition on two occasions (1294 CE and 1309 CE). In addition to these events, al-Nāṣir also must have felt vulnerable and powerless during this period when he was nothing but a non-mamlūk puppet sultan dominated by the powerful Mamlūk amīrs. The fact that he was a nine year old child in 1294 CE must have made his enthronement and deposition a terrifying event in his life. It is important to examine, if only briefly, these experiences because they are integral to understanding the development of al-Nāṣir’s personality and attitude and will help explain the actions he took to secure his position during his third reign. Furthermore, as mentioned above, al-Nāṣir’s early life is a good point of comparison to al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s experiences before his assumption of power because both of these rulers initiated important changes in their militaries. The latter ushered in the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model, which started the break with the Diversified Army Model and the former reorganized the Mamlūk sultanate’s military in a manner that
resembled the Diversified Army Model in an attempt to bring his army completely under his control.

Al-Ashraf Khalīl was murdered by a group of amīrs in 1293 CE. As mentioned earlier, this violent deposition took place during a hunt when the sultan was separated from his retinue. The conspirators, however, were quickly defeated by loyalist mamlūks led by Kitbughā, who thrust al-Ashraf Khalīl’s nine year old brother on the throne. Thus began al-Nāṣir Muhammad’s first reign. Those among the conspirators who were captured were put to death, their hands and feet were cut off and they were crucified and paraded around Cairo on the backs of camels.

Al-Nāṣir’s first reign lasted about one year (1293-1294 CE). During this period the sultan was a puppet in Kitbughā’s hands. Even with the death of the conspirators who had murdered his brother, there was internal turmoil during this period. One significant event that took place was the mutiny of a large group of Royal Mamlūks in 1294 CE. They demanded an improvement to their financial and material situations. They attacked the prisons, freed their imprisoned comrades, and set upon and looted the stables. While the rebels were distracted with their looting, Kitbughā mustered the amīrs and mamlūks stationed in the citadel and sallied out to defeat the uprising. Many of the captured rebel mamlūks were executed and tortured to death. A few days after putting down the Ashrafiyya revolt, Kitbughā deposed al-Nāṣir and took the sultanate for himself with the blessing of great amīrs, the caliph, and the army. Al-Nāṣir went into exile at Karak where he remained until he was recalled to the sultanate in 1299 CE after the murder of the then ruling sultan, Ḥusām al-Dīn Lājīn (r.1297-1299 CE). The violent murder

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1352 The Ashrafiyya, the mamlūks of al-Ashraf Khalīl.


of his brother, the severe punishment of the murderers, the Ashrafīyya revolt and its bloody conclusion, and his deposition must have left a strong impression on the young sultan.

Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s second reign lasted for ten years. He was invited back to Cairo out of exile and once again placed on the throne by the senior amīrs. The very nature of al-Nāṣir’s return to the sultanate indicates that his second reign would not be much different from the first with respect to his actual power because once again, he was placed on the throne by the powerful amīrs and owed his position to them. In fact, the amīrs had brought the young sultan back to serve as a façade for their own rule. Al-Nāṣir’s second reign saw the defeat of the Mamlūks by the Mongols at the Battle of Wādī al-Khazindār. More importantly, on the internal level, it was punctuated by the struggle between the young sultan and the senior amīrs who held the strings of power. In 1307 CE al-Nāṣir attempted to assert his authority by plotting against the two most powerful amīrs, Baybars al-Jāshinkīr and Sayf al-Dīn Salār. In this coup he was supported by some Royal Mamlūks and also enjoyed overwhelming popularity among the populace of Cairo (al-‘āmma). However, the plot was uncovered and foiled.

It was due to this failed attempt to wrest power from the senior amīrs that al-Nāṣir left Cairo in 1309 CE. To leave Egypt he used the pretext that he was going on the pilgrimage. However, instead of travelling to Mecca he headed for Karak, went into voluntary exile, and officially abdicated from the sultanate. Al-Nāṣir then started to consolidate his strength and support in his exile. Within one year the situation in Egypt had unraveled. Sultan Baybars al-Jāshinkīr was very unpopular with the civilian populace of Egypt and slowly lost his support among the military classes as well. The mamlūks and amīrs of Syria also pledged themselves to al-Nāṣir’s cause. When he felt strong enough, al-Nāṣir marched out of Karak to Damascus and then to Cairo to reclaim his sultanate on his own terms.

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1357 Al-Hajji, Internal Affairs, 11; Waterson, Knights, 215.
Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s experiences during his first two reigns strongly affected his personality and influenced the shaping of his policies during his third reign. From his rise to power for the third time in 1310 CE to his death in 1341 CE al-Nāṣir sought to maintain control over his realm and to create an autocratic and centralized power base centered upon the person of the ruler. To do this he had to ensure that he had complete control over the army and its officers and that none could challenge his authority. How this sultan must have felt in 1310 CE is best expressed by Levanoni:

When al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn attained the sultanate for the third period (709-741/1310-1341) it was with the overriding ambition to set up an autocratic and centralized government. Embittered by the experience of his two earlier periods of rule, when he had been entirely dependent upon the amirs of his father, al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn, and of his brother, al-Ashraf Khalīl, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was determined to return to sovereignty with the power of undisputed rule at his command.\(^{1360}\)

6.2 The Military and Political Situation during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s Third Reign

The regional political and military situation, including the balance of power, had shifted greatly by the time of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s third reign. The last two sections of Chapter 3 discussed the genesis of the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model and the Mamlūk sultanate during the reign of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb. The new model professional army, composed primarily of mamlūks, was needed during the mid-thirteenth century to ensure the survival of the last bulwark of the core Muslim regions against two powerful enemies: the Crusader States and the Mongols. Al-Nāṣir’s attitude regarding the army was spurred by similar circumstances. The previous section discussed this sultan’s personal experiences and how they planted the seeds of mistrust in the young sultan towards the oligarchy of amīrs that controlled Egypt after al-Ashraf Khalīl’s assassination. This section will present a brief overview of how the political and military situations (and in essence the whole balance of power in the region) had shifted by the early fourteenth century and how these changes affected al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s choices with respect to the organization of the Mamlūk army and the officer corps.

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\(^{1360}\) Levanoni, *Turning Point*, 28.
By al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s third reign the Crusaders had all but ceased to exist as a political force in the Levant and no longer presented any significant danger to the Mamlûk sultanate. The last ports, fortresses, and towns still held by the Franks fell to the Mamlûks in quick succession within a year of the fall of Acre to al-Ashraf Khalîl’s forces in 1291 CE. The threat of Crusader raids along the coast of Syria was also eliminated with the conquest of Rhodes, the base and the staging point for such attacks, in 1302 CE.

The Mongol threat was also eliminated during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign. In 1260 CE the seemingly unstoppable Mongol juggernaut threatened to wipe out the existence of the Mamlûk sultanate, as it had done with the caliphate in Baghdad. However, the Mamlûks were more than a match for the invading Mongols and halted all of their advances into Syria between 1260 CE and 1320 CE. The last major Mongol attack on Syria was launched by Öljeitû and targeted the frontier fortress of al-Rahba. The attack failed miserably and was followed up by a series of Mamlûk raids into Mongol territories in Iraq and Anatolia. Mongol attitudes changed after the accession of Abû Saʿīd, under the tutelage of his guardian Chūpān, in 1318 CE. The Ilkhanate faced internal problems such as rebellions, a mutiny in the army, and external threats such as the large scale invasion by the Golden Horde, through the Darband Pass in the Caucasus. These challenges were all overcome. One of the main results of this ordeal was that it left Chūpān as the undisputed ruler of the Ilkhanate. It was this Mongol strongman who initiated diplomatic ties with the Mamlûks in 1320 CE through the international slave trader, al-Majd al-Sallāmī. Over the next two years, al-Majd al-Sallāmī, along with envoys from both the Mongols and the Mamlûks, travelled between the two realms. Their negotiations resulted in

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1363 See Chapter 4 for a more detailed analysis on this struggle. Also see Amitai-Preiss, Mongols and Mamluks, 26-179.
1365 Amitai-Preiss, “Resolution,” 364.
terms acceptable to both sides and a peace accord was signed in 1322/1323 CE.\textsuperscript{1367} This agreement put an end to the threat of a Mongol invasion along with the fears that had plagued the Mamlūks for over sixty years. Not long after this agreement the Ilkhanate fully disintegrated due to the infighting among the Mongol generals that ensued in the succession crisis that took place after the death of Abū Saʻīd.\textsuperscript{1368}

The complete elimination of the Crusader States and the Ilkhanate left the Mamlūk sultanate as the undisputed superpower in the region. This shift in the political and military situation and consequently the balance of power in the region is very significant because it ended the military emergency that had been one of the major causes for the break with the Diversified Army Model and the establishment of the Šāliḥī Mamlūk Model. The sultan could now focus more on consolidating his control over his realm and his army without having to worry about any major external threats. The elimination of the major external foes of the Mamlūks and the period of relative peace and prosperity that ensued thereafter, along with al-\textit{Nāṣir} Muḥammad’s policies, have been perceived as the reasons for the military deterioration of the Mamlūks. However, I would posit that, rather than a becoming weaker and less effective, a change took place in the Mamlūk army during al-\textit{Nāṣir}’s reign. At this time the military was reorganized in a manner resembling the Diversified Army Model, allowing the ruler a firmer control over the army, even in times of peace. This was a conscious act of state-building on the part of al-\textit{Nāṣir} who, along with the other rulers of this era, may not have been aware of the idea of the two distinct military models described in this study. However, such rulers, especially the successful ones among them, were very aware of the need to establish a powerful and loyal patrimonial household and military force that was under the control of the sovereign in order to maintain their rule and to ensure that the realm did not descend into anarchy.

\textsuperscript{1367} Irwin, \textit{Middle East}, 118-119. For a detailed study and analysis of the process through which the Mamlūk sultanate and the Ilkhanate reached this agreement see Amitai-Preiss, “Resolution,” 364-378.

6.3 Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s Changes to the Mamlūk Army\textsuperscript{1369}

In 1310 CE al-Nāṣir Muḥammad seized the sultanate and started his third reign and ruled for the next three decades as the undisputed master of his realm. This period is described both as a high point and as a turning point (for the worse) of Mamlūk history. As mentioned earlier, Levanoni’s central thesis is that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s practices, especially the changes that he made to the army and military institution, set the Mamlūk army on a path that would see it fall into a weakened state, setting into motion its downfall along with the whole regime.\textsuperscript{1370}

The greatest accusation leveled against al-Nāṣir Muḥammad is that he departed from the training and advancement system set up by the founders of the Mamlūk sultanate. Levanoni argues that one of this sultan’s primary aims was to establish himself as the undisputed ruler of the sultanate. However, al-Nāṣir, a non-mamlūk, had not risen to power, as his predecessors had, i.e., by climbing through the ranks to the top of the Mamlūk hierarchy through the established system of training and education; rather, he was placed on the throne as a hereditary sovereign by the great amīrs who could not decide which one from among themselves would rule.\textsuperscript{1371} This experience is the reason given for al-Nāṣir’s attempts to distance himself as much as possible from his predecessors and from the military system they had created.\textsuperscript{1372} In one episode mentioned by al-Yūsufī, al-Nāṣir demolished the arched bridge of the lions (qanṭarat al-sibā’), built by Baybars,\textsuperscript{1373} and had a new bridge built in its place. The sultan is reported to have said that the bridge was too steep and that it hurt his back when he crossed it on his way to the hippodrome. Al-Yūsufī also mentions that al-Nāṣir hated everything that reminded the people (al-nās i.e., the Mamlūk elite) of the legacy of his predecessors or bore their names and so attempted to erase these memories.\textsuperscript{1374} This anecdote supports the hypothesis that al-Nāṣir was trying to undermine the legacy of Baybars and Qalāwūn and to establish his own. Such a

\textsuperscript{1369} For more on this sultan’s broader state-building polices see Flinterman and Van Steenberg, “Al-Nasir Muhammad,” 95-108.
\textsuperscript{1370} See Chapter 1 in Levanoni, Turning Point, 28-81.
\textsuperscript{1371} Levanoni, Turning Point, 30.
\textsuperscript{1372} Levanoni, Turning Point, 30-31, 34.
\textsuperscript{1373} A curved bridge built by al-Zāhir Baybars, which led to the hippodrome. It received its name because Baybars had four stone lions placed on the corners of the bridge. See al-Yūsufī, Nuzha, 264.
\textsuperscript{1374} Al-Yūsufī, Nuzha, 264-265.
mentality should come as no surprise, given al-Nāṣir’s experiences prior to his third reign. Furthermore, this sultan’s rule supports the idea that most of the successful Mamlūk rulers were individual state-builders who sought to create their own patrimonial households and power networks not basing their foundations on those established by their predecessors, but rather through undermining them and creating new ones.

Levanoni also credits al-Nāṣir Muḥammad with the destruction of a number of hippodromes that had been built by his predecessors. She lists al-Maydān al-Ẓāhirī and Maydān al-Qabaq, both built by Baybars, which were replaced by a garden and a housing complex respectively. Furthermore, Maydān Birkat al-Fīl, which was built by Kitbughā, was replaced by a palace for the amīr Baktimur al-Ṣāqi.¹³⁷⁵ This information regarding al-Nāṣir’s destruction of old hippodromes, built by his predecessors, is confirmed by such Mamlūk historians as al-al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Taghrī Birdī.¹³⁷⁶ Such an observation seems to support the idea that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s policies caused a laxity in training and thus affected the quality and efficiency of the army. However, through these actions he was belittling his predecessors and, as was the case in his creation of a new patrimonial household and army, he was cementing his position in the present and his memory in posterity. To replace the old hippodromes that he demolished he built new ones such al-Maydān al-Nāṣirī, constructed under the citadel and used for polo games and military exercises.¹³⁷⁷ He also built Maydān al-Mihār, which was also the site of equestrian activities and where the sultan personally participated in some of the games and drills.¹³⁷⁸

In a similar manner al-Nāṣir discarded the criteria of training and advancement established by Baybars and Qalāwūn. He fast-tracked many of his mamlūks through their training and promoted them to high ranks and offices in the army and at court over very short periods of time.¹³⁷⁹ There are several cases such as those of Qawṣūn, Bashtak, ‘Aqbūghā ‘Abd al-Wāḥid, Bahādur al-Dimurdāshī, and Alṭunbūgha al-Mārdīnī among others as examples of the

¹³⁷⁵ Levanoni, Turning Point, 158.
¹³⁷⁹ Levanoni, Turning Point, 34-40.
swift advancement and lack of training in al-Nāṣir’s army and officer corps. Furthermore, the
descriptions of al-Nāṣir’s conduct give the impression that he was very permissive with his
mamlūks and spoiled them. For instance, on one occasion he gave each of the amīrs Yalbughā al-Yahyāwī and Aḥṭūnḫūghā al-Mārdīnī a palace. On another occasion he gave a
200,000 dinār gift to four of his mamlūks. In another example, al-Nāṣir lavished money and
promotions on his mamlūks after a review in 1314 CE.

The criteria for advancement under al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, according to Levanoni, were
not based on military talents. For instance, upon acquiring his mamlūk Bashtak, al-Nāṣir quickly
promoted him to the highest rank in the army solely based on his good looks, and in this instance
because he resembled the Ilkhanid ruler, Abū Saʿīd. She states that one of the primary
motivations for this sultan’s advancement of his mamlūks was his personal feelings towards
them. He also favored his own relatives and promoted the kinsmen of those amīrs who were
close to him. Levanoni states that the rapid advancement of many amīrs during al-Nāṣir’s
reign can be attributed to favoritism and that such quick promotions were “no longer the
exception but had become the rule.” The consequence of this change in the policy of training
and promotion, argues Levanoni, was a decline in the professionalism and loyalty of the
army.

Another cause given for the Mamlūk army’s diminution due to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s
policies was his recruitment of non-Mamlūks and their promotion to high posts. Levanoni
mentions the examples of Maliktimur al-Ḥijāzī and the wazīr Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Shirwān,
both of whom came from the Ilkhanate and both of whom were awarded the rank of amīr miʿa

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1380 Levanoni, *Turning Point*, 36-38.
1382 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 9, 121.
1384 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 9, 52.
1386 Levanoni, *Turning Point*, 37.
1387 Levanoni, *Turning Point*, 37, 39.
1389 Levanoni, *Turning Point*, 40.
wa muqaddam alfd³⁹⁰ shortly after their arrival in the Mamlük sultanate.¹³⁹¹ Another non-Mamlük group that found its way into the ranks of the army and the officer corps in increasing numbers during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign were the awlād al-nās. This group had always formed a part of the halqā during the reigns of the early sultans, but they rarely ever acquired high ranks in the military hierarchy.¹³⁹² However, their numbers rose during the chaotic period after al-Ashraf Khalīl’s murder, due to āmīrs acquiring positions for their sons.¹³⁹³ These numbers rose even higher during al-Nāṣir’s third reign. Under Baybars and Qalāwūn there were only eleven awlād al-nāṣ who attained the rank of āmīr (none of them attained the rank of Amīr of One Hundred). On the other hand, during al-Nāṣir’s reign ninety-three of the awlād al-nās were awarded amirates and nine of those were made Amīrs of One Hundred.¹³⁹⁴ By increasing the numbers of the awlād al-nās, al-Nāṣir was trying to create a new nobility and a dependable and strong patrimonial household to solidify his rule.¹³⁹⁵ This policy was continued by his successors and the Turkic āmīrs to bolster their ranks against the growing power of the Circassians in the mid to late fourteenth century because Timur’s wars against Toqtāmish in the areas of the Golden Horde greatly affected the flow of fresh Turkic mamlūks to Egypt.¹³⁹⁶

Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad recreated the Mamlük military elite, and in essence the whole Mamlük army in a way that left him in undisputed control over it. Amitai-Preiss and Van Steenbergen both discuss al-Nāṣir’s officer corps at different times during his third reign. The former provides a list of the senior amīrs of al-Nāṣir. Due to the lack of a detailed and systematic account of the rise and fall of every amīr under al-Nāṣir, Amitai-Preiss uses a roster for the expedition against the Mongols in 1313 CE found in Nuzhat al-Mālik wa al-Mamlük fī

¹³⁹³ Levanoni, *Turning Point*, 44.
*Mukhtaṣar Sīrat man Waliya Miṣr min al-Mulūk*, by al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Ṣafadī, while the latter discusses the Mamlūk military elite on the eve of al-Nāṣir’s death in 1340 CE.

Both of the above mentioned scholars focus on examining the upper echelons of the officer corps, which was composed of Amīrs of One Hundred. Several conclusions can be drawn from these articles. First of all, al-Nāṣir worked to undermine the amīrs of his father and brother and gradually eliminated them, replacing them with men of his own choosing. The process of purging these elements from the army and the officer corps and their replacement was a continuous one throughout al-Nāṣir’s reign because he had no option but to proceed slowly due to the power that many of the Maṇṣūriyya had amassed. The practice of frequent promotions and demotions did not end with the elimination of the Maṇṣūriyya; it continued throughout al-Nāṣir’s reign. It was a means by which the sultan ensured that no single amīr accumulated too much power. Secondly, al-Nāṣir raised non-affiliated amīrs and non-mamlūks to the highest positions to create a counter-balance to the mamlūk factions and even against his own mamlūks. Thus, he created a system of balances and counter-balances that prevented the rise of any one faction to a position of dominance in the sultanate. Thirdly, the Mamlūk elite on the eve of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s death exhibited diversity rather than uniformity. One can conjecture that the same could be said regarding the lower officer classes and the rank and file of the army. Hence, even though these scholars do not say it directly, it is clear that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s practices led to the creation (or recreation) of an army that resembled the Diversified Army Model rather than the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model. Furthermore, this sultan was a very successful state-builder because he, a non-mamlūk, managed to eliminate all the potential opposition to his rule, both real and imagined, and to create a new ruling patrimonial household, from the ground up.

1397 Amitai-Preiss. “Remaking,” 146.
1399 Amitai-Preiss. “Remaking,” 145-146, 157-158
Al-Nāṣir conducted *rawks* (cadastral surveys) throughout his realm to reorganize and redistribute *iqṭāʿāt* and their incomes. The outcomes of these *rawks* had far reaching effects throughout the sultanate and the army. In 1313 CE the sultan conducted a trial *rawk* in the province of Damascus and in 1315 CE conducted a larger land survey of the territories of Egypt. As mentioned above, Lājīn had attempted to carry out a land survey in order to create a new military unit that would shift the balance of power in his favor against the powerful amīrs, but he failed where al-Nāṣir succeeded and was killed before the survey could be completed. Subsequently, the military elite just redistributed the land that was surveyed among themselves.

Like Lājīn, al-Nāṣir’s aim was to centralize power in his own hands at the expense of the amīrs. However, this sultan was able gradually to eliminate several of the powerful Manṣūrī amīrs and members of the military oligarchy between 1310 CE and 1315 CE and to replace them with his own mamlūks and supporters. This led to an imbalance of power between the sultan’s household and that of the amīrs. Therefore, by the time he completed his *rawks*, no one was strong enough to resist his decisions or to attempt to depose him.

The Nāṣirī *rawk* had several consequences. First of all, the sultan greatly increased his own share (and that of his household) from four twenty-fourths to ten twenty-fourths of Egypt’s cultivated lands. The remaining fourteen twenty-fourths was reserved for the amīrs and the *ḥalqa*. These changes weakened the amīrs because although many of them received *iqṭāʿāt* worth the same as their previous holdings, they were now, however, required to pay more taxes. Moreover, these land holdings were dispersed throughout the sultanate to ensure that none of them could build up a regional power base to challenge central authority. The soldiers of the *ḥalqa* suffered even more because many of them saw their holdings shrink to the point that they were no longer sufficient to maintain themselves, their mounts, and equipment, rendering a section of the *ḥalqa* useless. Many of these destitute soldiers were forced to sell their *iqṭāʿāt*,

1409 To examine the breakdown of the incomes of different sections of the *ḥalqa* see, Levanoni, “Ḥalqah,” 50.
or were purged from the unit and had their lands confiscated during military reviews at which they failed to present themselves in an acceptable manner.\textsuperscript{1410}

The Nāṣirī rawk is said to have caused the fall of the halqa. However, Levanoni points out that the survey and redistribution of land were in fact designed to prevent the great amīrs from getting their hands on a portion of the halqa’s income through the payment of himāya by soldiers to amīrs for protection and to disrupt their rival power networks.\textsuperscript{1411} Al-Nāṣir’s effort met with partial success. However, after his death the himāya system and its power networks reemerged with a vengeance. By the reign of Barqūq, the iqṭāʿāt of the halqa were evenly split between the sultan and the amīrs (who controlled their share through the himāya system).\textsuperscript{1412} Furthermore, Levanoni states that the halqa had always been very flexible and open to changes, even during the reigns of the early Mamlūk sultans. She asserts that the varied makeup\textsuperscript{1413} of the halqa is indicative of its openness to change.\textsuperscript{1414} I am inclined to agree with this thesis regarding the halqa according to which this unit did not decline, but rather was transformed. The notion that the halqa had fallen into a sorry state comes from the descriptions of its most destitute members, who formed only a fraction of the whole force. The remainder of the halqa was, in fact, composed of mamlūks (both Royal Mamlūks and amīrs’ mamlūks) and freeborn soldiers, strengthened by the patronage of powerful amīrs through the himāya system, who constituted important links in the sultan’s and amīrs’ power networks and factions.\textsuperscript{1415} Thus, what historians have viewed for a long period of time as the deterioration of the halqa due to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s policies was in fact its transformation. The same can be said regarding the Mamlūk army as a whole during this sultan’s reign.

\textsuperscript{1410} Some of these sold iqṭāʿāt were restored to these poor soldiers, however they had to pay the buyers one eighth of their value in three annual installments. See Levanoni, “Halqah,” 50-51, 60-61.
\textsuperscript{1411} For more on the himāya system in the instance of Mamlūk power politics see Levanoni, “Halqah,” 45-46, 48-51.
\textsuperscript{1412} Levanoni, “Halqah,” 56, 64.
\textsuperscript{1413} Composed of professional freeborn Ayyūbid soldiers, wāfidiyya, awlād al-nās, and others.
\textsuperscript{1414} Levanoni, “Halqah,” 38-44.
\textsuperscript{1415} Levanoni, “Halqah,” 63-65.
6.4 Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s Officer Corps: Non-Mamlūks in High Positions

In his article, “The Remaking of the Military Elite of Mamlūk Egypt by al-Nāṣir Mūḥammad B. Qalāwūn,” Amitai-Preiss provides a list of al-Nāṣir’s senior amīrs as presented in the roster found in Nuzhat al-Mālik wa al-Mamlūk by al-Ḥasan b. ʿĀbd Allāh al-Ṣafadī for the expedition against the Mongols in 1313 CE. Amitai-Preiss claims that “this list resembles stop action photography” in that it gives us a good picture of who formed the ranks of the military elite of the Mamlūk army at this time.1416 Of the twenty two amīrs on this list, six were Nāṣiriyya, four were Mansūriyya, two were Ḥusāmiyya (Lājīn’s mamlūks), and ten were non-affiliated. Furthermore, among the ten non-affiliated amīrs, four were from non-mamlūk origins.1417 This means that they were not of slave origin and did not go through the system of training that the mamlūks had to complete before their emancipation and the start of their military careers. These four amīrs were: Jankalī b. al-Bābā (Mongol wāfīdī), Ḥusayn b. Jandār (son of a wāfīdī), Mughultāy b. Amīr Majlis (son of a wāfīdī), and Mūḥammad b. al-Wazīrī (son or grandson of a mamlūk).1418

Levanoni argues that al-Nāṣir’s fast-tracking and accelerated promotion of favorites and the recruitment and advancement of non-Mamlūks to high positions in the army was one of the ways (among others that were discussed above) by which this ruler undermined the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model (or “the Mamlūk system/traditional norms” as she refers to it)1419 that was established by the early sultans.1420 She gives examples of some of the sultan’s favorites (both mamlūks and non-mamlūks) such as Qawsūn, Bashtak, ʿAqbūghā ʿAbb al-Wāḥid, Bahādur al-Dīmurdāshī, Alṭunbūghā al-Mārdīnī, Maliktimur al-Ḥijāzī and the Wazīr Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Shirwān to demonstrate the possible negative effects of such swift promotion and favoritism.1421 From such examples al-Nāṣir is presented as an easily influenced and whimsical ruler who promoted his favorites based solely on the criterion of their good looks and charm. However, the

1416 Amitai-Preiss, “Remaking,” 146.
1417 Amitai-Preiss, “Remaking”, 148-149.
1418 Amitai-Preiss, “Remaking,” 149.
1419 Levanoni, Turning Point, 1-3, 30.
1420 Levanoni, Turning Point, 34-42, 197-198.
1421 Levanoni, Turning Point, 36-38, 40-41.
four non-mamlūks mentioned by al-Ṣafadī in the roster of 1313 CE are seldom mentioned or discussed. These men did not go through the Mamlūk training system and were promoted to high posts in the army very quickly. However, as I will demonstrate below, they were all very qualified and capable soldiers and generals, whose promotion to the rank of Amīr of One Hundred was an asset to both al-Nāṣir’s personal power and to the Mamlūk army. A brief recreation of the career biographies of the four above-mentioned amīrs will confirm their competence and qualifications for the posts to which al-Nāṣir did not hesitate to quickly promote them.

6.41 Mughulṭāy b. Amīr Majlis

Of the four amīrs mentioned in the roster of the 1313 CE campaign, the sources say the least about Mughulṭāy b. Amīr Majlis. Al-Ṣafadī’s entry for him is very short. It only states that he was the son of an Amīr Majlis (lord of the audience), who took up his residence in Damascus after leaving Cairo, that his rank was that of Amīr of One Hundred, and that he died in Damascus in 1333 CE. Baybars al-Manṣūrī also mentions him by name as one of the amīrs upon whom the sultan bestowed honors and wealth in 1311 CE and describes him as one of the great amīrs present when the sultan sat in dār al-ʿadl (the house of justice) to pass judgment and see to the affairs of the realm. Amitai-Preiss mentions, in his appendix, that he may have been the son of a Rūmī wāfīdī amīr, Sābiq al-Dīn Baybars (who was known as Amīr Majlis), who had fled to the Mamlūks after the Battle of Elbistan in 1277 CE. In this sense, one can compare Mughulṭāy b. Amīr Majlis to Ḥusayn b. Jandār, who was also the son of a Rūmī wāfīdī amīr and who happened to be a very skilled horseman, marksman, hunter, and soldier as will be discussed below. One can safely speculate that if Mughultāy b. Amīr Majlis and Ḥusayn b. Jandār came from the same milieu, then they probably would have had similar martial and riding skills. Thus, it could be conjectured that this individual may have had the skills and experience

1422 See Ayalon, Studies II,” 59.
1425 Amitai-Preiss, “Remaking,” 149.
1426 Amitai-Preiss, “Remaking,” 162.
There is also evidence to show that this amīr personally commanded at least one military expedition against some rebellious Arabs in 1315 CE.\footnote{\text{1428}}

\subsection*{6.42 Muḥammad b. al-Wazīrī}

The sources on Mūḥammad b. al-Wazīrī are also rather scarce. Both Ibn Kathīr and al-Ṣafadī describe him as being one of the great amīrs of his time. He was an amīr of One Hundred and Commander of One Thousand. He also represented the sultan in the dār al-ʿadl for a period of time (wa nāba ʿan al-ṣūlṭān bi-dār al-ʿadl muddatan).\footnote{\text{1429}} He also had a say regarding awqāf, and the appointment of qādis, and religious instructors in Egypt and was also an important commander of the left wing of the army.\footnote{\text{1430}} He died in Damascus and was buried there and left a great legacy (wa khallafa tarikatan ʿazīmatan).\footnote{\text{1431}}

It must be noted that Mūḥammad b. al-Wazīrī was a descendant\footnote{\text{1432}} of Ţaybars al-Wazīrī,\footnote{\text{1433}} who was a powerful Şāliḥī mamlūk amīr who served both Baybars and Qalāwūn. Baybars al-Manṣūrī mentions Ţaybars al-Wazīrī fulfilling important military roles on two occasions. First in 1272 CE he was given a joint command with ʿĪsā b. Muhannā, the amīr al-ʿarab of Syria, of a unit of the army during the campaign against the Mongol incursions. This

\footnotetext[1427]{Al-Shujāʿī does not mention Mughultāy b. Amīr Majlis in his work. However, he does mention a number of other Mughultāys one of whom he names Mughultāy al-Ghuzzī. Like Mughultāy b. Amīr Majlis, this amīr was also an Amīr of One Hundred and Commander of One Thousand. However, the dates and places of their death do not correlate. Ibn Amīr Majlis died in Damascus in 1333 CE, while al-Ghuzzī died in Ayās in 1341 CE, and according to this author he played a major role in fighting the Armenians and conquering the area and was made its governor. See al-Shujāʿī, \text{Tārīkh al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad}, 97, 114, 123, 124. I point out this individual because of his nisba, al-Ghuzzī (i.e., the Ghuzz or Oghuzz), meaning that he was of Ghuzz Turk origin and that he (or his ancestors) may have come from Rüm to join the Mamlūks. This may mean that perhaps two individuals have been confused or the two sources might have different information on the same person (I will more clearly demonstrate this later in my discussion of Jankali b. al-Bābā).}

\footnotetext[1428]{Al-Maqrīzī, \text{al-Sulūk}, vol. 2, part 1, 145.}

\footnotetext[1429]{Al-Ṣafadī, \text{Aʿyān}, vol. 5, 298; Ibn Kathīr, \text{al-Bidāya}, vol. 14, 79.}

\footnotetext[1430]{Ibn Kathīr calls him the chamberlain of the left wing (ḥājib al-maysara), whereas al-Ṣafadī calls him the commander/lord of the left wing (ṣāḥib al-maysara).}

\footnotetext[1431]{Al-Ṣafadī, \text{Aʿyān}, vol. 5, 298; al-Maqrīzī, \text{al-Sulūk}, vol. 2, part 1, 169; Ibn Kathīr, \text{al-Bidāya}, vol. 14, 79.}

\footnotetext[1432]{I say “descendant” because Amitai-Preiss says that he is either the son or the grandson of a mamlūk. Amitai-Preiss, “Remaking”, 149.}

\footnotetext[1433]{For more on this amīr see Baybars al-Manṣūrī, \text{Zubda}, 98, al-Maqrīzī, \text{Sulūk}, vol. 1, part 3, 663; Northrup, \text{From Slave}, 75, 110.}
force met the Mongols and decisively defeated them. Second, Ṭaybars al-Wazīrī is also named as one of the senior commanders of the Mamlūk army’s right wing at the decisive Mamlūk victory against the Mongols at the Battle of Ḥimṣ in 1281 CE. It is clear that Muḥammad b. al-Wazīrī rose to senior posts due to his powerful and illustrious ancestor, but he is praised in the sources as being a great amīr himself. Furthermore, he was one of the senior commanders who led a combined Egyptian and Syrian army in the conquest of Malta in 1315 CE. This amīr’s military activity shows that he was not only raised to his high position because he was a descendent of a high ranking mamlūk, but also because he himself must have been a skilled general in addition to being well educated in law and politics.

6.43 Ḫusayn b. Jandār

There is a considerable amount of information on Ḫusayn b. Jandār in the sources. He was the son of a wāfidī who emigrated to the Mamlūk realm from Rūm with his father during al-Ẓāhir Baybars’ reign. He is unanimously described by the authors of the Mamlūk sources as being a superb horseman whose courage knew no bounds, an excellent archer, and a skilled hunter. The sources also mention that he was a sure shot with the bow and never missed a target, whether a bird in the air or a beast on land, and that he was very skilled at hunting with birds of prey. His career as an officer in the army began before al-Nāṣir’s third reign. Al-Ṣafādī mentions that he was an experienced warrior both in field battles and in sieges out of which he always emerged victorious. He had served Ḫusām al-Dīn Lājīn when he was still the nā’ib in Syria. When Lājīn became sultan he raised Ḫusayn first to an amirate of ten and then forty.

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1434 Baybars al-Manṣūrī, al-Tuhfa, 73.
1436 Levanoni, Turning Point, 28-29, 45.
1437 Ibn Ḥajar al-ʻAsqalānī, al-Durar, 137.
When al-Nāṣir marched on Cairo to begin his third reign, Ḥusayn b. Jandār was one of the Syrian amīrs who supported him and joined the ranks of his army. The sources state that he was able to become one of the close companions of the sultan (khawāṣṣ) by the end of the journey through the means of “schemes” (hiyal). He capitalized on his skills as a horseman, a hunter, and as a sure shot to impress al-Nāṣir. For instance, while on the march he made wagers with the sultan saying, “If I shoot that bird with an arrow/hunt him with this falcon, you will emerge the victor and the ruler of Egypt.” This amīr’s charm and skills with the bow seem to have pleased the sultan, as he promoted him to the rank of Amīr of One Hundred and made him amīr shikār (commander/master of the hunt) and gave him charge of the royal hunting birds.

An interesting episode occurred in 1312 CE when the sultan went on pilgrimage to Mecca. Ḥusayn fell off his horse, broke his leg, and had to remain in Damascus but rejoined the sultan on his return journey to Egypt. While he was injured, the nā’ib of Damascus, Tankiz, visited him on several occasions. Ḥusayn did not remain in Egypt for very long because the climate there did not seem to agree with his health, so he was sent back to Damascus by the sultan. He enjoyed a high standing in Damascus until he and Tankiz argued over property, as a result of which Tankiz petitioned the sultan to have him punished and have his properties and wealth confiscated for disrespecting and assaulting him (a superior). However, the sultan ordered Ḥusayn to move to Ṣafad and allowed him to retain his wealth and properties. When Tankiz requested that Ḥusayn be allowed to return to Damascus, al-Nāṣir ordered him to return to Egypt and treated him with kindness and generosity and he stayed there until he died 1329

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1441 The sources say different things regarding how Ḥusayn b. Jandār impressed al-Nāṣir on the journey. However, they all agree on the point that he was a very skillful horseman, marksman, and hunter and used these skills to get closer to the sultan on their journey to Cairo, al-Ṣafadī, A’yān, vol. 2, 261.


1444 This amīr, though nominally nā’ib al-ṣalṭana, was virtually the ruler of Syria for most of al-Nāṣir’s reign and exercised immense power in this region. See Irwin, Middle East, 107.

1445 Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī says they argued over horses in the horse market; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, al-Durar, vol. 2, 137, whereas, al-Ṣafadī says they argued over [the ownership of/the income from] sugar cane fields in the village of ‘Amtanā (in Jordan), and also in the horse market; al-Ṣafadī, al-Wāfī, vol. 12, 348; al-Ṣafadī, A’yān, vol. 2, 261.

1446 Aal-Ṣafadī describes an episode of their arguments in which Tankiz stood up in anger and Ḥusayn did likewise and grabbed his patron’s neck to choke him. When he realized what he was doing, he tried to salvage the situation by kissing Tankiz’s forehead. See al-Ṣafadī, al-Wāfī, vol. 12, 348.
It was al-Nāṣir’s love for this amīr that allowed him to escape intact from the wrath of Tankiz. In Egypt this amīr was honored and held in high esteem by al-Nāṣir and was definitely among the great magnates of the realm. He was at the head of the right wing and then given the command of the left wing of the army. He was also given some tablakhānāt, musical bands that played at the entrances of some amīrs’ homes (usually Amīrs of Forty and their superiors), to distribute among his relatives. He was also a great builder. He built a mosque in Ḥijr Jawhar al-Nūbī in Cairo and the bridge across the Khalīj adjacent to this mosque. The sultan was very sorrowful when Ḥusyan died. He gave his mamlūks iqṭāʿāt and arranged for his wife, daughters, and other relatives to receive pensions, and even freed his birds of prey, acts which al-Nāṣir did not perform for any of his other amīrs.

It is true that al-Nāṣir may have been attracted to Ḥusayn b. Jandār’s charm, exotic accent, and maybe even his physical appearance, as this sultan had a weakness for handsome and pretty-faced young men and liked to purchase and promote them and to surround himself with them. However, once again the case of Ḥusayn b. Jandār shows that it was not merely his charm, light-heartedness, and good looks that elevated him to the highest ranks of the Mamlūk army. Despite being of non-mamlūk origin, this amīr still worked his way up the ranks of the officer corps and was clearly a skilled soldier, politician, and builder. Therefore, despite breaking with tradition, al-Nāṣir promoted a qualified individual who already possessed those qualities that mamlūks received during their training to the rank of Amīr of One Hundred.

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1450 He was given the authority to promote individuals to the rank of Amīr of Forty or to afford them the honor of having a band play at their homes. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʻAsqalānī does not state how many of these posts he was given to distribute among his family members. See Ibn Ḥajar al-ʻAsqalānī, al-Durar, vol. 2, 138.
1452 Al-Ṣafadī, A’yān, vol. 2, 263.
1454 Irwin, Middle East, 107; Levanoni, Turning Point, 34; Waterson, Knights, 221.
6.44 Jankalī b. al-Bābā

The last of the four non-mamlūk amīrs Amitai-Preiss mentions is Jankalī b. al-Bābā. This wāfīdī amīr is definitely the most important among the four listed in the 1313 CE roster of senior amīrs. As a matter of fact, he was one of the most powerful amīrs of the sultanate, despite being of non-mamlūk origin. The sources also give a more detailed account of his life and career than they do for the other amīrs, showing his importance and the impact he had on the regime.

Before proceeding to outline Jankalī b. al-Bābā’s career, there is one problematic issue that must be addressed. This problem regards the honorific title of this amīr. Most of the sources refer to him as Badr al-Dīn Jankalī b. al-Bābā. However Baybars al-Manṣūrī mentions both a Sayf al-Dīn Jankalī b. al-Bābā and a Badr al-Dīn Jankalī b. al-Bābā. Thus raising the question of whether there were two Jankalī b. al-Bābā’s or if these titles refer to one and the same person or simply whether the author may have made a mistake with the names. I contend that there could only have been one Jankalī b. al-Bābā, because the events in the life of this individual, taking either of the honorific titles, described by Baybars al-Manṣūrī correlate with the accounts given in the biographical dictionaries of al-Ṣafadī and Ibn Ḥajar. Thus, when Northrup and Irwin refer to him as Sayf al-Dīn and Badr al-Dīn respectively, they are referring to the same individual.

Prior to his move to Egypt, Jankalī b. al-Bābā was an amīr of the Ilkhanate. He must have been an important individual because al-Ashraf Khalīl wrote to him requesting that he enter his service and offered him high standing at his court and a good iqṭā’. However, at this point he was unable to make the journey to Egypt to join the Mamlūks. He finally managed to move to

1455 Baybars al-Manṣūrī, al-Tuhfā 109, 175.
1457 Who refers to him as Sayf al-Dīn based on Baybars al-Manṣūrī’s and Ibn Taghrī Birdī’s accounts. See Northrup, Slave to Sultan, 40.
1458 Who refers to him as Badr al-Dīn based on Ibn Ḥajar al-ʻAsqalānī’s work. See Irwin, Middle East, 108.
1459 The sources do not give a reason for his inability to join the Mamlūks at this point except for stating that he was only able to leave the Ilkhanate after the death of the Ilkānid ruler, Ghāzān. al-Ṣafadī, A’yan, vol. 2, 164; al-Ṣafadī, al-Wāfi, vol. 11, 199; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʻAsqalānī, al-Durar, vol. 2, 76.
Egypt in 1304 CE with his whole family, his retainers, and his wealth. Al-Nāṣir commanded all of his amīrs and governors to honor this wāfidī amīr and his retinue and to treat them with the utmost respect and hospitality as they travelled through their lands towards Cairo. The sultan himself warmly welcomed Jankalī b. al-Bābā and those who were with him and honored them. He bestowed the rank of Amīr of One Hundred upon him immediately and gave him a rich iqṭā’. He also bestowed ranks and lands upon several of his retainers and family members who had accompanied him.

Once again we see al-Nāṣir breaking with tradition and promoting a non-mamlūk to the loftiest military rank in the sultanate very quickly. One must stop here and ask why? Jankalī b. al-Bābā must have been an amīr of high standing in the Ilkhanate because both al-Nāṣir and his predecessor had encouraged him to defect to the Mamlūks with his amīrs. There is little in the sources about this individual’s background prior to his defection to the Mamlūks. However, these miniscule references in the Arabic sources show that he was indeed an important Mongol amīr and military commander. His father was al-Bābā b. ʿAbd Allāh one of the great amīrs of the Mongols. Al-Bābā was the governor of Mosul and is described as a great and just ruler; he died in battle in 1280 CE. Jankalī b. al-Bābā himself was the ruler of Diyār Bakr, as we know from al-Ṣafadī who mentions that he heard that after his departure, a Mongol commander was dispatched from the ordu to take his place. Jankalī b. al-Bābā was also one of the commanders of a Mongol army of 10,000 that raided Syria in 1292 CE; this force withdrew upon learning that the Mamlūk army was nearby. Baybars al-Manṣūrī describes another encounter between this amīr and the Mamlūk army, this time while the mamlūks were raiding Armenia. Upon learning that some mamlūks were in the vicinity, Jankalī b. al-Bābā, who was leading a group of Qarāghūl Mongols, ordered a detachment of his force to advance. The Mamlūks


1462 According to the date reported in the sources, it is highly likely that al-Bābā died either during the campaign of the Battle of Ḥimṣ or at the battle itself (as the date given by the chronicler may by inaccurate). This date’s close proximity to this major clash between the Mongols and the Mamlūks makes it highly improbable that any of the great Mongol amīrs would have been sent to fight elsewhere. Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Manhal, vol. 3, 231.

1463 Aʿyān, vol. 2, 166.

1464 Baybars al-Manṣūrī, al-Tuhfā, 131.
attacked them and in the ensuing fight the Mongols were defeated with heavy losses.\textsuperscript{1465} Therefore, this amīr was no stranger to commanding armies and fighting battles. Moreover, as a senior amīr of the Ilkanate he was a member of the Mongol military elite. So it should come as no surprise that al-Nāṣir took advantage of the defection of one of the great magnates of his enemies and elevated him to the position of a senior amīr in his own realm.

In addition to the experiences gained as an amīr in the Ilkhanate, Jankalī b. al-Babā also had several other praiseworthy attributes befitting an individual of his rank and position. He is described as being very generous; for example, he paid 8,000 \textit{ardab} of wheat and 4,000 silver \textit{dirhams} annually for the \textit{zakāt}.\textsuperscript{1466} These figures not only indicate his generosity, but also showcase his vast wealth. He is also described as being very just and pious and is said to have known one quarter of the prayers by heart (\textit{wa kāna ya’rifu rub’ al-’ibādāt}).\textsuperscript{1467} Moreover, he liked to surround himself with scholars and men of religion.\textsuperscript{1468} He is also described as being chaste;\textsuperscript{1469} the sources state that he never went to the bed of a woman other than his wife.\textsuperscript{1470}

Jankalī b. al-Bābā remained in a position of power and prominence from the time of his arrival in Egypt to the day of his death. Never once did he fall out of favor with the sultan, and if anything, his power, authority, and influence grew with the passing of time. Furthermore, the marriage of his daughter to al-Nāṣir’s son, Ibrāhīm b. Mūḥammad b. Qalāwūn,\textsuperscript{1471} also forged a link between this \textit{wāfidi} Mongol and the royal Qalāwūnid family.\textsuperscript{1472} He also had a lot of influence to carry out his will within the realm. For example, a certain Mughultāy b. Qilīj,\textsuperscript{1473}

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{1465} Baybars al-Manṣūrī, \textit{Zubda}, 240.
\item \textsuperscript{1466} Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, \textit{al-Durar}, vol. 2, 77.
\item \textsuperscript{1467} This can only mean that he had one quarter of the Qur’ān committed to memory. al-Ṣafadī, \textit{A’yān}, vol. 2, 163; al-Ṣafadī, \textit{al-Wāfi}, vol. 11, 200.
\item \textsuperscript{1468} al-Ṣafadī, \textit{A’yān}, vol. 2, 163-164; al-Ṣafadī, \textit{al-Wāfi}, vol. 11, 200.
\item \textsuperscript{1469} It is interesting to note here that this quality (and the others mentioned before it) appears in the advice literatures (especially Persian advice literature) as being those of a good king/ruler. For example, being chaste is mentioned as being one of the positive attributes of a good king in the Qābūs Nāmēh. Kāy Kā’ūs b. Iskandar, \textit{Qābūs Nāmēh}, 130.
\item \textsuperscript{1470} Al-Ṣafadī, \textit{A’yān}, vol. 2, 163; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, \textit{al-Durar}, vol. 2, 76.
\item \textsuperscript{1471} Al-Ṣafadī, \textit{A’yān}, vol. 1, 119.
\item \textsuperscript{1472} Al-Ṣafadī, \textit{A’yān}, vol. 2, 165; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, \textit{al-Durar}, vol. 2, 77.
\item \textsuperscript{1473} For more on him see the entry in al-Ṣafadī, \textit{A’yān al-‘Aṣr}, vol. 5, 433-434.
\end{enumerate}
who had been imprisoned, was released upon the insistence of Jankalī b. al-Bābā. This amīr also took over the supervision of the Manṣūrī Bīmāristān in 1343 CE. These examples show that Jankalī b. al-Bābā had a hand in many different facets of Mamlūk politics and society. However, he is said to have declined promotions to the position of a regional nāʿīb (governor) on more than one occasion, opting instead to remain in Cairo near the sultan and the center of power.

Not only did Jankalī b. al-Bābā attain the rank of Amīr of One Hundred, but he also eventually rose to the rank of first commander of the right wing of the army after having been the second in command for some time. He was definitely one of the amīrs who was called up to lead the army whenever a Mongol threat was perceived (while it still lasted); for instance he is named as the commander of the Egyptian force that was sent to Syria when news arrived that the Mongols were planning an attack in 1312 CE. The sultan also made him the commander of the army that he sent to Syria in 1340 CE to fight and capture Tankiz, because he feared he would lose Syria to this ambitious governor.

Jankalī b. al-Bābā’s role as kingmaker after al-Nāṣir’s death shows the true extent of his power and influence. He played a major role in deposing al-Nāṣir Aḥmad b. Muḥammad and replacing him with his brother al-Ṣāliḥ Ismāʿīl. Al-Nāṣir Aḥmad left Cairo for Karak in what looks like an attempt to imitate his father’s strategy to get rid of the great amīrs who controlled the affairs of the realm. Jankalī b. al-Bābā went to Karak with a group of senior amīrs to persuade him to return with them, which he refused to do. He then tried to rule the realm from Karak, which displeased many of the amīrs and the subjects. It was Jankalī b. al-Bābā, who at this point, encouraged the deposition of this sultan and his replacement with his brother. He was the first to swear allegiance to the new sultan and he compelled the other amīrs to also swear

1479 Al-Shujāʾī, Tārīkh al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, 81.
their loyalty to the new sovereign.\textsuperscript{1481} He also led the Egyptian army to besiege Karak, which eventually ended with the death of al-Nāṣir Aḥmad in 1344 CE.\textsuperscript{1482} Jankalī b. al-Bābā died shortly afterwards in 1346 CE.\textsuperscript{1483}

It is quite clear from the biographies of these four non-mamlūk amīrs that they were competent and experienced military men, rulers, and politicians. At the point when they were promoted to the rank of Amīr of One Hundred it would not have made any sense to put such valuable and experienced men through the training and education process undergone by mamlūk recruits. Furthermore, al-Nāṣir’s choice of such men to form a part of his military elite shows that this sultan not only whimsically promoted pretty-faced retainers and favorites, but also deserving and able individuals with whom he could strengthen his army and bolster his power base in his bid for absolute control.

\textbf{6.5 Analysis of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s Break with Tradition and Its Consequences}

Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s changes to the army as discussed above have prompted several scholars to conclude that this sultan’s reign was a turning point for the worse in Mamlūk history. Levanoni concludes that al-Nāṣir’s break with the traditions pertaining to the recruiting, training, rewarding, and promoting of mamlūks set by his predecessors had far reaching implications and had “harmful and destabilizing” effects on the Mamlūk army and regime as a whole.\textsuperscript{1484} Overall, this historian paints a grim picture of a weakened, untrained, disloyal, and inefficient army that al-Nāṣir left behind. However, despite such assertions, she cannot explain why the Mamlūk sultanate and its army did not collapse after al-Nāṣir’s death. She asks “If, as the present study has tried to show, the Mamluk system lost its military vigor at a relatively early stage, how did it survive for as long as it did?”\textsuperscript{1485} As a matter of fact this regime survived for another 177 years after al-Nāṣir’s death, a period that accounts for two thirds of its existence.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1481} Al-Ṣafadī, \textit{Aʿyān}, vol. 1, 524, vol. 2, 165
\item \textsuperscript{1482} Al-Ṣafadī, \textit{al-Wāfī}, vol. 11, 201; al-Ṣafadī, \textit{Aʿyān}, vol. 1, 524, 525; al-Shujāʿī, \textit{Tārīkh al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad}, 258-260.
\item \textsuperscript{1483} Al-Ṣafadī, \textit{al-Wāfī}, vol. 11, 201; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, \textit{al-Durar}, vol. 2, 77.
\item \textsuperscript{1484} Levanoni, \textit{Turning Point}, 197.
\item \textsuperscript{1485} Levanoni, \textit{Turning Point}, 199.
\end{itemize}
The answer to this question is clear. Despite breaking with the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model, al-Nāṣir was acting as a strong ruler and a successful state-builder. He reorganized his army in a way that enabled him to better control it and to reduce the power of its officers and prevent them from challenging him and becoming potential rivals in the future. Thus, he created a new, powerful, and loyal patrimonial household upon which he could depend. After this reorganization the Mamlūk army started to resemble the militaries of the Diversified Army Model. Furthermore, this ruler was adjusting to the changing military and political situation in the region, which saw the Mamlūks as the only superpower remaining in the Middle East after the expulsion of the Crusaders and the collapse of the Ilkhanate.

Al-Nāṣir carried out a major purge of the officer corps and the high ranking amīrs of the sultanate in the early years of his third reign. It would become his policy throughout his reign to get rid of any amīrs who got too powerful or whom he perceived to be a threat. Al-Nāṣir quickly replaced the purged amīrs with his own mamlūks or raised unaffiliated mamlūks and even non-mamlūks to high positions. All of these newly appointed officers depended on the sultan for their positions and well-being and formed his power base. As mentioned earlier, by raising such a diverse group to the highest positions in the sultanate al-Nāṣir created a system of balances and counter-balances to ensure that power was concentrated in his hands and that no group could emerge as the supreme faction in the sultanate. This practice is very reminiscent of the “balanced” army mentioned in the Persian advice literature. Lastly, the fact that al-Nāṣir was not a mamlūk probably spurred his policy of bringing non-mamlūk elements into the army and raising them to high posts in order to reinforce his position against those mamlūk amīrs who opposed him.

The void created after the purging of many high ranking Manṣūriyya and Ashraffīyya amīrs had to be filled and al-Nāṣir had no choice at this point but to fast track many of his own mamlūks through the promotion system and to raise qualified non-affiliated mamlūk and non-mamlūk amīrs to fill the vacant positions. It may seem that al-Nāṣir’s purge and reshuffling of the officer corps was a drastic measure on his part to centralize power in the person of the sultan,

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but it was not the first instance in which a Mamlūk sultan took such measures. Al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn also carried out a purge of his predecessor’s mamlūks, the Ẓāhiriyya, upon his accession to the throne.\(^{1488}\) The only difference was that Qalāwūn had gone through the stages of training and promotion of the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model and was a member of the Baḥriyya regiment, whereas al-Nāṣir was freeborn and did not have a power base in the army. Furthermore, al-Nāṣir was not the first sultan to fast-track his mamlūks and supporters through the ranks in order to solidify his position. As a matter of fact, upon his accession to the sultanate Baybars elevated many of his own \(khushdāshiyya\) to high positions. Several of these Baḥrī mamlūks were raised to amirates from the rank and file soldiery of the regiment.\(^{1489}\) Similarly, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb purchased Qalāwūn for 1,000 \(dīnārs\) (which earned Qalāwūn the title \(al-alfī\)) based on his exceptionally good looks. This beauty also helped Qalāwūn rise through the ranks more quickly than others, especially early on in his career.\(^{1490}\) The major similarity between al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and his predecessors such as Baybars and Qalāwūn was that they were all successful state builders who managed to reshuffle the royal court, to build up strong patrimonial households, and to reorganize and gain full control over the army. As mentioned above, one major and unique characteristic of the Mamlūk sultanate was that every ruler was a state builder who created a new patrimonial household and ruling apparatus after demolishing the power structures of his predecessor. So in effect, every successful Mamlūk ruler, rather than inherit and use his predecessors’ network of allies and supporters, purged them and raised and set up his own support networks and power structures at court and in the army.

As discussed in the previous section, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad has also frequently been blamed for relaxing the standards of training and discipline for the rank and file mamlūks in the army. Just as he fast tracked officers through the ranks, al-Nāṣir also expedited his mamlūks’ training process due to his immediate need for loyal and dependent supporters to strengthen his internal position vis-à-vis the powerful amīrs. When al-Nāṣir left Cairo after his second reign only seventy-five mamlūks and a small number of amīrs accompanied him into exile.\(^{1491}\) Even

\(^{1488}\) Amitai-Preiss, \(Mongols and Mamluks\), 218; Ṭaqqūsh, \(Tārīkh al-Mamālīk\), 173.

\(^{1489}\) Amitai-Preiss, “Mamluk Officer Class,” 273.

\(^{1490}\) Shāfi’ b. ʻAlī, \(al-Faḍl\), 25.

\(^{1491}\) Al-Maqṭūzī, \(al-Sulūk\), vol. 2, part 1, 43.
though most of the amīrs joined him on his march back to Cairo prior to his third reign, al-Nāṣir could not depend on them because they had betrayed him and his predecessors on more than one occasion. Thus, he needed to increase the numbers of his mamlūks quickly during his third reign. Therefore, he had no choice but to quickly advance his own mamlūks through the training and promotion processes.

Al-Nāṣir’s destruction of hippodromes has been cited by some as a sign of his neglecting the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model with regard to both training and discipline. Several scholars state that this ruler attempted to wipe out the legacy of his predecessors by abandoning the military traditions they established and demolishing any structure that preserved their legacy.\textsuperscript{1492} This may be true to some extent, but al-Nāṣir also built new hippodromes where the mamlūks trained and honed their martial skills. In fact, like the earlier sultans, al-Nāṣir personally participated in the military exercises and the games.\textsuperscript{1493} This sultan, like rulers such as Baybars, held several military reviews to inspect his army and demoted or expelled those who did not present themselves as being fit to serve.\textsuperscript{1494}

Al-Nāṣir is also accused of spoiling his mamlūks and trying to buy their loyalty through rewards and permissiveness. This permissiveness is cited as one of the leading causes that led to a breakdown in the loyalty and discipline of the Mamlūk army. It is true that al-Nāṣir spoiled his mamlūks and was very permissive with them, but he was also stern when he had to assert his authority over them.\textsuperscript{1495} Severe disciplinary measures were taken against mutinous mamlūks and examples were certainly made of some of them. For example, in one instance seven mamlūks were cut in half under the citadel (\textit{wuṣṣita taht al-Qal‘a sab‘an min mamālīk Aqūsh al-Rūmī}) for murdering their amīr, Aqūsh al-Rūmī, and stealing his money. Furthermore, section 4.2 of this study has shown that al-Nāṣir was not the first sultan to spoil his mamlūks and that a lack of discipline in the ranks, as well as disloyalty and betrayal, had plagued the Mamlūk army from the very inception of the sultanate. The reason these characteristics became more pronounced during

\textsuperscript{1492} Levanoni, \textit{Turning Point}, 12, 30-31, 158-160.
\textsuperscript{1495} Hasan, \textit{al-Nāṣir Muhammad b. Qalāwūn}, 43.
and after al-Nāṣir’s third reign was because both the Crusaders and the Mongols, who had been a constant external threat, had been eliminated as rivals by the early fourteenth century CE. This shift in the political and military situation in the region allowed the army and the Mamlūk elite to focus more on the internal power struggles of the sultanate without having to worry about being threatened by foreign powers.¹⁴⁹⁶

The Mamlūk army was composed of professional full-time soldiers. These men did not disband to return to their farms or artisanal professions as part-time or conscript soldiers did at the end of a campaigning season. The mamlūks continued in their military role during times of peace and lived either in the Royal barracks or the amīrs’ households. Furthermore, they had to be paid year round. Their sources of revenue came in the form of salaries (jāmakiyya) for the rank and file soldiers and the income from iqtāʿāt for the amīrs. During times of war these sources of revenue were supplemented with booty gained from looting and plundering enemy territories and from conquests, which also boosted the wealth of the central treasury. It should come as no surprise that a full-time professional force such as the Mamlūk army was very expensive to maintain, and during times of peace the strain on the state must have been even greater due to the lack of extra revenues that it derived from the conquests and plunder of enemy territories.

Section 4.2 of this study has also shown that the rulers of the sultanate had been able to divert the martial energies of their mamlūks against external enemies. The Mamlūk army was heavily employed in fighting against both Mongols and Crusaders for the first few decades of the sultanate and then pillaging their camps, towns, castles, and villages. However, with the disappearance of these foes, it not only became more difficult to pay the army, but it was also harder to control its depredations within the sultanate. Their ravages increased greatly in the later period as we shall discuss in greater detail in Chapter 6. The only reason that such excesses did not occur in Cairo and within the sultanate more frequently in the first six decades of its existence was because the army committed these depredations on enemy soil and sated their martial aggressions and desire for loot in military campaigns against outsiders.

¹⁴⁹⁶ We will see in the last chapter that it was the Mamlūks’ inability to set these internal differences aside when facing external foes such as the Ottomans that partially contributed to their final defeat.
It seems that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s practices regarding the army introduced changes and a break with the Šāliḥī Mamlūk Model only because this sultan’s third reign was so long and successful. Many similar changes had been introduced and implemented by his predecessors, albeit on a smaller scale. Furthermore, this sultan’s experiences and the changes in the military and political situation of the region made it more possible for him to implement such practices on a larger scale without having to worry about the danger of formidable external foes. This factor also allowed al-Nāṣir to make some perhaps whimsical appointments to high positions based on the good looks of some of the members of his retinue, a luxury his predecessors did not have due to the very real danger posed by the Crusader and the Mongols (although he was shrewd enough to also appoint qualified men to high posts).

One last question must be asked here before proceeding to discuss the Mamlūk army in the Circassian period of the sultanate. Were al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s policies aimed at creating balances and counter-balances in the military an innovation on his part or was he aware of the Persian advice literature and what these works said about the ideal army of the powerful ruler (the Diversified Army Model)? I have not found any evidence in the sources that explicitly states that al-Nāṣir ever read works such as the Siyāsat Nāmeh or the Qābūs Nāmeh. However, it is highly unlikely that he or his predecessors had not been exposed to ideas from the east. Many of the mamlūks were from the Ilkhanid territories, which included the homeland of the authors of the Persian advice literature. Furthermore, the waves of wāfidiyya brought thousands of soldiers and amīrs into the Mamlūk sultanate from Iraq, Persia, and Anatolia. Some of these men must have been aware of the ideas present in the Persian advice literature and may have even brought some texts with them.

The case of Ḥamza Shams al-Dīn al-Turkmānī illustrates this point very well. He was one of the Turkmen wāfidi amīrs from the east. In his entry on this individual, al-Ṣafadī states that he had a copy of the Shāh Nāmeh. This amīr read entries from this text every day and recited them from memory by night. This is a very important piece of information because it shows that the wāfidiyya could have brought other Persian texts from the east including advice literature. This evidence also shows that rulers such as al-Nāṣir Muḥammad may have been aware of the

1497 Al-Ṣafadī, A’yān, vol. 2, 300-301.
idea of organizing the army based on the Diversified Army Model. Linda Darling’s *A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East* addresses the notion of ideas present in the Persian advice literature, such as the concept of the Circle of Justice, being transferred to the Mamlūk sultanate. She also cites several scholars who make references to such ideas in their works. Barbara Flemming states that many scholars, tutors, jurists and *kuttāb* were of Turkic and even Persian origin who were imported into the Mamlūk sultanate throughout its existence by the sultans and amīrs from Anatolia, Iraq, and Azerbaijan. In his article “Sitting with Ottomans and Standing with Persians,” Kristof D’hulster asserts that “Mamluk court culture was characterized by a strong mixed Perso-Turkic flavour, or, to put it like James Stewart-Robinson, ‘(it) represents an important era in the cultural cross-fertilization of Arabic, Persian and Turkish literatures.’” D’hulster examines previous studies done on the text, its language, contents and structure, author, date and place of composition, the dedicatee (sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī), and the motives for translating this text from Persian to Turkish. It is not within the scope of the current study to present a detailed summary of D’hulster’s finding. However, it is important to mention it here because it sheds light on the point that Persian texts were present, read, and translated in the courts of the Mamlūk sultans. Thus, there is a good probability that sultans such as al-Nāṣir were aware of the material regarding the ideal army presented in the Persian advice literature; on the other hand there may have been some innovation, borne by necessity, in their actions when they chose to break with the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model.

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1498 For a detailed discussion of this topic see Chapter 7 of Darling, *A History of Social Justice*, 103-127.


1502 We must not forget that there are several texts of Arabic advice literature and military manuals that also mention diverse armies, albeit most of them do not go into as much detail on this topic as the Persian texts. See Chapter 2.

1503 This break was not a permanent one. As mentioned earlier, the Mamlūk army was never uniform because every sultan acted as a new state-builder and reorganized it (or attempted to reorganize it) in order to maintain his position. Thus, the army fluctuated between the two military models, sometimes leaning more closely to the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model and at others to the Diversified Army Model depending on the ruling sultan and on the political and military situation in the region.
Chapter 7

The Mamlūk Army in the Later Period of the Sultanate

Modern historians and specialists on the Mamlūk period appear to almost unanimously agree about a marked decrease in the quality of the training, efficiency, discipline, and performance of the Mamlūk army during the Circassian period. David Ayalon argues this point in several of his works and laid the foundation for the idea of the Mamlūk sultanate’s waning, which several other scholars have echoed. Ayalon states the level of training in the Mamlūk army was declining throughout the Circassian period which led to the deterioration of its effectiveness. He also says that the furūsiyya exercises were only renewed towards the end of the sultanate by al-Ghawrī (r. 1501-1516 CE).\textsuperscript{1504} He explains that during the Circassian period many of the amīrs and sultans brought their adult relatives into the sultanate with the result that their training time in the military schools was shortened. He argues that this fast-tracking through the training process is one of the reasons that the mamlūks of the later period of the sultanate were mediocre soldiers at best compared to those of the early period.\textsuperscript{1505} Ayalon also gives examples of the results of this poor training, stating that the julbān were so poorly trained and ineffective that they were put to flight by a Cairo mob on one occasion and by an amīr’s retinue, which was smaller in number and whose equipment was of lower quality, on another. To further support this point, Ayalon takes Ibn Taghrī Birdī’s statement at face value when he says that the julbān could be routed by even the most insignificant black slaves.\textsuperscript{1506}

Several historians of the Mamlūk period have accepted Ayalon’s over-simplified account of the fall of the Mamlūk army and it has been echoed in a number of works of which I will mention a few. As discussed earlier, Levanoni argues that the decline did indeed occur and that it was initiated by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad during his third reign even before the Circassian period. Carl Petry states that the mounted mamlūk warrior’s fighting style had become outmoded\textsuperscript{1507} and

\textsuperscript{1504} Ayalon, Gunpowder, 52-55.
\textsuperscript{1505} Ayalon, “Circassians,” 144-145.
\textsuperscript{1506} Ayalon, “Studies I,” 211.
\textsuperscript{1507} Petry, Twilight, 162.
that the mamlūks “had become an interest group whose field reliability was dubious.”\textsuperscript{1508} Waterson describes the army under the Bahris as being one that was “near-perfection” but states that under the Circassians it fell from being an elite army to a second rate force.\textsuperscript{1509} He also says that by the time the sultanate went to war with the Ottoman empire, the mamlūk soldiers could not even depend on their individual capabilities and skills against the numerically superior Ottoman armies due to their neglect of the \textit{furūsiyya} exercises.\textsuperscript{1510} Har-El also mentions that the Mamlūk military fell apart and lost its effectiveness due to the neglect of the traditional training practices, exemption for some members of the army from field service through corrupt practices, the dwindling of the martial vigor and spirit of the soldiers, and a failure to adopt firearms.\textsuperscript{1511} Garcin cites the \textit{julbān} as being a constant threat to the stability of the sultanate through their depredations, unruliness, and lack of discipline.\textsuperscript{1512} Although the most recent scholarship has challenged the early theories on the “decline” of the Mamlūk sultanate, there have not been any studies focused on the military that analyze the organization structure, and effectiveness of the Mamlūk army throughout the history of the sultanate. As discussed in Chapter 1, these studies have argued that the Mamlūk sultanate went through a series of social and political changes, which have been interpreted as decline by the earlier generations of scholars of mamlūk history. Loiseau’s ideas on the constant changes that the sultanate underwent through series of \textit{dawlas}, the remilitarization of the sultanate during the fifteenth century, and his assessment on the high quality training of the army despite the closure of several hippodromes have been instrumental in the new approach to studying the later period of the Mamlūk sultanate. However, even some of the most recent works such as Elbendary’s monograph has conformed to the idea of the decrease in the quality of the Mamlūk army during the Circassian period.

This chapter will examine the Mamlūk army in the Circassian period. It will show that the army did not weaken or deteriorate to the extent that historians have claimed and that those areas where a perceived change did occur resulted not from a shortcoming of the training and

\textsuperscript{1508} Petry, “Military Institution,” 468.
\textsuperscript{1509} Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 251.
\textsuperscript{1510} Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 265.
\textsuperscript{1511} Har-El, \textit{Struggle}, 55.
\textsuperscript{1512} Garcin, “Regime of the Circassian Mamlūks,” 309-310.
discipline of the soldiery, but rather as a consequence of both internal and external military and political factors that had dictated the policies, practices, attitudes, and stances of the sultans, amīrs, and the army as a whole from the very inception of the sultanate. It must be mentioned again here that the Mamlūk army went through frequent changes because the reign of every successful sultan, not only al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, was a turning point for the sultanate and the army because each one of these rulers is best viewed as an independent state-builder. Additionally, an indication of the continued efficiency and effectiveness of the Mamlūk army in the Circassian era was its consistently good performance when it took the field against an enemy, a fact that we shall demonstrate.

7.1 The Late Mamlūk Army: Structure, Training, and Composition

The Mamlūk army’s structure and organization in the Circassian period was not very different from that of the early army. The regular army was still dominated by mamlūk soldiers (the Royal Mamlūks, and the amīrs’ mamlūks). The ḥalqa still existed, but its role, membership, and importance had changed drastically by this period. However, there were some new units such as al-ṭabaqa al-khāmisa (the fifth corps) among others that had been created or incorporated into the army. Furthermore, Turkmen and Arab tribesmen continued to serve as auxiliaries during military campaigns.

7.11 The Structure of the Army

Mamlūk regiments continued to form the backbone of the army during the Circassian period. The main change that occurred within the mamlūk ranks was that the Circassians became the dominant racial group in the army. As discussed above, it was during Qalāwūn’s reign that the Circassians were first brought into the sultanate in large numbers to form his Burjiyya regiment, which was probably created to counter any challenge from Baybars’s Zāhiriyya mamlūks and Qalāwūn’s khushdāshiyya, the Ṣālihiyya-Bahriyya. In essence, this sultan was a new state-builder who created a new powerful element in the army and a new patrimonial household upon which he could depend to bolster his rule. Qalāwūn’s example of using Circassians was not the only one. The great amīr Yalbughā al-‘Umarī created a powerful
mamlūk unit, the Yalbughāwiyya, numbering between 1,800 - 4,000 mamlūks, which also contained a strong Circassian element. It was from among this unit that the founder of the Circassian regime, Barqūq, emerged. It was also during the late Kipchak and early Circassian periods (in essence during the period of transition) that a new dimension of ethnic ʿaṣabiyya was temporarily added to the bonds of allegiance (i.e., the allegiance to the patron and group/factional solidarity of the khushdāshiyya).

As in the early period, the Royal Mamlūks continued to form the backbone of the army and were the best trained and armed soldiers at the disposal of the sultanate. This unit was composed of three main groups of soldiers: 1) the mamlūks of the ruling sultan (who are referred to as the julbān/ajlāb/mushtarawāt in the sources of the later period), 2) the veteran mamlūks of previous sultans who had passed into the service of the ruling sultan (who are referred to as the qarāniša/qarānīš in the sources of the later period), and 3) the mamlūks of amīrs who had passed into the ruling sultan’s service (who are referred to as the sayfiyya in the sources of the later period). For the most part, the Royal Mamlūks continued to be concentrated in Cairo during the Circassian period and did not leave the capital unless they were going on an expedition. However, there were small units of Royal Mamlūks sent out to garrison distant parts of the sultanate. For example, there was a small unit of Royal Mamlūks garrisoned at Qūs in Upper Egypt, which was sent there to keep the Nubians under control. Another fifty were dispatched with the pilgrimage caravan and garrisoned Mecca; their job was to safeguard the pilgrimage route and to suppress the banditry of the Arab tribes. A third group was also garrisoned on the

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1513 Van Steenbergen states that there were no less than 1,800 rebellious mamlūks from among the Yalbughāwiyya who rose against their master during the struggle between Yalbughā and sultan al-Ashraf Sha`bān II. The number given indicates only those who revolted against their master, and not those who remained loyal to him during this conflict. See Van Steenbergen, “On the Brink,” 142.


1516 Al-ʿAmāyira, al-Jaysh, 93.
island of Cyprus after its conquest in 1460 CE. Usually the soldiers sent to these remote outposts of the sultanate were being punished by the sultan for a transgression.

From the three main groups that formed the Royal Mamlūk Corps, the *julbān/mushtarawāt* were the group most favored by the ruling sultan. The reason for their preferential treatment was the fact that this unit was composed of the ruler’s own mamlūks whom he had purchased, trained, and emancipated and with whom he had a special bond and who formed the main pillar of support for his rule. It was the *julbān/mushtarawāt* as well as the ruling sultan’s *khushdašīyya* or comrades who were given the highest positions in the government and at court, usually at the expense of the mamlūks of the previous sultan.

As was the case in the early period, every successful sultan of the Circassian era had to build up a strong force of *julbān/mushtarawāt* with whom he could shore up his rule and from among whom he selected the most loyal, intelligent, and skilled mamlūks to form a part of his patrimonial household. This enabled him to successfully control the court, and thus the army and the whole realm. For example, the first Circassian ruler, al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (r. 1382-1389 CE, 1390-1399 CE) had 2,000 *julbān/mushtarawāt* at the end of his first reign in 1389 CE and 4,000-6,000 at the time of his death in 1399 CE. Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy (r. 1422-1431 CE) purchased 2,000-3,000 mamlūks during his reign. Qāytbay (r. 1468-1496 CE) also took care to purchase many mamlūks, and had it not been for the plagues that decimated the ranks of the army, his *julbān/mushtarawāt* would have numbered 8,000 men.

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1520 Ahmad b. ‘Ali al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawā’iz wa al-I’tibār bi Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa al-Āthār*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Maktubat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, 1987), 95; al-ʻAmāyira, *al-Jaysh*, 58-59. Loiseau asserts that this sultan purchased an unprecedented number of Royal Mamlūks because he was the first mamlūk to rise to the throne who was not from one of the royal households (i.e. from among the Sāliḥiyā/Bahriyya or from the house of Qalāwūn) that had provided all the rulers of the sultanate up to his accession and was establishing a new royal house. He was harnessing the fresh *‘asabīyya* of his fellow mamlūks and his reign was the beginning of a new *dalwa* within the Mamlūk period. See Loiseau, *Les Mamelouks*, 125-126.
The julbān/mushtarawāt formed the largest single faction/interest group among the Royal Mamlūks and the army as a whole. However, in comparison to the qarāniṣa and the sayfiyya these soldiers and their officers were young and inexperienced. As they matured so did their skills, discipline, and organization. It is the accounts in the primary sources of the poor performance, undisciplined behavior, and lack of skill of these young mamlūks in comparison to the veteran mamlūks and the mamlūks of the early period that give the impression that the training and skills of the mamlūks of the Circassian period declined. This point will be elaborated in more detail in section 6.13 below that deals with the training and advancement in the Mamlūk army during the Circassian period.

The qarāniṣa formed the second important group of Royal Mamlūks. They were the mamlūks who had passed into the service of the ruling sultan from previous sultans. In the secondary sources these soldiers are sometimes referred to as the “veterans” due to their having trained longer, served longer, and to their having probably been involved in more battles and skirmishes than the mushtarawāt/julbān. The qarāniṣa were also very numerous. However, unlike the mushtarawāt/julbān, they did not form a united front and were composed of several factions which were based on and named after the sultans to whom they had belonged. These interest groups often vied against one another, but their hostility to the mushtarawāt/julbān of the new sultan sometimes united them in their struggle against the young mamlūks who had been placed above them in the pecking order.¹⁵²³ For instance, when al-Ashraf Barsbāy died in 1437 CE, Barqūq’s Żāhirīyya, Faraj’s Nāṣirīyya, and al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh’s Mu’ayyadiyya, who formed the bulk of the qarāniṣa, united under the command of the atābak Jaqmaq against Barsbāy’s Ashrafiyya julbān who supported the deceased sultan’s son, Yūsuf. The qarāniṣa won the struggle and the Ashrafiyya were driven out of the barracks in the citadel and Jaqmaq was placed on the throne.¹⁵²⁴

As mentioned earlier, upon the accession of a new sultan, the previous ruler’s mamlūks were purged from their privileged positions. These purges varied in intensity and ranged from the arrest and imprisonment or exile of the prominent officeholders and members of the

The third element of the Royal Mamluk corps was composed of the sayfiyya. These were the mamluks of amirs who passed into the service of sultans due to their masters’ fall from favor with the sultan and as a result of their dismissal or imprisonment. These mamluks also passed into the service of the sultans as a result of the death of their former masters. They were considered the most inferior group among the Royal Mamluks because of their origins and because various mamluks who had served different masters were thrown together to form this unit. The sayfiyya were neither loyal to the sultan nor to one another. During times of conflict

1526 Al-Maqrizi, al-Suluk, vol. 4, part 1, 188, 192; al-‘Amayira, al-Jaysh, 70.
and strife they often opted to support the (seemingly) winning side. Like the qarâniṣa, these soldiers were very well trained and experienced fighters. However, as a unit and faction they were weak because of their relatively low numbers, compared to the mushtarawāt/julbān and the qarâniṣa, and their lack of camaraderie that the khushdāshiyya bond instilled in the members of the other units.

The Royal Mamlūks formed the backbone of the Mamlūk army. They embodied the realization of the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model, which emphasized the predominance of mamlūk soldiers in the military and its leadership. However, by the later periods of the sultanate, the Royal Mamlūks also exhibited characteristics of the Diversified Army Model with a number of groups, based mainly on factional loyalties and ties (but also ethnic ones, especially in the early Circassian period), vying for dominance and control. No mamlūk sultan was able to establish a dynasty (with the exception of the house of Qalāwūn, and even this dynasty fell into disarray and chaos shortly after the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad) in which the allegiance of the soldiers, both slaves and freeborn, was passed from one sultan to the next. Thus, every new Mamlūk sultan had to become a state-builder who had to remould the army and create a new patrimonial household. Therefore, we see that Barqūq purchased a very large number of mamlūks including Kipchak Turks and Rūmīs (Greeks, Armenians, or Anatolian Turkmen). However, his Circassian mamlūks outnumbered the other groups by far because it was this group that formed the foundation of his power base, and it was from among them that he created his patrimonial household and ruling apparatus, and whom he used to crush the opposition of Turkic amīrs to his rule. The full and unconditional allegiance of these mamlūks did not pass to Barqūq’s successor, Faraj, who, in turn, had to violently purge the household his predecessor had created and attempt to build a new one.

This cycle of purges and state-building had been ongoing since Baybars I seized the throne and was to continue on until the fall of the sultanate, with sultans such as al-Nāṣir Muḥammad standing out because his decision to create a new ruling household and retinue


\[1530\] Al-ʻAmāyira, al-Jaysh, 112.

involved the inclusion of many non-mamlūk elements as discussed in Chapter 5. Like al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, al-Nāṣir Ḥasan (r. 1347-1351 and 1354-1361 CE) attempted to undermine the power of the Mamlūk amīrs by trying to use the awlād al-nās as his power base and to create a new retinue and court based on them.  

Similarly, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qāytbāy (r. 1496-1497 and 1497-1498 CE) attempted to base his power on new foreign and non-mamlūk elements, namely a unit of black arquebusiers, whom he used to create a new patrimonial household to bring the mamlūks and the sultanate under his control. However, these attempts were met with stiff resistance and eventually failed.  

If we revisit al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s policies during his third reign, it becomes clear here that his changes did not eliminate “mamlūk traditions,” but rather introduced a new element, namely non-mamlūks, to the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model, which continued to exist with some aspects of the Diversified Army Model imbedded in it. Ayalon points out the main weakness in the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model and compares it to the model employed by the Ottomans (which more fully resembled the Diversified Army Model). He concludes that it was the Ottomans’ ability to create a hereditary system where both rulership and the household and slave army’s allegiance passed to the new sultan that ensured their success, stability, and longevity.  

The second element of the regular army was the amīrs’ mamlūks. These soldiers were similar to the Royal Mamlūks, but they were in the service of the amīrs. They resembled miniature versions of the Royal Mamlūk corps, but generally they were not as well trained and were poorly equipped in comparison with their counterparts in the sultans’ service as a result of the limited resources of the amīrs in comparison to those available to the ruler and also because they did not have access to the elite military schools and training facilities where the sultans’ mamlūks received their training and education. The numbers of amīrs’ mamlūks were low compared to those who served the sultan. The most powerful amīrs generally had 200-400 mamlūks in their service in the Circassian period. However some very powerful and wealthy

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1533 Ayalon, Gunpowder, 67; according to Fuess this unit was inspired by the Ottoman janissaries. See Albrecht Fuess, “Les Janisaires, les Mamelouks et les Armes à Feu: Une Comparaison des Systèmes Militaires Ottoman et Mamelouk à Partir du Milieu du XVe Siècle,” Turcica, 41 (2009), 213.
1534 Ayalon, “Circassians,” 145-146.
1535 Ayalon, “Studies II,” 459-460
amīrs such as Jakam, the viceroy of Aleppo, Taghrī Birdī al-Kamashbūghāwī, and Yalbāy had 1,500, 1,000, and 1,000 mamlūks respectively.\textsuperscript{1536} In total, the amīrs’ mamlūks numbered around 8,000 soldiers in Egypt and 3,000 in Damascus, 2,000 in Aleppo, 1,000 in Tripoli, 1,000 in Gaza, and 1,000 in Ṣafad.\textsuperscript{1537} Despite the seemingly large numbers of these soldiers, they were divided into dozens of groups, each serving its own master. They thus lacked the unity of the large factions that formed the Royal Mamlūk regiments.

The third element of the regular army was the ḥalqa. As discussed above, this unit was a very flexible body in the Mamlūk army. Up until al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign the ḥalqa formed a large proportion of the army, 37% according to Levanoni.\textsuperscript{1538} The soldiers of this unit held relatively small ʾiqṭāʿāt. However, combined, these yielded a huge amount of income. As mentioned earlier, al-Nāṣir’s cadastral survey and redistribution of ʾiqṭāʿāt (to his advantage and that of his patrimonial household) hurt the ḥalqa and resulted in many of its soldiers becoming so destitute that they were no longer fit for service because they could not maintain their arms, equipment, or their mounts. For this reason, only small numbers of ḥalqa soldiers were selected for campaigns in the Circassian period.\textsuperscript{1539} For example, Barqūq reviewed the ḥalqa and selected only 300 horsemen to accompany him to fight against the uprising in Syria that led to the end of his first reign in 1389 CE. This is a relatively small number compared to the 4,000 ḥalqa soldiers who were positioned in the center of the Mamlūk army at the Battle of Ḥimṣ in 1281 CE.\textsuperscript{1540} When the rebels threatened Cairo itself later that year, the whole ḥalqa was mobilized, and those soldiers who were unable to mount a horse, either because they could not afford to keep one or because they lacked the training to do so, were ordered to fight as foot archers and to fire upon the enemy from the parapets on the citadel’s walls.\textsuperscript{1541} In fact, Ayalon states that the main task of the soldiers of the ḥalqa in the late period was to guard strategic locations in Cairo.\textsuperscript{1542}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\item Ayalon, “Studies II,” 463-464; al-ʿAmāyira, al-Jaysh, 118.
\item Ibn Shāhin, Zubdat Kashf, 104; al-ʿAmāyira, al-Jaysh, 118-119.
\item Levanoni, “Ḥalqah,” 48.
\item Al-ʿAmāyira, al-Jaysh, 120.
\item Ayalon, “Studies II,” 451.
\item Ayalon, “Studies II,” 454.
\end{thebibliography}
Despite the seeming diminution of the ḥalqa, it continued to exist as a branch of the regular army. In the early period of the sultanate it was composed of freeborn soldiers such as the wāfidiyya, the awlād al-nās, Shahrazūrī Kurds, and Ayyūbid soldiers who had been incorporated into the Mamlūk army. The question of why the ḥalqa continued to exist as a branch of the army has been a matter of debate. Levanoni answers this question most satisfactorily in her article on the ḥalqa. She states that this unit was very flexible and diverse and was in a constant state of transformation throughout its existence. She argues that by the Circassian period the ḥalqa was composed of a strong element made up of Royal Mamlūks and amīrs’ protégés and a weaker and poorer element composed of awlād al-nās and civilians who had purchased ḥalqa iqṭāʾāt. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that historians like al-Maqrīzī state that Barqūq relegated the Ashrafiyya mamlūks to the ḥalqa when he reorganized the army at his accession.

In addition to the above-mentioned sections of the regular forces, the Circassian era saw the introduction of some new units into the Mamlūk army. Prominent among them were the arquebusier units created by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qāytbāy and Qaṇṣūh al-Ghawrī. The former created a unit of arquebusiers composed of black slaves (who also served as artillerymen) and the latter, a unit that became known as al-ṭabaqa al-khāmisa, which was composed of awlād al-nās, Turkmens, and Persians, among others. Qāytbāy also created a special unit of awlād al-nās armed with handguns to fight the Ottomans during the Ottoman-Mamlūk war of 1485-1491 CE. In addition to these units, in the last decades of the sultanate there were also large numbers of Ottoman soldiers, possibly including Janissaries, who had deserted to the Mamlūks during and after the war of 1485-1491 CE.

It is evident that the overall structure of the regular Mamlūk army did not change very much in the Circassian era from the early Kipchak period. However, it was very different to the army of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who had considerably increased the presence of non-mamlūks.

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1546 Ayalon, Gunpowder, 63; Har-El, Struggle, 201-202; Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 122; Waterson, Knights, 269.
1547 Petry, Twilight, 97-98.
These changes were reversed by Barqūq and his successors. The most noticeable difference, regarding the mamlūk regiments, is the dominance of the Circassian element during this period, and this can be attributed to the state building efforts of sultans such as Barqūq in addition to the high loss of life among the Turkic elements during the struggles that ensued after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s death as well as the devastation wrought by Timur on the Kipchak Steppe.\textsuperscript{1548} The other noticeable change, compared to the early armies of sultans such as Baybars and Qalāwūn, was the transformation of the composition of the halqa, which was divided into a strong unit manned by mamlūks and amīrs’ protégés and a weaker section composed of destitute awlād al-nās, invalids, civilians, and young children. Furthermore, with the introduction of gunpowder weapons, the sultans of the later period started to introduce non-mamlūk arquebusier units into the army. However, in the bigger picture the Mamlūk army did not change so much as to drastically alter its organization or how it functioned.

There was also a merging of the two military models in the Circassian period, which formed a third military model, the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model, which continued to exist and evolve during the Ottoman period. This model combines elements of the Diversified Army Model and the Şāliḥi Mamlūk Model. The army of the Circassian era was more diverse than that of the early sultanate. However, this diversification occurred within the ranks of the Mamlūks themselves and did not involve the addition of large numbers of non-Mamlūk units to the regular army.\textsuperscript{1549} Every ruling sultan had his contingent of personal mamlūks. With his death these troops passed to the next sultan. However, they formed a separate faction within the Royal Mamlūk Corps. As exemplified above, these factions and the way in which they aligned themselves often determined who ruled the sultanate. In addition to these factions and interest groups within the ranks of the Royal Mamlūks, there were also the factions of the great amīrs, some of whom wielded a great amount of power, of the sultanate and their power networks.\textsuperscript{1550}

\textsuperscript{1548} Al-ʻAmāyira, al-Jaysh, 82.

\textsuperscript{1549} It is true that some sultans incorporated non-mamlūk units into the army such as the unit of awlād al-nās armed with arquebuses that Qāytbāy recruited and sent to fight the Ottomans see page 356; or the unit of black arquebusiers that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qāytbāy recruited; or al-Ghawrī’s \textit{al-tabqa al-ḵāmisa} see pages 303-304.

\textsuperscript{1550} For more on the the various factions and interest groups in the Mamlūks sultanate see Sievert, \textit{Der Herrscherwechsel}, 3-6, 88-110, 133-139. For a detailed analysis of amiral households and factions see Loiseau, \textit{Les Mamelouks}, 108-109, 207-240.
The mamlūks still formed the largest proportion of all these factions, but now there were many more groups and their loyalties did not always align. Thus, we see a diversification within the mamlūks with the emergence of more interest groups with the passage of time that competed against one another and that could be played off against one another by the successful ruler. The frequent revolts and factional fighting in the Circassian period is an indicator of these groups jockeying to promote their own interests at the expense of the others. Nevertheless, as Loiseau and Sievert have argued, this political system, despite projecting an image of chaos and disorder, contributed to the longevity and stability of the Mamlūk regime. The merging of the two military models into the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model was inevitable with the passage of time as the number of Mamlūk factions increased in the sultanate and as the political and military circumstances continued to evolve. In this new model we see the strengths of both the Diversified Army Model (i.e. multiple groups forming the military) and the Şāliḥi Mamlūk Model (i.e. elite mamlūks troops forming the bulk of the army) coming together. After the fall of the Mamlūk regime, a continuation of the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model can be observed in the Ottoman empire. However, under the Ottomans this model evolved further and became diversified even further with a core standing army of slave soldiers directly commanded by the ruler in addition to freeborn provincial troops and auxiliaries all linked to the central military command of the empire.\footnote{For a more detailed discussion of the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model in the Ottoman military see pages 381-402.}

7.12 Non-Mamlūks and Auxiliaries

Like the early Mamlūk army, the forces of the Circassian sultans also utilized auxiliary units. These troops were not a part of the regular army but often joined the Mamlūk armies of Egypt and/or Syria during major campaigns. These irregular forces included Arab bedouin tribes of Syria and Egypt, Turkmen tribes from Syria, infantrymen\footnote{The Mamlūks had used militias and infantrymen from both Egypt in Syria even during the early period of the Sultanate. These foot soldiers were often drawn from the towns and cities or from the mountainous regions of Lebanon and Syria. During the early period they served in a limited capacity in sieges and in expeditions in mountainous regions against “heretics” (i.e., Druze), but are absent from major field battles against the Mongols. Infantrymen were employed more frequently and in a wider capacity during the Circassian period. For more see Reuven Amitai-Preiss, “Foot Soldiers, Militiamen and Volunteers in the Early Mamluk army,” in Texts, Documents and Artifacts: Islamic Studies in Honour of D.S. Richards, ed. C.F. Robinson (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 232-249.} from the cities, towns, and villages of Syria and Palestine, and even some Kurds (but by this time there were very few of
These troops had a variety of roles such as setting up and maintaining siege lines, acting as scouts and outriders, harrying the enemy and raiding his camps and territories ahead of the main army, guarding the army’s camps and supply lines, and as mobile light cavalry (or infantry) in battles. They also guarded the roads, borders, and countryside during times of peace.\(^\text{1554}\)

The Arab tribes continued to furnish important auxiliary units for the Mamlūk army during the Circassian period. Most of these irregular troops were levied in Syria because most of the large-scale battles and sieges of the Mamlūk period took place on the northern and eastern frontiers of the sultanate. These campaigns required the presence of both infantry and cavalry units of all types, and it would have cost more and slowed down the main Mamlūk army if tribal infantry and cavalry levies had been mustered and brought from Egypt. Thus, the position of the Arab tribes of Syria as auxiliaries was strongly reinforced due to their close proximity to the Mamlūk sultanate’s enemies.\(^\text{1555}\) However, the Arab tribes of Egypt were also levied during emergencies. For example, in 1401 CE al-Nāṣir Faraj mustered 10,000 Egyptian bedouin (in addition to those who would join him in Syria) for his campaign to retake Syria after the Timurid invasion.\(^\text{1556}\)

The Arab infantrymen of Syria and Lebanon, known as the ‘ashīr, were from Jabal Nāblus and other parts of Syria. In the Circassian period, there was an increase in the involvement of these auxiliaries in the campaigns of the Mamlūk army. These troops were recruited from the cities and towns of Syria and from among the semi-nomadic populations of the region. They played important roles in sieges and in campaigns in mountainous regions.\(^\text{1557}\) During the Timurid invasion these infantry levies were present at the siege of Aleppo. They were positioned in front of the Syrian amīrs and their armies as a screen of skirmishers in the battle before the city fell.\(^\text{1558}\) In another instance, the army of Aleppo clashed with rebel Turkmen

\(^{1553}\) Al-ʻAmāyira, *al-Jaysh*, 128-129.

\(^{1554}\) Al-ʻUmārī, *al-Ta‘rīf*, 145-146; Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubh*, vol. 12, 123; Tritton, Tribes of Syria,” 567.

\(^{1555}\) Har-El, *Struggle*, 57.

\(^{1556}\) Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 12, 251.


\(^{1558}\) Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 12, 222.
tribes in the mountainous regions north of the city in 1383 CE. The amīrs and their troops were hard-pressed after being ambushed in the mountain passes due to the rocky terrain that made mounted warfare more difficult. The battle was going badly for the mamlūks until they were relieved by an army of auxiliaries composed of Syrian and Kurdish infantrymen and it was with these foot soldiers’ aid that the rebel Turkmen were defeated.\textsuperscript{1559} These Syrian infantrymen continued to play an important role even at the end of the Mamlūk sultanate when they were levied to fight against the Ottomans during the reigns of Qāytbāy and al-Ghawrī. By this time many of these infantrymen were armed with handguns.\textsuperscript{1560} Finally, Kurdish infantry were also present in the Syrian army that set out to fight some Frankish raiders near Beirut in 1383 CE.\textsuperscript{1561}

The Turkmen tribesmen of Syria (especially the northern regions) also acted as auxiliaries for the Mamlūk army. In 1393 CE (or 1390 CE according to Ibn Taghrī Birdī) a group of loyal Arab and Turkmen tribesmen defeated the rebel amīr Mintāsh in a battle near Shayzar southwest of Aleppo.\textsuperscript{1562} In 1432 CE the Turkmen and Arabs also played a major role in Barsbāy’s campaign against Āmid. They were so prominent in this expedition that one amīr commented that these auxiliary troops are those who win victories for kings.\textsuperscript{1563} Turkmen scouts were also hired, in addition to Syrian infantrymen, to accompany the army that was sent to quell Shāh Suwār’s revolt in 1469 CE.

One more group that must be noted here is the \textit{awlād al-nās}. This group was mentioned above as having formed one of the elements of the \textit{ḥalqa}. However, it seems that during the first Ottoman-Mamlūk war (1485-1491 CE), a number of \textit{awlād al-nās} were armed with arquebuses, trained to use them, and then sent to the front in 1490 CE to fight the Ottomans. This unit seems to have operated as mobile infantry, because they rode on camelback to the battlefield and dismounted to fight.\textsuperscript{1564} It is unclear whether Qāytbāy created this non-mamlūk and irregular unit

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\textsuperscript{1560} Har-El, \textit{Struggle}, 58, 167
\textsuperscript{1561} Al-Maqrīzī, \textit{al-Sulūk}, vol. 3, part 2, 499.
for the purpose of that specific campaign or if this unit (or others like it) continued to exist until the end of the sultanate.

It is quite evident from the examples presented above that the auxiliaries of the Mamlūk army continued to play as important a role in the Circassian period as they did earlier. However, one must once again emphasize here that these troops were merely there to supplement the regular army which was dominated by the mamlûks. They did have their strengths, merits, and advantages; however, they fell far short in quality, training, discipline, and overall military efficiency in comparison to the mamlûk soldiers. This gap can be seen most clearly when either Arab or Turkmen tribes rebelled and had to face mamlûks in the field. These tribal troops could somewhat hold their own against the mamlûks when waging a guerilla war, but in open battle they were always defeated. For example, in 1384 CE the Mamlûk army of Aleppo severely defeated a group of Turkmen rebels.\footnote{Al-Maqrīzī, \textit{al-Sulûk}, vol. 3, part 2, 518-519.} That same year a number of mamlûk amîrs and mamlûk soldiers were sent to discipline a group of Arabs in Lower Egypt and had no problem in defeating them and killing and capturing large numbers of them.\footnote{Al-Maqrīzī, \textit{al-Sulûk}, vol. 3, part 2, 638-639.} Furthermore, the Turkmen rebel Shâh Suwâr (I will discuss his war with the Mamlûks in more detail below), carried out a long guerilla war against the Mamlûk sultanate. However, he had to defeat them in the field to triumph. When his army met the Mamlûks in open battle, it was easily beaten.\footnote{Petry, \textit{Twilight}, 66-69.} Thus, it can be concluded here that these auxiliaries played an important military role throughout the whole duration of the Mamlûk sultanate. However, their importance, level of training, efficiency, discipline, and overall strength paled in comparison to that of the mamlûk troops.

\subsection*{7.13 Training and Advancement}

A large proportion of modern scholarship has agreed upon and accepted the notion that in the Mamlûk era, the army underwent a period of stagnation and failure due to the negligence of traditional training methods of the soldiers and the advancement of officers through the ranks. Ayalon and Levanoni, for example, argue that during and after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign (and most definitely by the Circassian period) the training that the mamlûks underwent was inferior.
compared to that which they had had to complete during the early period of the sultanate.\textsuperscript{1568} Although Sievert argues, citing Irwin, that during the Circassian period the rise to high positions was very slow and gradual, he also states that the quality of the late Mamlūk army was inferior to that of its predecessor.\textsuperscript{1569} As a result, this inferior training produced troops of lower quality. In fact, Ayalon states that “their military training was most ineffective, and they were lacking in warlike spirit. Ibn Taghrī Birdī was of the opinion that 100 \textit{qarānīs} could put to flight over 1,000 \textit{julbān}, and that, were it not for respect for the sultan, even the lowest black slaves of Cairo would be sufficient to rout them.”\textsuperscript{1570} This attitude is echoed by other scholars such as Waterson who states that the Mamlūk army “fell from being an elite force to being, at times, a second rate army in the late fifteenth century.”\textsuperscript{1571} Petry takes a similar view, but to a lesser extent.\textsuperscript{1572} Even some of the recent scholars such as Sievert and Elbendary mention a downturn in the quality of the army. Sievert states that the Royal Mamlūks of the Circassian period were more concerned with terrorizing the civilian population while “their military training was increasingly declining.”\textsuperscript{1573} Similarly, Elbendary notes that due to the fast-tracking of the mamlūk soldiers in order to create larger forces more quickly “meant that assimilation was not perfect, as integration needed time, and training and discipline were therefore compromised.”\textsuperscript{1574} At a glance, one would be inclined to agree with such assessments. However, I will show that the mamlūks who were brought to Egypt during the Circassian period continued to receive the same style of training and advanced slowly through the ranks as they had during the reigns of sultans such as Baybars and Qalāwūn.

One of the indicators of a well-equipped, well-trained, and battle-ready army in the Mamlūk sultanate that was mentioned in Chapter 4 was the mobilization of the entire army for military reviews by the sultans. Such reviews continued to be held in the Circassian period. Sultans ordered military reviews during both times of war and peace to gauge the battle readiness.

\textsuperscript{1568} Ayalon, “Studies I”, 211-213; Levanoni, \textit{Turning Point}, 30-60.
\textsuperscript{1569} Irwin, “Factions,” 236; Sievert, \textit{Der Herrscherwechsel}, 4, 101, 137.
\textsuperscript{1570} Ayalon, “Studies I”, 211.
\textsuperscript{1571} Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 251.
\textsuperscript{1572} See Petry, “Military Institution,” 467-470; Petry, \textit{Twilight of Majesty}.
\textsuperscript{1573} Sievert, \textit{Der Herrscherwechsel}, 4.
\textsuperscript{1574} Elbendary, \textit{Crowds}, 42.
of the troops before they headed out on a campaign. Al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Taghrī Birdī, and Ibn Iyās all mention such events during the reigns of different Circassian sultans. For example, al-Maqrīzī reports that Barqūq reviewed the army in 1390 CE shortly after he regained the sultanate and started his second reign. In another example, Ibn Taghrī Birdī states that Barqūq reviewed his whole army in 1382 CE prior to sending out detachments to fight a number of rebel amīrs in Syria. Ibn Iyās also mentions military reviews held by al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh in 1417 CE and by Barsbāy in 1437 CE. Just enumerating these few examples shows that the practice of military reviews was not abandoned by the Circassians. In fact, they show that the sultans of the later Mamlūk sultanate continued to inspect their armies to ensure their military preparedness.

In addition to the traditional reviews of the army by the sultans, mamlūks continued to undergo rigorous and prolonged training. The main indication that the training of the mamlūks did not decrease is the quality of the soldiers that formed the Royal Mamlūk corps and the amīrs’ mamlūks and their consistently good performance on the field against all manner of foes, a fact which will be discussed in detail in section 6.3. There is ample evidence which demonstrates that the troops received a high level of training that created an army of very competent and skilled soldiers. For instance, Ibn Taghrī Birdī states that in 1464 CE, the lance games were performed during the parade of the pilgrimage litter (maḥmal) and the “lancers displayed their skill as usual.” This statement indicates that even in the last decades of the sultanate the lancers continued to exhibit the same level of skill as their predecessors. Ibn Taghrī Birdī and Ibn Iyās also mention that sultans such as Barqūq and İnāl continued the tradition of playing polo with

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1579 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 11, 259, 266.
1580 Ibn Iyās, *Badā’ī*, vol. 2, 30, 179
their amīrs and soldiers.\textsuperscript{1582} Similarly, al-Maqrīzī also mentions that in 1387 CE Barqūq started to train with the lance and he made it mandatory for all the mamlūks to do the same.\textsuperscript{1583} In fact, these training sessions and war games got very competitive that Barqūq’s eye was injured while he trained using the lance with some of his young mamlūks.\textsuperscript{1584} Furthermore, in the early sixteenth century Qanṣūh al-Ghawrī ensured that his army, especially his Royal Mamlūks, were numerous, disciplined, and that they received the best training in horsemanship, battlefield maneuvers, and in the use of different types of weapons. This sultan, as well as others, did not deviate from the training model established by the founders of the Mamlūk sultanate.\textsuperscript{1585} Lastly, mock battles were an important part of the training of the Mamlūk army and they continued to take place in the Circassian period. These mock battles were either held in the hippodromes or at the Pyramids.\textsuperscript{1586}

Despite all of the evidence presented above, several scholars still maintain that the Mamlūk army’s effectiveness and the competence of its soldiers worsened during the Circassian period. Ayalon’s statement that 100 qarānīs could put 1,000 julbān to flight in battle attempts to make this point. However, what Ayalon and others have overlooked here is that the qarānīs were also mamlūks. In fact, they were the veteran mamlūks of previous sultans who had passed into the service of the current sultan. These mamlūks and the sayfiyya, the mamlūks of amīrs who passed into the service of the sultan, were very well-trained and experienced from their participation in battles and campaigns. Therefore, the qarānīs and the sayfiyya had the advantage of age and experience over the younger julbān.\textsuperscript{1587} Thus, it should come as no surprise that in times of internal strife, when groups of qarānīs and julbān fought one another, the qarānīs often came out on top. For example, in 1455 CE the julbān mutinied and rioted and marched on the citadel, but were easily routed after less than an hour of fighting.\textsuperscript{1588} In another instance, when al-Manṣūr ‘Uthmān was deposed in 1453 CE, the julbān who held the citadel were defeated

\textsuperscript{1582} Ibn Taghṭrī Birdī, al-Najūm vol. 11, 243; Ibn Iyās, The Chronicle of Ibn Iyas, 29.
\textsuperscript{1583} Al-Maqrīzī, al-Sulūk, vol. 3, part 2, 591.
\textsuperscript{1584} Loiseau, Les Mamelouks, 87.
\textsuperscript{1585} Najīb, Tanẓīm al-Jaysh, 13, 15.
\textsuperscript{1586} Petry, Twilight, 76.
\textsuperscript{1587} Al-ʻAmāyira, al-Jaysh, 111-112.
\textsuperscript{1588} Ibn Iyās, Chronicle, 29.
when it was stormed after a one week siege. Ibn Taghrī Birdī states that the reason for the easy defeat of the *julbān* was their youth and lack of experience in the ways of war.\(^{1589}\) This means that the amīrs and their more experienced mamlūks and the other factions of the Royal Mamlūk corps who formed the opposition were better trained and more experienced and were thus able to gain an easy victory. When the *julbān* revolted during İnāl’s reign in 1455 CE, they were again easily defeated by the *qarānīs*.\(^{1590}\)

The above-mentioned examples all show that the *julbān* appear less efficient and trained than other mamlūks in the army. However, their lack of martial efficiency and skill is not due to a less rigorous training regimen, but rather to the fact that the *julbān* were younger and less experienced than the *qarānīs*, the *sayfiyya*, and amīrs’ mamlūks. Therefore, such statements about the *julbān* should not be taken at face value by scholars, and should definitely not be applied to the whole Mamlūk army, which for the most part was a well-trained and efficient force. Furthermore, those among the inexperienced *julbān* who survived the internal struggles and campaigns against external enemies eventually became experienced and well-trained veterans and joined the *qarānīs* after their master died.

The trend of accelerated promotion has also been cited as one of the causes for the deterioration of the Mamlūk army. As discussed in Chapter 5, according to some historians it seems that this trend was introduced by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. However, I have shown that such accelerated promotion was not done haphazardly. In fact, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s promotion and elevation of certain individuals was very calculated and considered from both the military and political standpoints. As previously noted, this trend was not new because Qalāwūn had also been fast-tracked through the ranks due to his good looks, among other qualities. So the question here is: did the trend of accelerated promotions and fast tracking through the ranks become the norm in the late Mamlūk sultanate? The answer is no. As a matter of fact, there is evidence presented in biographical dictionaries such as al-Sakhāwī’s *al-Ḍaw’ al-Lāmi’* indicating that the slow promotion of mamlūks through different ranks and positions in the officer corps was still very much in practice in the fifteenth century CE. That is not to say that accelerated promotions


\(^{1590}\) Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *Ḥawādith*, vol. 2, 531.
did not happen. However, such trends were more likely practiced by rulers such as al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who did not have an established support and power base or a strong and numerous group of personal mamlūks attached to them. In other words, fast tracking through the ranks was a form of state building used by those sultans who were not very powerful upon their accession and who wanted to create a strong support base as quickly as possible.

The best way to illustrate the fact that accelerated promotion was not the norm in the Mamlūk army during the later periods of the sultanate is to briefly outline the careers of several officers, specifically the patterns of their promotions, as presented by al-Sakhāwī, starting with some of Barqūq’s officers. Timurbūghā al-Mashtūb was one of Barqūq’s mamlūks. During his master’s reign he was promoted to the rank of Amīr of Ten. He was then promoted to Amīr of Forty and Amīr of One Hundred under al-Nāṣir Faraj.\footnote{Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, 
*al-Daw‘ al-Lāmi‘ li Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi‘*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1992), 41.} Tanibak al-Barbdākī al-Ẓāhirī Barqūq, despite being one of Barqūq’s mamlūks, became one of the khāṣṣakīyya during the reign of al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh. After the death of this sultan, he became an Amīr of Ten. During the reign of Barsbāy this mamlūk was elevated to the rank of Amīr of Forty and was made the nā‘ib of the citadel. He was promoted to the rank of Amīr of One Hundred only at the end of Barsbāy’s reign.\footnote{Al-Sakhāwī, 
*al-Daw‘*, vol. 3, 42.} Janibak al-Qirmānī al-Ẓāhirī experienced a series of misfortunes after the death of his master and was almost cut in half at the command of al-Nāṣir Faraj. He left Cairo for the domains of Ibn Qirmān but returned during the reign of al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh who promoted him to the rank of Amīr of Ten. He was then promoted to Amīr of Forty by Jaqmaq and to Amīr of One Hundred by al-Ashraf Īnāl.\footnote{Al-Sakhāwī, 
*al-Daw‘*, vol. 3, 59.} Sūdūn Ṭāz was also one of Barqūq’s mamlūks and officers. His master promoted him to the rank of Amīr of Ten and made him an instructor in lance training. He was then promoted by al-Nāṣir Faraj to the highest rank and this sultan also made him *amīr akhūr*.\footnote{Al-Sakhāwī, 
*al-Daw‘*, vol. 3, 280. Note: for a description of the various ranks and court positions see David Ayalon, “Studies III,” 57-79.} One thing in common among all of the amīrs mentioned above is that all of them took several decades (and they lived through the reigns of two or more sultans) to attain the
highest position, that of Amīr of One Hundred, in the Mamlūk army, indicating that the practice of slow and steady promotions was maintained in the early Circassian period.

Slow promotions were also practiced by sultans reigning in the later Circassian era. Qanṣūh al-Nawrūzī Nawrūz al-Hāfiẓī was one of al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh’s khāṣṣakīyya. He was promoted to the ranks of Amīr of Ten, then Forty by al-Ẓāhir Tatār. Al-Ashraf Barsbāy made him the viceroy of Ṭarsūs and then hājīb al-ḥujjāb of Aleppo. Under Jaqmaq he was promoted to the rank of Amīr of Eighty and made the viceroy of Malatya. Mūghulbāy Ṭāz al-Abū Bakrī al-Mu’ayyadī Shaykh was one of al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh’s young mamlūks. He became a khāṣṣakī after the sultan’s death. Al-Ashraf İnāl promoted him to the rank of Amīr of Ten. He was then elevated by Khushqadam first to the rank of Amīr of Forty then to Amīr of One Hundred and was made amīr ḥājj al-Mahmal. Südūn al-İnālī, also known as Qarāqūsh, was one of al-Mu’ayyad’s mamlūks. Until the reign of al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq he was one of the khāṣṣakīyya and then became a dawādār (bearer of the inkwell) and Amīr of Ten. However, he was exiled to Jerusalem when he fell out of favor with Jaqmaq and only returned to Cairo during the reign of al-Ashraf İnāl who restored him to his former rank of Amīr of Ten and promoted him to Amīr of Forty. This amīr died fighting in Cyprus. He was almost sixty years old and had not been able to rise above the rank of Amīr of Forty throughout his whole career. Tanam min Bikhshāsh al-Jarkasī was one of his master, Jaqmāq’s, khāṣṣakīyya. He did not attain the rank of Amīr of Ten until the beginning of al-Ẓāhir Khushqadam’s reign, who later promoted him to the rank of Amīr of Forty. He was killed shortly afterwards by a group of julbān at around the age of forty. Once again, these examples show that it took decades to get promoted to the higher ranks of the Mamlūk army.

The fact that slow promotion through the ranks of the Mamlūk army continued to be practiced into the Circassian period should come as no surprise because some of the more successful and long-reigning sultans of this period went through this system of rigorous training and gradual promotion. Al-Ẓāhir Barqūq became one of Yalbūghā’s mamlūks in 1361 CE. After

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1595 Al-Sakhāwī, al-Daw’, vol. 6, 199.
1596 Al-Sakhāwī, al-Daw’, vol. 10, 164.
1598 Al-Sakhāwī, al-Daw’, vol. 3, 43.
his master’s death in 1366 CE, he spent some time in exile at Karak and in the service of a number of patrons such as Manjak, the nā’ib of Damascus, and al-Ashraf Sha‘bān, Aybak al-Badrī, and lastly Ṭashtamur al-ʿAlāʾī, the atābak and de facto ruler of the sultanate. Throughout his service to these masters he attained the rank of Amīr of Forty. He and some of his compatriots overthrew Ṭashtamur, and after further infighting Barqūq emerged as the victor and seized the sultanate for himself. Barqūq, the first Circassian sultan, did not have a smooth reign. He was deposed in 1389 CE for less than a year before he managed to return to power and to strengthen his position.\footnote{1599}

Sultan Jaqmaq also went through a long process of promotions and elevations until he became the ruler. He was one of Barqūq’s khāṣṣakiyya and under al-Nāṣir Faraj he was elevated to the rank of Amīr of Ten. He was later stripped of this rank and imprisoned by the same sultan. During the sultanate of al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh he was again promoted to the rank of Amīr of Ten and then to Amīr of Forty. He attained the rank of Amīr of one Hundred after the death of al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh. Under al-Ashraf Barsbāy he became the atābak, a position from which he was well-placed to seize the sultanate after Barsbāy’s death.\footnote{1600} Lastly, Qāytbāy was one of Jaqmaq’s khāṣṣakiyya. He became an Amīr of Ten under al-Ashraf İnāl, and Amīr of Forty under al-Ẓāhir Khushqadam (r. 1461-1467), and atābak under al-Ẓāhir Timurbughā (r. 1467-1468 CE). After the death of the latter, he became the sultan.\footnote{1601} It is quite clear from the examples of these Mamlūk sultans, and the amīrs who were mentioned before them, that the process of slow and steady promotion based on merit and experience was not abandoned after the reign of al-Nāṣir Muhammad. In fact, it was still very much practiced in the Circassian period. The above-mentioned examples all show that it took these individuals, whom I believe are representative of the Mamlūk officer class as a whole, decades to attain the highest ranks (or the sultanate).

\subsection*{7.2 Mamlūk Loyalty and Discipline in the Circassian Period}

Along with an almost unanimous agreement regarding the downturn in training, organization, efficiency, and effectiveness, the consensus among several scholars is that the

\footnote{1600} Al-Sakhāwī, \textit{al-Daw‘}, vol. 3, 70-71.
\footnote{1601} Al-Sakhāwī, \textit{al-Daw‘}, vol. 6, 201-211.
loyalty and discipline of the Mamlūk army also worsened in comparison to the army of the early sultanate. However, it was the different external circumstances faced by the sultanate during this period that make it seem as though there was a major change in the loyalty of the army and the discipline of its soldiers. There are numerous reports in the sources regarding depositions of sultans, revolts by amīrs, and rioting and disobedience by the Mamlūk soldiers. However, the behavior of the late Mamlūk army was not very different from its earlier counterpart. Here I will examine these aspects of the army in the Circassian period.

7.21 Revolts against and Depositions of Sultans in the Circassian Period

A good place to begin this discussion is with the episode of the great amīr Sayf al-Dīn Yalbūghā al-ʿUmaṭī al-Nāṣirī al-Khāṣṣakī (d. 1366) whose career spanned the period just prior to the beginning of the Circassian era. From among his mamlūks Barqūq rose to seize the throne and become the first Circassian sultan and in doing so ushered in a new period of Mamlūk history. Yalbūghā al-ʿUmaṭī was one of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan’s (r. 1347-1351 CE and 1354-1361 CE) mamlūks and rose to become one the most powerful amīrs in the sultanate during his patron’s reign and in the post-Nāṣirian period. The chaotic period after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s death up to the rise of the Circassian sultans saw a number of weak Qalāwūnid rulers dominated by the powerful magnates of the sultanate. This state of affairs is interpreted as a period in which the Mamlūks’ power waned, which was a direct result of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s changes to the military. As a matter of fact, despite the chaotic nature and instability of this period, it should be seen as a testament of the state-building capabilities of Qalāwūn and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. The patrimonial households they established and the legacies that they left were so powerful that their descendants continued to be placed on the throne despite the inability of most of them to emulate their two illustrious predecessors’ control over the army and the sultanate.

Yalbūghā al-ʿUmaṭī’s star rose quickly during al-Nāṣir Ḥasan’s reign. In 1356 CE he was made an Amīr of Forty and two years later he was elevated to the rank of Amīr of One Hundred when he defeated the rebellious amīr Ṭaḥštamur. This sultan not only appointed Yalbūghā to

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1602 For a discussion and reassessment of this amīr’s career and position in Mamlūk society in the fourteenth century see Jo Van Steenbergen, “The Amir Yalbūghā al-Khāṣṣakī, the Qalāwūnid Sultanate, and the Cultural Matrix of Mamlūk Society: A Reassessment of Mamlūk Politics in the 1360s,” JAOS 131, 3 (2011), 423-443.

the position of amīr majlis in 1358 CE, but also gave him all the mamlūks and wealth of his disgraced predecessor, Şarghātmish. Yalbughā purchased large numbers of mamlūks and added them to the ones he already had and consequently, his personal army rose to 4,000 mamlūks.¹⁶⁰⁴ This amīr eventually turned on his master, deposed him, had him killed, and replaced him first with al-Manṣūr Muḥammad (r. 1361-1363) and then with his nephew, al-Malik al-Ashraf Sha’bān (r. 1363-1377 CE), while he effectively became the power behind the throne.¹⁶⁰⁵ One of the possible reasons for this amīr’s extreme action was the fact that al-Nāṣir Ḥasan feared the growth of his power and attempted to emulate his predecessor, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, by creating a new power base and patrimonial household based on the awlād al-nās and other non-mamlūks. He surrounded himself with them and started to promote large numbers of them (ten of them to the rank of Amīr of One Hundred) to counterbalance Yalbughā’s power.¹⁶⁰⁶ Unlike his predecessor this sultan failed because he attempted to shift the balance of power in his favor too quickly and dramatically, without slowly building up his support base.

Yalbughā managed to become the sole powerbroker behind the Qalāwūnid throne after removing all his rivals from the scene. After his deposition of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, he defeated the rebel amīr Baydamur, the nā’ib of Damascus.¹⁶⁰⁷ He then came to blows with his former ally and khushdāsh Ṭaybughā al-Ṭawīl. The latter was defeated in battle and imprisoned along with the amīrs who had supported him.¹⁶⁰⁸ He was even able to turn Peter I’s Cypriot Crusade against Alexandria in 1365 CE to his advantage and used this attack for propaganda purposes to build a large fleet to avenge this attack the following year.¹⁶⁰⁹

Yalbughā’s demise came quickly and unexpectedly, at a time when it seemed as though no one could challenge his authority. Having constructed a large “revenge fleet” of 100 ships and recruited the sailors and soldiers to undertake the offensive, Yalbughā went hunting on the west bank of the Nile, thinking that his position was secure. This was far from the truth and two

¹⁶⁰⁴ Ṭaqqūsh, Tārīkh al-Mamālīk, 336.
revolts erupted simultaneously: one in his own camp and another in Cairo led by al-Ashraf Sha‘bān (who was joined by many of Yalbughā’s mamlūks). In the ensuing fighting, the two sides faced one another across the Nile and both used the ships that had been constructed for the attack on Cyprus. In the end Yalbughā found himself deserted by most of his mamlūks. He was eventually captured and then murdered by a group of the Yalbughāwiyya.\(^{1610}\)

This short account of the Yalbughā episode is interesting and relevant because it exemplifies all the topics that will be mentioned and discussed below. First of all, Yalbughā represents the rebellious amīr who deposed his master and took control of the sultanate (in this case as the power behind the throne, in other cases we will see that more often than not, successful rebel amīrs assumed the role of sultan). Second, the rebellious Yalbughāwiyya represent the discontented mamlūks who rioted and mutinied often during the Circassian period. What is interesting to note here is that, unlike the claims made by several scholars on the laxity in the training and disciplining of the mamlūks and the permissiveness of the rulers towards them after al-Nāṣir Muhammad’s reign that led them to become an uncontrollable and destructive force within the sultanate, the case of the Yalbughāwiyya is quite the opposite. Yalbughā treated his mamlūks very harshly. Their training was rigorous and they were punished severely for any misconduct. This harshness and mistreatment was one of the driving factors that led several of Yalbughā’s amīrs and mamlūks to join the fight against their patron.\(^{1611}\) Yalbughā was also in the process of building up his own patrimonial household, and he may even have had designs to eventually take the sultanate for himself. However, at the time of his defeat and death in 1366 CE, many of his own mamlūks were still juniors and had not completed their training. Furthermore, several of those who had turned against him from among the Yalbughāwiyya had actually passed into his service from other masters. Thus, their loyalty to him was not as strong as that of the mamlūks whom he had purchased and was in the process of raising.\(^{1612}\)


The first Circassian sultan, al-Zāhir Barqūq (r. 1382-1389 CE and 1390-1399 CE), played the roles of rebel, usurper, and deposed sovereign during his career. He was of Circassian origin and started his career as one of Yalbughā’s mamlūks. Ibn Taghrī Birdī states that it is not known whether Barqūq was one of those mamlūks who turned against his master or remained loyal to him until he was murdered. In any case, after the fall of Yalbughā, Barqūq and many other Yalbughāwiyya were imprisoned.\footnote{Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{al-Nujūm}, vol. 11, 223.} After his release from prison he served Manjak al-Yūsufi, the nāʾib of Damascus, for a while before being recalled to Egypt by al-Ashraf Shaʿbān. He was among the mamlūks who rebelled and deposed this sultan and also participated in the subsequent factional fight between ‘Aynabak and Qirṭāy and supported the former. ‘Aynabak rewarded Barqūq by promoting him to the rank of Amīr of Forty after his victory over his rival. However, within one month Barqūq and a group of mamlūks rebelled against ‘Aynabak. He was then able to raise himself to the rank of Amīr of One Hundred and to the post of atābak al-ʿasākir.\footnote{Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{al-Nujūm}, vol. 11, 223.} By 1382 CE Barqūq had either imprisoned, killed, or exiled most of those amīrs and their supporters who posed any challenge to him and in this year he was able to depose the young sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Maṣūr and put an end to the period of the Turkic sultans and dominance,\footnote{With the exception of a short break in 1389 CE when al-Ṣāliḥ Maṣūr was returned to the throne for a short period of time.} thus ushering in the Circassian period of the Mamlūk sultanate.\footnote{Al-Maqrīzī, \textit{al-Sulūk}, vol. 3, part 2, 473-475.}

The first half of Barqūq’s reign was challenging for the new sultan due to plots and intrigues to remove him from power and because of some major rebellions in Syria. In fact, in 1389 CE Barqūq was temporarily deposed and forced to flee by the rebels. In 1383 CE the caliph al-Mutawakkil and the amīrs Quruṭ b. ‘Umar al-Turkmānī and Ibrāhīm b. al-Amīr Qutlū al-ʿAlāʾī Amīr Jandār plotted to kill Barqūq and to put the caliph in his place as the new ruler. Their plan was to ambush the sultan when he descended to the hippodrome to play polo. The conspirators agreed to use Quruṭ’s 800 Turkmen and Kurdish warriors to attack the mamlūks and the amīrs as they accompanied the sultan from the citadel while they were dismounted.\footnote{Al-Maqrīzī, \textit{al-Sulūk}, vol. 3, part 2, 493; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{al-Nujūm}, vol. 11, 234.} If the coup failed, the plotters planned to flee to the Arab tribes of Upper Egypt, with whom the caliph had already

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1613] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{al-Nujūm}, vol. 11, 223.
\item[1614] Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{al-Nujūm}, vol. 11, 223.
\item[1615] With the exception of a short break in 1389 CE when al-Ṣāliḥ Maṣūr was returned to the throne for a short period of time.
\end{footnotes}
corresponded, and to use these warriors to continue the struggle.  

Barqūq got wind of the plot and when he had verified this information, he had the conspirators brought before him. The caliph barely escaped with his life and was imprisoned in the citadel. Qurūṭ and Ibrāhīm were crucified and the former was then cut in half. In 1386 CE Barqūq was able to uncover another plot. This time a group of Royal Mamlūks under the leadership of the hājjib, amīr Timurbughā, planned to assassinate him. The plotters were arrested and beaten with whips after which Timurbughā and ten of his co-conspirators were crucified and then cut in half.

The rebellions that took place in the first half of Barqūq’s reign were far more dangerous than the plots mentioned above. The revolts began in 1388 CE with amīr Minṭāsh’s uprising. He was joined by the Ashrafiyya mamlūks (of the deposed sultan al-Ashraf Sha‘bān) and other Turkic mamlūks and Turkmen. When Südūn, the governor of Aleppo, failed to quell the revolt, Barqūq sent Yalburghā al-Nāṣirī, the former governor of Aleppo and an excellent general, to fight Minṭāsh with promises to reinstate him in the governorship of Aleppo. However, this move backfired and Yalburghā al-Nāṣirī also revolted against the sultan. After al-Nāṣirī’s defection, most of the Syrian amīrs, along with the Arab and Turkmen tribes joined the revolt and the sultan lost effective control of Syria. After these developments, Barqūq sent the Egyptian army to deal with the rebels. Yalburghā was beaten in two battles, but in the third clash several amīrs and their followers defected to the rebels and the sultan’s forces were routed. It was not long after this setback that the amīrs and mamlūks of Egypt also started to defect or refused to fight and Barqūq was forced to flee the citadel in disguise as Minṭāsh and Yalburghā.

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1622 Al-ʻArīs, Mawsū‘at al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī, 40-41.

Barqūq did not remain a prisoner in Karak for long. When some of his mamlūks and supporters learned that Mińṭāš and Yalbughā al-Nāširī had sent an amīr with orders to execute Barqūq, they roused the garrison and people of Karak, killed the amīr and freed Barqūq. After this action, the governor of Karak had no choice but to throw his lot in with Barqūq and his supporters.\footnote{Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{al-Nujūm}, vol. 11, 232-233.} In the meantime, rifts had emerged among the rebels who had overthrown Barqūq and a conflict arose between the two leaders Mińṭāš and Yalbughā al-Nāširī.\footnote{Al-Maqrīzī, \textit{al-Sulūk}, vol. 3, part 2, 696-702; Ibn Khaldūn, \textit{Tārīkh ibn Khaldūn}, 493-494.} Furthermore, a prison break occurred in which about 500 mamlūks were able to escape from their confinement and, under the leadership of an amīr by the name of Buṭā al-Ṭulūtamurī, were able to drive off the mamlūks guarding the citadel’s gates and take control of the Royal Stables and eventually the whole citadel. They then freed other imprisoned mamlūks in Cairo and were joined by many of Barqūq’s own Žāhiriyya.\footnote{For details on this see al-Maqrīzī, \textit{al-Sulūk}, vol. 3, part 2, 658-704.} Thus, when Barqūq returned to Cairo, he faced no resistance because his partisans had secured the city for him.

Barqūq returned to Cairo from Karak much in the same manner as al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had for his third reign.\footnote{For a detailed account of these battles and sieges see \textit{al-Sulūk}, vol. 3, part 2, 708-785; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{al-Nujūm}, vol. 12, 11-41.} He resumed his position as sultan and embarked on the reconquest of Syria which was still in the hands of the rebels. Barqūq and his supporters fought a series of battles, sieges, ambushes, and skirmishes against Mińṭāš between 1389 and 1392 CE.\footnote{Al-Maqrīzī, \textit{al-Sulūk}, vol. 3, part 2, 785; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{al-Nujūm}, vol. 12, 41.} During these years Barqūq slowly but surely conquered all of Syria and drove the rebels farther north, depriving them of their powerbases and supporters. Mińṭāš was eventually captured and executed in 1393 CE.\footnote{Al-Maqrīzī, \textit{al-Sulūk}, vol. 3, part 2, 785; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{al-Nujūm}, vol. 12, 41.} Yalbughā al-Nāširī, who had previously come to an agreement with
Barqūq, was also arrested and killed because the sultan could not trust him after his betrayal which resulted in his exile to Karak.\textsuperscript{1632} After the executions of Minţāsh and Yalburghā al-Nāşirī, Barqūq was able to become the undisputed master of Egypt and Syria and secured his position as sultan until the end of his reign.

The sources are very clear on the fact that it was quite common in the Circassian period for amīrs to rebel (especially in Syria) and for the powerful magnates to either directly or indirectly seize power from ruling sultans. Sometimes several of these usurpations and coups took place within a short period of time, giving the image that the officer corps of the Mamlūk army was less disciplined and loyal than it had been under the early sultans. A few examples, presented below, show the state of affairs regarding this matter during the Circassian period.

Barqūq’s successor, al-Nāşir Faraj, did not have an easy time asserting his control over his father’s mamlūks. As mentioned earlier, he tried to curb the dominance and power of the Circassians by carrying out large scale purges and massacres to thin their ranks.\textsuperscript{1633} He also started to build up a new patrimonial household and to create his own ruling apparatus, depending heavily on the Rūm (Turks or Greeks) ethnicity of his maternal side.\textsuperscript{1634} However, these measures did not secure his position on the throne. In fact, he was forced to abandon Syria to Timur and to return to Egypt in 1400 CE because of rumors that a group of amīrs were planning a coup against him.\textsuperscript{1635} Furthermore, he was forced to temporarily abdicate the throne in 1405 CE due to the heavy opposition to his rule.\textsuperscript{1636} Finally, he was deposed in 1412 CE by Shaykh, the governor of Damascus, after being defeated in battle by him, imprisoned in Damascus, and murdered in his cell by a group of his father’s Circassian mamlūks.\textsuperscript{1637} Within a year of al-Nāşir Faraj’s deposition and murder, the Caliph al-Musta’īn who had been installed by

\textsuperscript{1632} Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{al-Nujūm}, vol. 12, 32-33.
\textsuperscript{1634} Al-ʻArīs, \textit{Mawsū‘at al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī}, 55.
\textsuperscript{1636} Al-ʻArīs, \textit{Mawsū‘at al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī}, 55.
the amīrs as an interim “sultan”, was deposed by Shaykh who took the sultanate with the title al-Mu‘ayyad.1638

Such depositions and usurpations of power continued throughout the Circassian period. For example, al-Mu‘ayyad Shaykh tried to establish his infant son al-Muẓaffar Aḥmad as his successor. Seven months after the sultan’s death, al-Ẓāhir Tatār usurped the throne. However, this sultan’s rule was not long lived either. During his short reign al-Ẓāhir Tatār was plagued with poor health, rebellious amīrs (due to his harsh purges), and a bitter, divorced wife whose son he had also removed from the succession. The latter had him poisoned and he died after having only reigned for about one year. He was succeeded by his ten year old son, al-Ṣāliḥ Muḥammad.1639 This young sultan was deposed by Barsbāy within three months of his enthronement.1640 Barsbāy ruled for fifteen years and his son, al-‘Azīz Yūsuf, succeeded him, but he was unable to establish his powerbase and was deposed within one year by the atābak Jaqmaq.1641 This sultan also ruled for fifteen years and also arranged for his son, al-Manṣūr ‘Uthmān to succeed him. But once again, his father’s amīrs deposed him and replaced him with the atābak Ḯānāl.1642 Like the other successful sultans before him, Ḯānāl named his son, al-Mu‘ayyad, as his successor and once again this son of a Mamlūk sultan was quickly deposed by the amīrs and the Mamlūk army led by the amīr Khushqadam, who assumed power and took the title al-Ẓāhir.1643 In the latter half of the fifteenth century, al-Ashraf Qāytbāy also came to the throne after the deposition of his predecessor, Timurbughā in 1468 CE.1644

There were revolts against several of the more successful Circassian sultans as well. However, these sultans were able to establish themselves in power and created strong support groups and patrimonial households that were able to withstand these revolts and eventually to crush them. For example, the governor of Ṣafad, Ḯānāl al-Ẓāhirī, revolted against Barsbāy in 1422

1643 Ibn Tağhrī Birdī, History of Egypt, 1382-1469 A.D., 24
1644 Taqqūsh, Tārīkh al-Mamālīk, 469; al-ʻArīs, Mawsūʿat al-Tārīkh al-Islāmī, 72.
CE, the same year that he became sultan. He had been one of the mamlūks of his predecessor’s father, al-Ẓāhir Tatar, and felt that his fortunes would change for the worse under the new ruler. Ṣafad was besieged and taken without much difficulty, and Īnāl and many of his followers were captured and executed. In another incident, the atābak Qurqumās gathered his mamlūks and supporters numbering around 1,000 men and rode to the citadel to depose Jaqmaq shortly after he became the sultan in 1438 CE. The two sides fought a fierce battle in Cairo, but at the end of the day the sultan was victorious and the rebels were scattered and put to flight. A few months later (early 1439 CE) the governor of Damascus, Īnāl al-Jakamī, also revolted. The Egyptian army was sent out to deal with him and a bloody battle was fought between the two sides in which over 500 mamlūks lost their lives and after a day of fierce fighting the rebels were once again defeated. There was another rebellion that took place two months after Īnāl’s uprising. This time it was Taghrī Birmish, the governor of Aleppo, who rose up against Jaqmaq’s rule. This rebel was defeated and captured by a group of loyal Turkmen and imprisoned in Aleppo.

These examples show that, like the early rulers of the Mamlūk sultanate, almost all the Circassian sultans faced problems and opposition early in their reigns. It was usually those sultans who were of mamlūk origin (i.e., not the sons of mamlūk sultans) such as Barqūq, Barsbāy, and Jaqmaq who were able to weather, and eventually defeat these early revolts, uprisings, and coups. Furthermore, these rulers had all usurped, rather than inherited, the throne. They had spent a lifetime working their way up through the ranks. To solidify their positions they had built up their own patrimonial households and strong bases of support, rather than depending on the ones created for them by their fathers.

There is a clear pattern at work in the examples mentioned above for the careers of the Mamlūk sultans of the Circassian period. A strong Mamlūk amīr (in most cases the atābak) seized power by deposing the weak ruling sultan (often the son of a Mamlūk sultan). This strong leader usually built up a powerful patrimonial household, and like the early sultans engaged in

1647 Ibn Iyās, Badā‘i‘, vol. 2, 214.
the process of state building and cementing himself in his position as the undisputed ruler of the realm. In most cases, these strong rulers attempted to establish dynasties by trying to secure their sons’ succession. However, as was the case in the examples mentioned above, these sons were usually removed from power either by members of the deceased ruler’s household or by the mamlūks and amīrs of previous sultans. The most powerful of the amīrs who led the deposition of the son of the deceased sultan then usually assumed the throne and the cycle started once again. The identification of this pattern sheds light on one of the fundamental weaknesses of the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model, which is the one generational loyalty of the mamlūks to their master, but not necessarily to the son of that master.1649

From the discussion of loyalty above and in Chapter 4, it can be seen that the amīrs and the army of the Circassian period were not any less loyal than those who served the sultans in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The only major difference between the two periods is that Qalāwūn was able to establish a dynastic legacy, which only survived for as long as it did because of the measures that his son al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had taken to secure his position as an undisputed autocrat during his third reign. Through the efforts of these two sultans the decades in which the Qalāwūnid dynasty ruled were the only ones in which a patrimonial household was established where loyalty to the descendants of the deceased sultans was observed to a certain extent. After al-Nāṣir’s death several of his successors were deposed but they were replaced with other Qalāwūnids (mostly as the puppets of powerful amīrs) until Barqūq extinguished the dynasty and ushered in the Circassian era.

7.22 Discipline among the Rank and File Mamlūks of the Circassian Period

Accounts of the Circassian period of the Mamlūk sultanate note that it is one plagued with chaos and disorder caused by the rioting, looting, and depredations of the rank and file mamlūks. The sources are replete with reports of the Royal Mamlūks (especially the julbān) of several sultans rampaging through Cairo or committing depredations against the populaces of Syrian cities such as Aleppo and Damascus while on campaign. These accounts make it seem as though the downturn in the discipline and obedience of the Mamlūk soldiers is a foregone

1649 This pattern has been identified by previous scholars. See Ayalon, “The Circassians in Mamlūk Kingdom,” 145; Garcin, “The Regime of the Circassian Mamlūks,” 290-295.
conclusion. Historians of the period have neglected to analyze and compare these actions with those of the mamlûks of the early sultanate. In this section several examples of such incidents will be given and the probable reasons for this behavior will be discussed and analyzed.

The unbridled behavior of the mamlûks can be observed from the very beginning of the Circassian period. Barqūq sent the Royal Mamlûks to Syria to fight Yalburghâ al-Nâširî at Aleppo shortly before the end of his first reign in 1388 CE. The Egyptian army entered Damascus and the mamlûks busied themselves with looting and engaging in corrupt acts until Yalburghâ marched south and defeated them in battle. Al-Nâšir Faraj seems to have had even less control over his army. In 1399 CE, the year of his accession, a conflict arose between the khâṣṣakiyya led by the amīr Yashbak and his father’s amīrs and a group of the Zâhirîyya led by the atābak Aytamish who wanted to depose the sultan. A major battle ensued between the two parties in the streets of Cairo and around the citadel in which the group led by Yashbak won the day. In the aftermath of the battle, the mamlûks of the victorious side started to break into and loot the homes of Aytamish and the other rebel amīrs. But the situation got out of control as the mamlûks were joined in the looting by local brigands and thugs (azʿar, pl. zuʿar). Together they looted the madrasa of Aytamish, the mosque of Āq Sunqur, and the madrasa of sultan Ḥasan in addition to burning the quarters in this part of Cairo. Several prisons were also broken into, the criminals confined therein were released, and they in turn contributed to the chaos.

Disorder and chaos caused by julbān riots was also seen during the reign of Barsbāy. In 1434 CE the julbān rioted in Cairo because they had begged for their pay and the dīwān responsible was not compliant. These mamlûks headed to the homes of the powerful amīrs and officials and looted them and then the rioting became more general and the mamlûks attacked and looted several stores and markets. In 1437 CE, the year of Barsbāy’s death, the julbān committed atrocities once again. This time they took advantage of the confusion and upheaval caused by the annual hajj procession that passed through Cairo before departing for Mecca.

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1650 Al-Maqrīzī, _al-Sulūk_, vol. 3, part 2, 598-599.
1652 Ibn Iyās, _Badāʾiʿ_, vol. 2, 159.
During this time they kidnapped women and young boys for their pleasure and caused general harm and damage with their actions.\textsuperscript{1653}

Jaqmaq’s reign was not free from the injustices of the Royal Mamlûks against the population either. Ibn Taghrī Birdî reports that in 1441 CE the Nile failed to flood. In fact the water levels decreased, which led to a shortage of grain and drove the prices of food and other commodities up. The situation got to the point where only the very wealthy and powerful could afford to purchase anything from the merchants. At this point the Royal Mamlûks descended upon the docks on the Nile and seized the merchants’ goods and wares. This action made the situation even more difficult because it resulted in several merchants refusing to come to Cairo to sell their goods out of fear that they would be robbed by the mamlûks.\textsuperscript{1654}

Some of the most frequent disturbances caused by the Royal Mamlûks occurred during the reign of al-Ashraf Înāl. For example, in 1454-1445 CE the julbān descended from the citadel and confiscated all the horses from the qādīs and religious scholars in Cairo to the point where not one of them was left with a horse and they were all forced to ride donkeys and mules. They also looted some of the shops in Cairo.\textsuperscript{1655} Ibn Taghrī Birdî states that these mamlûks claimed that they had been commanded by the sultan to carry out these acts. The author seems to believe this claim because he states that the mamlûks took the seized horses to the Royal Stables and tried to have them branded with the royal brand. Ibn Taghrī Birdî also claims that the mamlûks stopped their depredations when the sultan gave the command for peace and order.\textsuperscript{1656} In the same month the Zāhiriyâ (Jaqmaq’s mamlûks) and the Ashrafiyya (Barsbây’s mamlûks) got into a conflict after the Zāhiriyâ assaulted some of the Ashrafiyya. The two factions assembled and faced off against each other in the horse market, but both sides departed after some fighting, or according to Ibn Taghrī Birdî, no fighting occurred and they departed after a long stand-off. The Ashrafiyya had expected the sultan to step in on their side against his immediate

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[1653]{Ibn Iyās, \textit{Badā’i’}, vol. 2, 174.}
\footnotetext[1654]{Ibn Taghrī Birdî, \textit{Hawādīth}, vol. 1, 289.}
\footnotetext[1656]{Ibn Taghrī Birdî, \textit{Hawādīth}, vol. 2, 486.}
\end{footnotes}
predecessor’s mamlūks (whom he had not purged), but İnāl remained neutral stating that all the Royal Mamlūks belonged to him and he would treat them all equally.\textsuperscript{1657}

The \textit{julbān} also rioted later that year during the festival of the sacrifice (‘īd al-\textit{aḍḥā}) and attacked the sultan and the amīrs, but were driven off. In the aftermath of this clash there was a lot of chaos and the sultan was forced to withdraw from the public eye and carry out his sacrifices in private.\textsuperscript{1658} A few days later the \textit{julbān} attacked the home of the \textit{ustādh al-dār} (grand major domo)\textsuperscript{1659} and looted it due to the tardiness of their payments (jāmakiyya). When news of this chaos and disorder in Cairo spread throughout the sultanate, banditry and crime rose everywhere and al-Ashraf İnāl was unable to stop any of it.\textsuperscript{1660} The following year the \textit{julbān} rioted again and were joined by the black slaves of Cairo because of a shortage of meat in their rations. They looted several stores and the homes of some wealthy amīrs during these disturbances.\textsuperscript{1661} In 1455 CE a group of \textit{julbān} once again descended upon Cairo from the citadel and looted several stores and mistreated the populace. The depredations of the mamlūks were so extreme that the Cairenes started to mobilize against them and to retaliate. When the sultan heard of this, he sent out word that any of the Royal Mamlūks caught stealing, looting, or committing violent acts would be punished, and the sultan continued to threaten them in this manner. However, Ibn Taghrī Birdī is of the opinion that İnāl clearly favored his mamlūks and the threats never materialized.\textsuperscript{1662} In 1456 CE Ibn Iyās mentions another incident in which the \textit{julbān} looted the markets of Cairo and stole the harvests of the summer crops, especially the watermelons. These actions caused many vendors and merchants to close their shops, leading in turn to an increase in food prices.\textsuperscript{1663} Furthermore, that same year the Royal Mamlūks once again looted a number of homes in a separate incident when their pay was delayed.\textsuperscript{1664}

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\textsuperscript{1658} Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{Hawādith}, vol. 2, 504.
\textsuperscript{1660} Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{Hawādith}, vol. 2, 505.
\textsuperscript{1661} Ibn Iyās, \textit{The Chronicle of Ibn Iyas}, 36.
\textsuperscript{1662} Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{Hawādith}, vol. 2, 527.
\textsuperscript{1663} Ibn Iyās, \textit{The Chronicle of Ibn Iyas}, 40.
\textsuperscript{1664} Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{Hawādith}, vol. 2, 586.
\end{flushright}
This seemingly unruly behavior of the mamlūk rank and file soldiers continued almost to the very last moments of the Mamlūk sultanate. During the Marj Dābiq campaign Sultan al-Ghawrī sent an advance guard ahead of the main force to Aleppo under Qānī Bāy. This amīr and the mamlūks under his command committed depredations against the people of Aleppo. They broke into their homes and violated their women and children. In fact, when news of the defeat at Marj Dābiq arrived at Aleppo, the people of the city gathered and attacked the mamlūks fleeing from the battlefield in revenge for what they had suffered at their hands.\textsuperscript{1665}

The accounts mentioned above lend strong support for the argument that the discipline of the mamlūks decreased by the Circassian period. However, one must examine the causes for the disorderly and rapacious actions of the mamlūk soldiery in this period. One of the main reasons for the mamlūks’ descending upon the people of Cairo and looting their shops and their homes was a shortage in money or means of livelihood (i.e., food such as meat and wheat). The sources state that there was a shortage of funds at the disposal of the sultans on more than one occasion in this period. For example, early in his second reign in 1390 CE, Barqūq found that his treasury was empty and that he had no money to pay his army.\textsuperscript{1666} Similarly, when Īnāl’s mamlūks demanded their pay, the sultan had to ask them for a grace period of three months in order to gather the necessary funds because Īnāl’s predecessor, Jaqmaq, had used up all the sultanate’s reserves.\textsuperscript{1667} The mamlūks, being professional soldiers, took what they needed by force if it was not given to them, as the examples above demonstrate.

A major difference between the Circassian period and the earlier sultanate was the frequency and scale of wars. As discussed in Chapter 4, early sultans such as Baybars and Qalāwūn contended against major foes such as the Mongols and the Crusaders. These wars not only kept mamlūks busy with fighting, but as previously mentioned, they were also able to satiate their desire for loot, war booty, and general destruction and depredations whenever they took a Crusader castle or fought a field battle against the Mongols. By the Circassian period the

\textsuperscript{1665} Ibn Iyās, \textit{Badā’i‘}, vol. 5, 73; Ibn Iyās, \textit{An Account of the Ottoman Conquest of Egypt in the Year A.H. 922 (A.D.1516):} translated from the third volume of the Arabic chronicle of Muḥammed Ibn Aḥmed Ibn Iyās, an eye-witness of the scenes he describes by W.H. Salmon (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1921), 46.

\textsuperscript{1666} Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{al-Nujūm}, vol. 12, 57.

\textsuperscript{1667} Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{Hawādith}, vol. 2, 449.
situation had changed significantly. The Mamlūks waged major wars for short periods of time and the minor raids they carried out were not enough to gratify the soldiers or to drive a booty economy as was the case with the wars of Baybars and Qalāwūn. Thus, the Mamlūks of the Circassian period did not behave any differently to those of the Baḥrī period. The only difference was that the Circassians occasionally unleashed their martial desires for loot against the local populace because in many cases they did not have the opportunity to gain it fighting enemies. One should also not forget that the accounts mentioned in this section are very reminiscent of the rioting and looting that the Baḥriyya carried out in Cairo in the thirteenth century. Yet the Baḥriyya are the ultimate model of military prowess, discipline, and organization that the scholars in this field use as a comparison for the armies of the later periods of the Mamlūk sultanate.

### 7.23 The Disciplining and Punishment of Mamlūks during the Circassian Period

As mentioned previously, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign has been characterized as one in which “mamlūk traditions” were abandoned, which resulted in a less competent and efficient army and a general military deterioration. One of the many negative effects of al-Nāṣir’s reign, according to scholarly opinion, was the laxity and relative permissiveness of the rulers towards the mamlūks, especially the Royal Mamlūks. However, such a claim is a gross oversimplification of the real situation, and as we have seen with other aspects of the Mamlūk army, the strictness of sultans with their mamlūks differed greatly. Generally, those sultans who were successful rulers and state builders and who were able to consolidate their positions and avoid being deposed, were stricter and less permissive with their mamlūks and were thus similar to the successful sultans of the early period of the sultanate such as Baybars and Qalāwūn. Therefore, it cannot be maintained that there was a general trend toward decline in the discipline, obedience, and the punishment of mamlūks who had committed crimes and misdemeanors in the Mamlūk army throughout this period. In fact, the level of discipline and control that sultans maintained over their armies fluctuated throughout the whole sultanate.

The sultans who were successful in establishing themselves were usually able to bring their army and amīrs under control. As mentioned earlier, rulers such as Barqūq, Barsbāy, and Jaqmaq all gained power by deposing the sons of their predecessors and they all faced internal opposition in the early parts of their reigns either from rebel amīrs or mutinous soldiers. Some
examples were presented above that showed how such sultans overcame plots and amīr rebellions and quite often treated the rebels and conspirators very harshly. For example, Barqūq had both Mintāsh and Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī executed and also had some amīrs put to death for plotting to overthrow and replace him with the caliph. Such rulers also dealt very harshly and decisively with rank and file mamlūks who showed signs of insubordination, mutiny, or a lack of discipline. The sources give very specific examples of such occurrences, which I will discuss in more detail below.

Barqūq was a strict disciplinarian. He had been raised through the rigorous Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model under a very severe master, Yalbughā al-ʿUmarī al-Nāṣirī al-Khāṣṣakī. He had also experienced rebellions against his rule and had even been temporarily deposed by his opponents. It should come as no surprise then that this sultan tried to maintain an iron grip over both his amīrs and the Mamlūk soldiery of his army. In 1390 CE, early in his second reign an Amīr of Ten and a Mamlūk soldier both spread rumors of internal strife and that the amīr Buṭā al-Ṭulūtamurī, the dawādār, was planning to rise up against the sultan. Barqūq confirmed that there was no truth to these rumors and had the amīr and the mamlūk who had started them severely beaten, crucified on the backs of camels, and displayed to the public. A town crier preceded them and proclaimed to the onlookers that this was the punishment for those who create rumors that could potentially instigate strife between the amīrs and the ruler.\footnote{1668}{Al-Maqrīzī, al-Sulūk, vol. 3, part 2, 719; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nujūm, vol. 12, 14.}

Barqūq dealt very harshly with those who had rebelled against him, especially with those who had supported Mintāsh. In 1391 CE the sultan had Asandamur al-Ashrafī, Aqbughā al-Zarīf, and Ismāʿīl al-Turkmānī, amīrs who had supported Mintāsh, arrested, crucified, and cut in half. Al-Maqrīzī comments on this event and states that up to this point such punishments had only been meted out to bandits and highway robbers and not to amīrs.\footnote{1669}{Al-Maqrīzī, al-Sulūk, vol. 3, part 2, 738-739.} In another incident in Damascus, a group of Barqūq’s supporters pretended to rebel against the sultan in order to lure all of Mintāsh’s remaining supporters from hiding. 1,200 Mintāshīs gathered to join the would-be rebellion only to be disarmed, arrested, and thrown into the dungeons.\footnote{1670}{Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nujūm, vol. 12, 18.} Furthermore,
Barqūq ordered the execution of thirteen captured Minṭāshī rebels in 1391 CE.\textsuperscript{1671} In 1392 CE fifteen mamlūks stormed the citadel of Damascus, released about 100 Minṭāshī and Nāṣirī (mamlūks of Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī) prisoners from the dungeon and held the citadel against Barqūq’s loyalists for three days before it was taken by storm. All but five of the rebels were taken prisoner, and they were all executed by being cut in half.\textsuperscript{1672} All these events occurred while Minṭāsh was still in revolt before his final defeat. Barqūq’s harsh but decisive treatment of the rebels shows that this sultan did not take disloyalty and rebellion lightly and was not forgiving or permissive to those who rose against him.

Barqūq took minor offenses committed by the mamlūks as seriously as he did the major ones such as rebellion. In 1393 CE the supervisor of the iqṭā' of Gīza, the amīr Nāṣir al-Dīn, was arrested, flogged, and imprisoned on the orders of the sultan because the peasants of his district had complained about him to the authorities.\textsuperscript{1673} Furthermore, in 1394 CE Barqūq had called several musters of his army in preparation to march out to face Timur’s threat to Syria. Hundreds of mamlūks did not show up at these musters and stayed behind when the main army had departed from Cairo. Another muster was called and several hundred of these “tardy” soldiers appeared thinking that they were going to receive their pre-campaign stipends. Instead of being paid, 370 of them were surrounded, arrested, and dragged to prison in chains for being late for the military review.\textsuperscript{1674}

Barqūq was not the only Circassian sultan who continued the strict enforcement of discipline in the army and the harsh punishment of mamlūks who rebelled or misbehaved. In fact, there were several sultans of the Circassian period who maintained (or tried to maintain) order in the sultanate by keeping a strong grip on the mamlūks and punishing those who ventured to rebel against royal authority or to create chaos and disorder through unruly conduct and depredations. Faraj, Barqūq’s son and successor, dealt extremely harshly with the Circassian elements of the army, which had been the backbone of his father’s support but had become the pillar of resistance against the new ruler. Over the duration of his reign this sultan had over 2,000

\textsuperscript{1671} Al-Maqrīzī, \textit{al-Sulūk}, vol. 3, part 2, 744.
\textsuperscript{1672} Al-Maqrīzī, \textit{al-Sulūk}, vol. 3, part 2, 762-763.
\textsuperscript{1673} Al-Maqrīzī, \textit{al-Sulūk}, vol. 3, part 2, 784.
\textsuperscript{1674} Al-Maqrīzī, \textit{al-Sulūk}, vol. 3, part 2, 811.
Circassian mamlūks and amīrs killed in an attempt to establish some control over the military. Additionally, in 1442 CE, during Jaqmaq’s reign, a group of mamlūks plotted to murder their master, the grand dawādār Taghri Birdī al-Bikilmāshī al-Mu’dhī. They surrounded the grand dawādār’s home and tried to assault him throughout the night. When the sultan heard of these events, he sent a force to the aid of the grand dawādār, which successfully beat the insurgents. The survivors of the fight were put in chains and imprisoned. Later that year Jaqmaq gave the order that a dozen Royal Mamlūks were to be removed from the pay registers as a punishment for failing to appear at a military review. In the early parts of his tenure as sultan, al-Mu’ayyad Aḥmad reigned in his father’s julbān. The unruliness of Īnāl’s julbān and the permissiveness of the sultan regarding their disciplining is clear from the examples presented earlier. Al-Mu’ayyad’s policies put fear into the hearts of Īnāl’s Ashrāfiyya, and they were afraid to leave their homes, let alone commit unruly acts such as robbery, abduction, and extortion in and around Cairo. In a matter of months the seemingly untameable mamlūks of Īnāl were all under the new sultan’s control. However, al-Mu’ayyad’s attitude toward this group changed suddenly and he started to fawn over them and to treat them as his father once had done. The shift in this ruler’s behavior lost him his support among the populace of Cairo and the other elements of the army. Eventually it cost him his throne. The next sultan Khushqadam also restrained the julbān from rioting and committing crimes against the people and merchants of Cairo. Ibn Taghrī Birdī states that the punishments meted out by this ruler included beatings, imprisonment, and banishment, among others.

The policy of controlling the mamlūks through threats and varying degrees of punishment was followed by several sultans of the Circassian period, even during the last march into Syria during the Marj Dābiq campaign in 1516 CE. Ibn Iyās mentions that there was a mamlūk among the julbān by the name of Jānam al-Ifranjī who had departed from Cairo with the advance detachment before the sultan and the main army. This mamlūk, along with his servants,
terrorized the local population through whose land the army marched and seized whatever he could from them. Upon hearing this, Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī ordered that he should be arrested and hanged on the spot. This order was carried out and the culprit was hanged from a tree wearing his uniform, bow, quiver, and sword and his servants were arrested, put in chains, and led away to prison. Furthermore, when the sultan set out for Marj Dābiq he gave strict orders that prevented the mamlūks from molesting the people of the regions through which the army passed.

It is quite clear from the examples presented above that one cannot simply assume that all the sultans after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad were permissive with their mamlūks and did not enforce discipline and loyalty. In fact, like many other aspects of the Mamlūk sultanate and army, the enforcement of loyalty and discipline varied between the reigns of the different sultans. Some of them were able to restrain and control their mamlūks much more effectively than others. Therefore, the case of loyalty, discipline, and control in the Mamlūk army, like that of training, military effectiveness, and efficiency, was not one of perpetual ebbing, as is often presented by some of the scholars, but rather a series of individual cases that depended on the sultan and the amount of control he was able to exert over his realm and his army during his reign. To assert that after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign the Mamlūk army was in a state of continuous deterioration is thus a gross oversimplification that ignores many important details presented to us in the sources.

7.3 The Performance of the Mamlūk Army in the Later Periods of the Sultanate

So far this chapter has shown that the Mamlūk army of the Circassian period had not lost its military effectiveness as several scholars claim with respect to training and discipline. In fact, it did not change very significantly at all compared to the army of the early sultanate. For the most part, sultans, with some exceptions, upheld earlier principles of training and promotion. Furthermore, the loyalty and discipline of the army depended very much on the strong character

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1681 Ibn Iyās, An Account, 11-12.
1682 Ibn Iyās, An Account, 18
1683 With a few exceptions when the “mamlūk traditions” were abandoned due to military and political circumstances that seemed to serve the ruler (i.e., al-Nāṣir Muḥammad). However, this occurred throughout the whole period of the Mamlūk sultanate and not only during and after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign.
and personality of the sultan and his ability to create and establish a powerful patrimonial household through which he exerted complete control over his realm and the military. However, proving all these points would not mean much if the Mamlūk army did not continue to perform exceptionally well in the field.

The Circassian sultanate, unlike the earlier regime, was not in a constant state of all-out war against powerful enemies. However, it did face a number of opponents some of whom were more formidable than others. Among these were the Franks, Timur, Shāh Suwār of the Dhū al-Qādrid principality, and the Ottomans in addition to some tribal Arab and Turkmen uprisings. What is important to note here is that the Mamlūks did not fight their wars against these foes consecutively; there were long periods of peace between these conflicts when the army was idle and sometimes rebellious and disruptive. Due to the fact that the army was not occupied with fighting external enemies it seemed less disciplined than the army of the early period. There was less booty and wealth to distribute to the troops, sometimes causing them to forcefully take what they wanted from the civilian population.

7.31 The Franks

The Franks continued to be active enemies of the Mamlūk sultanate. However, after their expulsion from the Levant upon the conquest of Acre in 1291 CE, they no longer posed a major threat. Nevertheless, the Franks still maintained control over several islands in the Mediterranean such as Cyprus and Rhodes. Thus, most of the contact between the Franks and the Mamlūks was in the form of quick raids against one another due to their diminished presence in the Eastern Mediterranean, with the exception of King Peter I’s Crusade against Alexandria in 1365 CE and the attacks on Cyprus by Barsbāy during his sultanate (1422-1437 CE).

King Peter I’s Crusade against Alexandria was probably the last major Frankish offensive against the Mamlūks. Even though this incident occurred after the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, during the transitional period that led to the rise of the Circassians a few decades

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1684 For an analysis of what the Mamlūk sources say regarding this military campaign see Jo Van Steenbergen, “The Alexandrian Crusade (1365) and the Mamluk Sources: reassessment of the Kitab al-Ilmam of an-Nuwayri al-‘Iskandarani (d. 1372 AD),” in East and West in the Crusader States. Context - Contacts - Confrontations, III. Acta of the congress held at Hernen Castle in September 2000, eds. Krijnie Ciggaar, Adelbert Davids and Herman Teule. (Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 124-137.
before the “official” beginning of the Circassian sultanate, it nevertheless was an important event. The Crusader force was composed of Peter I’s army, Knights from the Order of St. John, and troops supplied by the Venetians, the Papacy, and other European rulers.\textsuperscript{1685} The army of 10,000-30,000 men set sail from Rhodes on 165 ships.\textsuperscript{1686} The Egyptians were taken by surprise and the city was defended by the garrison, the local population, and some Arab tribesmen who were in the vicinity.\textsuperscript{1687} The attackers were able to overcome the defenders after two days of fighting by landing some of their troops and attacking from both the land and the sea. When the walls were scaled and the gates were either opened or burned down, the Frankish army entered the city and sacked it. The Franks massacred the population and gathered a very large amount of booty.\textsuperscript{1688} It had been King Peter’s intention to capture Alexandria and to trade it for Jerusalem, hoping that occupying Egypt’s main port would cripple the sultanate’s economy, thus forcing the exchange.\textsuperscript{1689} However, as the Mamlūk army approached Alexandria, the English and French knights who had joined the Crusade deserted laden with their loot and prisoners. Seeing his army lose cohesion and the desire to fight, Peter I withdrew with his Cypriot knights only six days\textsuperscript{1690} after taking Alexandria and just as the Mamlūks were arriving at the outskirts of the city.\textsuperscript{1691} Thus, they never really clashed with the Mamlūk army, only managing to defeat a weak and semi-professional defense force composed primarily of auxiliaries.\textsuperscript{1692}

The second major clash between the Mamlūks and the Franks occurred during the reign of al-Ashraf Barsbāy. This sultan strengthened the navy in order to deal with Frankish pirates who were based in Cyprus and who frequently threatened the coasts of the sultanate and commercial shipping.\textsuperscript{1693} In 1424 CE a small fleet composed of both Syrian and Egyptian ships

\textsuperscript{1685} Waterson, Knights, 232.
\textsuperscript{1686} Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nują̇m, vol. 11, 29; Waterson, Knights, 232.
\textsuperscript{1687} Al-Maqrīzī, al-Sulū̇k, vol. 3, part 1, 105; Waterson, Knights, 233.
\textsuperscript{1688} Al-Maqrīzī, al-Sulū̇k, vol. 3, part 1, 106-107; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nuju̇m, vol. 11, 29; Waterson, Knights, 233.
\textsuperscript{1689} Waterson, Knights, 232.
\textsuperscript{1690} Eight days according to al-Maqrīzī. See al-Maqrīzī, al-Sulū̇k, vol. 3, part 1, 107.
\textsuperscript{1691} Al-Maqrīzī, al-Sulū̇k, vol. 3, part 1, 107; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, al-Nuju̇m, vol. 11, 30; Waterson, Knights, 234.
\textsuperscript{1692} Also see Holt, Age of the Crusades, 125-127.
\textsuperscript{1693} Ahmad Darrag, al-Mamālīk wa al-Firanj (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-‘Arabiyy, 1961), 22-25, 33; Waterson, Knights, 245.
was sent out to raid Cyprus under the leadership of the ḥājib, Jirbāsh al-Karīmī. This attack was very successful. The Muslim fleet defeated a number of Cypriot ships that had been sent to fight them off the coast of the Island. Half of the Mamlūk army on board the ships successfully disembarked on the island with their horses. Another battle was fought against the Cypriot army, commanded by the king’s brother, and after some heavy fighting the Mamlūks drove off their enemies. The victors then proceeded to ride across the Island taking many prisoners and looting several towns and villages. The ships then returned to Cairo laden with spoils. The Mamlūk army returned with 1,060 prisoners and so much booty that 170 porters, 40 mules, and 10 camels had to transport it. The sultan ordered that the prisoners be sold and awarded the victorious soldiers bonuses ranging from three to seven dīnārs.

Barsbāy launched a second attack against Cyprus in 1426 CE, which resulted in the capture of King Janus and the conquest of the island. This attack was much larger than the previous one. The sultan held a review of the army before it embarked on a fleet of over 100 ships. The army landed on the island and, in a joint operation with the sailors who remained on the ships, they took Limassol and sacked it. The land force, which included several Royal Mamlūks, then marched on Nicosia. Along the way they were ambushed by King Janus and his army and despite being outnumbered and being taken by surprise the Mamlūks proved to be the superior soldiers. After some heavy fighting they routed the Cypriots and captured the king and many of his men. They then marched on, took Nicosia, and sacked the city. The Mamlūk fleet also defeated a Frankish relief fleet that had been sent to the aid of Cyprus.

1695 Ibn Iyās says the booty was carried by seventy camels. See Ibn Iyās, Badāʾīʾ, vol. 2, 100.
1697 For a more detailed discussion of the Mamlūk conquest of Cyprus see Ahmad Darrag, L’Égypte sous le Règne de Barsbay, 825-841/1422-1438 (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1961), 239-267.
1699 Al-Maqrīzī, al-Sulūk, vol. 4, part 2, 721; Waterson, Knights, 246.
1700 The taking of Cyprus was the first conquest by the Mamlūks, the most powerful Muslim power of the late fourteenth century, in a century. Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 35-36.
The victorious Mamlūks returned to Cairo heavily laden with booty and prisoners including King Janus. In addition to the massive amounts of wealth brought back to Egypt, the Cypriot king ransomed himself for 200,000 dīnārs and was only allowed to return to his kingdom as a vassal of the sultan with the obligation to pay an annual tribute of 20,000 dīnārs. Barsbāy’s reign saw a revival of the military might and awe of the Mamlūk sultanate. In fact, a delegation came to Barsbāy from Rhodes after the conquest of Cyprus to pay homage and to seek assurances that they would not be attacked next. “It was like the return of the Bahri years of jihad in Cairo.” It is also interesting to note that the sources are quite about any major revolts, mutinies, riots, depredations, or disorder perpetrated by the army during these years. The most probable reason for this was that the royal coffers were full with the wealth gained from the wars with Cyprus and thus the sultan was able to pay his army. Moreover, the soldiers who had participated in these campaigns were also kept occupied fighting an external foe and their martial instincts and desire for plunder were sated just as Baybars’ forces had been.

Most of the other contacts between the Mamlūks and the Franks were in the form of limited raids and skirmishes. For instance, in 1383 CE a Frankish raiding force landed at Beirut where it managed to occupy several towers. This incursion was not seen as a very serious threat because the Egyptian army was not sent to fight the invaders. In fact, it was the Syrian amīrs and their mamlūks, accompanied by Kurdish infantrymen, who met the Franks in battle, defeated them, and drove them back to their ships. Barsbāy’s successor, Jaqmaq, used his predecessor’s fleet and raided Rhodes in 1443 CE. This raid was smaller in scale to Barsbāy’s invasion of Cyprus and achieved less. However, the mamlūks did besiege the city and bombarded it with both mangonels and cannons. After weeks of heavy fighting, both on land and at sea, the mamlūks were unable to breach the defenses of Rhodes and had to satisfy themselves with raiding the countryside before returning to Egypt.

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1703 Waterson, Knights, 246.
1704 Waterson, Knights, 246.
The Franks continued to be an enemy to the Mamlûks during the later periods of the sultanate. However, they were no longer a major threat and rather represented no more than an annoying thorn in the sultanate’s side. It is clear from the examples above that detached segments of the Mamlûk army were enough to deal with them both on the offensive and the defensive. Furthermore, sometimes detachments from the main army were not even needed to ward off Frankish raids on the coasts of Syria which were defended by auxiliaries and the armies of the Syrian amīrs.

7.32 Timur’s Invasion

At first glance Timur’s invasion of Syria and his conquest and sacking of both Aleppo and Damascus in the early fifteenth century seem to indicate that by this point, the Mamlûks had indeed experienced a military downturn. But upon a more detailed examination of events, it becomes clear that the main Mamlûk army never fought a pitched battle or a prolonged campaign against Timur’s forces. In fact, the only decisive battle that was fought between the two sides took place outside Aleppo in 1400 CE. On this occasion, only the armies of Syria were involved in the fighting on the Mamlûk side. Furthermore, in the preliminary clashes between the main Egyptian army and Timur, the Mamlûks had the upper hand.

The first contacts between Timur and the Mamlûks occurred in the 1380s when the former started his campaigns in the west, which intensified after his conquest of Baghdad in

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It must be mentioned here that Timur’s army is a good example of the Diversified Army Model. According to Ibn ‘Arabshâh it was composed of Indians, Turks from various regions and tribes, Persians, Mongols, Khwârazmians, Khurâsânîs, Mazandarânîs, Lûrs, among others. He even describes troops of ferocious female soldiers who fought in his armies. This author also describes the various religious groups that could be found in Timur’s military which included idol worshippers, fire worshippers (Zoroastrians), sorcerors and soothsayers, idolaters and infidels, and polytheists of all sorts. These groups brought their idols with them and their non-Muslim practices which this author describes in detail. See Ibn ‘Arabshâh, ‘Ajâ’îb, 52, 56, 168, 170, 195, 372, 476-477, 481; Ibn ‘Arabshâh, Fâkihat, 577; also see Mansura Haidar, Medieval Central Asia: Polity, Economy, and Military Organization (Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries) (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers Distributors, 2004), 275-292.
1393 CE during Barqūq’s second reign.\textsuperscript{1709} This sultan not only gave refuge to Sultan Aḥmad of Baghdad after the city fell, but also sent him back to Iraq with an army to reconquer his realm. Barqūq also concluded an alliance with Toqtāmish against Timur.\textsuperscript{1710}

There were no major clashes between Barqūq and Timur, although at one point it seemed inevitable that the two monarchs would meet each other in battle. In 1387 CE, the sultan sent an expeditionary force under the command of Alṭunbughā that included four Amīrs of One Hundred, seven Amīrs of Forty, five Amīrs of Ten, and 300 halqa soldiers to Syria after news arrived that Timur was operating in South Eastern Anatolia and that he had defeated the Turkmen under Qarā Muḥammad.\textsuperscript{1711} This expeditionary force came across a contingent of Timur’s army and defeated it in a battle near Diyār Bakr before returning to Syria.\textsuperscript{1712} In another incident in 1388 CE a Mamlūk army composed of Egyptian (most probably the same expeditionary force mentioned above) and Syrian contingents besieged Sivas in Anatolia. The defenders appealed to the Mongols (\textit{al-Tatār}). It is not clear who the “Mongols” were in this case. They were most likely either Toqtāmish’s Golden Horde or Timur’s troops since the sources state that 60,000 Mongol (\textit{Tatār}) warriors came to the aid of Sivas. However, because of the generally amicable relationship between the Mamlūks and the Golden Horde, it is most likely that this Mongol relief force was a contingent of Timur’s army. The Egyptians and Syrians were able to defeat and drive off the Mongols. After a prolonged and fruitless siege, the Mamlūk army departed from Sivas but was ambushed by the Mongols (\textit{Tatār}) on its return journey to Aleppo. However, this ambush was a failure. The mamlūk soldiers were able to withstand the Mongol assault, completely routed the ambushers, and captured over 1,000 prisoners and 10,000 horses. Upon hearing this news, Barqūq was pleased and gave the Egyptian expeditionary force permission to return to Egypt.\textsuperscript{1713}

\textsuperscript{1709} Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 237; Subtelny, “Tamerlane” 176-177.

\textsuperscript{1710} Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 237; Subtelny, “Tamerlane,” 177.


\textsuperscript{1712} Ṭaqqūsh, \textit{Tārīkh al-Mamālīk}, 382.

Barqūq went to great lengths to prepare for the clash with Timur. He assembled the entire army in 1394 CE and marched to Syria. Al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Taghrī Birdī both describe the army as it came together and marched out of Cairo. They state that it was huge in size and that the sultan personally reviewed and organized every contingent before allowing it to depart from Cairo. Barqūq also ensured that all the forts and castles in Syria were repaired and well stocked to withstand any attacks. In fact, he emptied the coffers in his war preparations against Timur. The Mamlūk sultan also sent a strong and decisive message to Timur when he had all the members of a Timurid embassy executed as soon as it entered Mamlūk territory at al-Raḥba. This assertive action and state of military preparedness hearkens back to the days of Baybars and Quṭuz and their policies regarding the war against the Mongols.

The almost inevitable clash between these two great rulers never took place. The invasion of Syria never materialized and while Barqūq awaited it with his well-prepared army, news arrived that Timur had withdrawn his forces from the Syrian frontier. There was only minimal contact between the scouts of the two armies in which the Mamlūks were victorious. The sources claim that Timur was afraid to face Barqūq and his formidable army in battle and that he retreated to his homeland. Although this is a simplistic and subjective account of the events, there is a kernel of truth in the Mamlūk sources’ interpretation of Timur’s withdrawal. In this instance, Timur can be described here as being more cautious than afraid. He knew he had to deal with Toqtāmish, the ally of the Mamlūks, and the threat that he posed to his flank. He must also have been aware of the Mamlūks’ defensive policies and correctly gambled that the Golden Horde was more likely to carry out offensive operations on his rear than the Mamlūk sultanate. So he chose to face his northern enemies and left Syria and the powerful fully mobilized Mamlūk army to fight on another day.

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1715 Taqqūsh, Tārīkh al-Mamālīk, 388.
1717 Broadbrige, Kingship and Ideology, 180-181.
1718 Shukrī, al-Ṣulṭān Barqūq, 93.
Timur’s gamble worked in his favor in more than one way. In 1395 CE he defeated Toqtāmish in battle at the Terek River in the Caucasus region. After this defeat, Toqtāmish was never again able to reestablish his authority over the Golden Horde. Nor was he ever again a threat to Timur. Furthermore, with Barqūq’s death in 1399 CE the Mamlūk sultanate was left under the control of his young son al-Nāṣir Faraj, who was a mere shadow of his illustrious father. Moreover, the new sultan was unable to exert full control over the army and there was much internal strife in the realm. Upon hearing the news Timur once again turned his attention to the west.

In 1400 CE Timur’s forces arrived at Aleppo where the Syrian amīrs had gathered to meet him. The armies of Damascus, Aleppo, Antioch, Acre, Ḥimṣ, Gaza, Tripoli, Baalbak, and Ḥamā were all concentrated in Aleppo. The amīrs of Syria held a military council and after debating the matter they decided to leave the city and face the invader in the open field. This decision was taken after Timur’s advance guard of 2,000 men was put to flight by 300 mamlūks and after his attacks on the city, which lasted for two days, were successfully repulsed by the defenders who used arrows and cannon to drive the invaders from the walls. So on the third day the defenders sallied out and drew up their battle lines before the city with the army of Damascus forming the right wing, the army of Aleppo the left wing, and all the other armies of Syria in the center with the infantry of Aleppo drawn up in front of them. The battle was a disaster and within one hour the Syrians were put to flight. The rout was so confused and disorderly that the pursuing attackers were able to gain access to the city. It was not long before Aleppo was in their hands and the city was plundered and its populace was massacred.

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1721 Watson, Knights, 237-238.
Timur, after quickly taking Ḫimṣ, Ḫamā, Sidon, and Beirut, next turned his attention to Damascus. However, this time the sultan and the Egyptian army had marched out to the aid of the beleaguered Syrians. It seemed once again that the two forces would face one another in a major battle. In the preliminary clashes between the two forces Timur’s advance guard of about 1,000 horsemen was utterly defeated by about 100 mamlūks. In a more serious clash Timur personally led his forces against Damascus, but was easily driven back by the right wing of the Egyptian army. After this setback, the invader asked Faraj for a truce and offered a prisoner exchange on two occasions. His overtures were repulsed by the Mamlūks both times. In the meantime, the garrison Timur had left in Aleppo was driven out and the city was retaken by the Mamlūks.

It seemed as though Timur was going to be stopped or even defeated. But at this crucial moment the sultan and the Mamlūk army departed for Egypt. The reason for this sudden withdrawal was due to rumors that had spread that a group of amīrs had left the army and returned to Cairo and planned to overthrow the sultan. Therefore, Faraj opted to ensure that his capital remained under his control and left Damascus to its fate. In 1401 CE, Damascus fell and a terrible massacre ensued and the city was laid to waste. Despite this setback, Faraj mobilized the Egyptian army the following year. All the amīrs and the mamlūks were ordered to muster for the march. Furthermore, all able-bodied members of the ḥalqa were also required to participate in the campaign. Those who could not accompany the army had to pay an indemnity to the sultan. In addition to the regular army, 10,000 Arab auxiliaries were also called up for the reconquest of Syria. After the army had set out from Cairo, word reached Faraj that Timur

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1735 Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm*, vol. 12, 249.
was withdrawing and abandoning Syria and thus for the last time in Timur’s life a major confrontation between these two adversaries was avoided.\footnote{Ibn Taghrī Birdī, \textit{al-Nujūm}, vol. 12, 252; Ṭaqqūsh, \textit{Tārīkh al-Mamālīk}, 431.}

The setback suffered by the Mamlūks in Syria in the early fifteenth century did not really affect their control over the region or their military power. In fact, Shāh Rukh, Timur’s successor, attempted to reduce the mamlūk sultan, Barsbāy, to vassalage by “appointing” him governor of Egypt. He also tried to assume the role of the protector of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. However, Barsbāy refused to submit and sent an expeditionary force to the Ḥijāz to bolster his position in the region.\footnote{Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 247.} Shāh Rukh did not (or could not) respond to Barsbāy’s activities, and thus the Mamlūks showed that they were still the military and political superpower of the region.\footnote{Anne Broadbridge argues that the Mamlūks had surrendered their pretension to regional supremacy and guardianship and were almost reduced to vassalage and bases this theory upon the language used in the diplomatic exchanges between Timur and Faraj, but she does not go into a detailed discussion of the military events. For more on this perspective see Broadbrige, \textit{Kingship and Ideology}, 169-198.}

It is clear from the events described above that Timur’s invasion of Syria and the conquest and sacking of Aleppo and Damascus were not indicative of the weakness of the Mamlūk army. It is very easy to write off the Mamlūk military as having lost its vigor and effectiveness because of the temporary losses in Syria. However, during the siege of Aleppo, Timur only faced and defeated the armies of Syria, which were smaller and weaker than their Egyptian counterpart. Furthermore, the Syrian amīrs did not have any Royal Mamlūks at their disposal. Moreover, when Timur’s forces did skirmish and clash with elements of the main Mamlūk army, they were always defeated. It should come as no surprise then that Timur tried to avoid a direct confrontation with the Mamlūk army, especially when it was commanded by a strong sultan such as Barqūq. These two powers could have clashed on three occasions. On two of those (in 1392 CE and in 1401 after the fall of Damascus) Timur opted to avoid a confrontation and withdrew. On the third in 1400 CE, he tried to reach an agreement with Faraj after his forces had been easily repulsed by the Mamlūks. These overtures were refused, but to Timur’s good fortune, a weak sultan and internal discord forced the Egyptian army to withdraw and temporarily abandon Syria. What one can take from this information is that after such a
detailed reading, it becomes quite evident that the soldiers of the Mamlūk army were far superior to Timur’s warriors and proved it on the battlefield on more than one occasion. However, they never got the chance to face this elusive eastern invader in a pitched battle.

7.33 Shāh Suwār

The struggle on the northern frontier of the sultanate against the Dhū al-Qādrid Turkmen amīr, Shāh Suwār, is often cited as one of the indicators of the poor state of the Mamlūk army because it took four military campaigns to defeat this upstart vassal. However, upon a deeper examination of this conflict, one will find that the Mamlūk army continued to win all the major field battles against the enemy and only had trouble when Shāh Suwār engaged in irregular guerilla tactics. In this case it is difficult to pass judgment on the Mamlūk army and to claim that it had waned in comparison to the military of the early Bahrī period, because there are innumerable examples of powerful armies having difficulties against much weaker opponents who employed guerilla tactics against them throughout history. One cannot argue against the fact that it is more difficult and time consuming to fight against an enemy that refuses to commit to an open battle, remains hidden and needs flushing out, and employs surprise attacks and ambush tactics. Thus, the fact that the Mamlūks were forced to dedicate a considerable amount of resources and manpower to their campaigns against the rebel Dhū al-Qādrid amīr and that they suffered some setbacks and defeats should come as no surprise and is in no way an indication a decrease in the quality and efficiency of their army.

The conflict between Shāh Suwār and the Mamlūks started when the former deposed his brother with the help of the Ottomans and proclaimed his independence from the Mamlūk sultanate in Elbistān (Eastern Anatolia). These disturbances in the Dhū al-Qādrid regions

1740 Sievert supports this idea based on the fact that the “unpleasant” details of these campaigns were omitted from Abū Ḥāmid’s Tārikh, which was a laudatory text on Qāytbāy’s reign. Sievert, Der Herrscherwechsel, 45.

1741 Even in modern warfare we see that superpowers with the largest, best trained, and most technologically advanced armies continue to have trouble against much weaker opponents who employ guerilla tactics. Some examples are the experiences of the Russian army in Afghanistan and Chechniya and the American army in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

started in 1465 CE in the last years of al-Zāhir Khushqadam’s reign. This ruler neglected to crush the revolt in its early stages and only sent a punitive expedition against Shāh Suwār in 1467 CE after his influence and power had grown in the region. This expedition was defeated because amīr Bardbak, the nā’ib of Damascus, had rebelled against Khushqadam and failed to support the other Syrian amīrs and the expeditionary force against the rebels. Upon hearing the news, the sultan started to prepare an even greater expedition. However, it never materialized because he died that same year.\textsuperscript{1743}

The most intense fighting between the Mamlūks and Shāh Suwār took place during the reign of al-Ashraf Qāytbāy (r.1468-1496 CE). Unlike his two predecessors who were both enthroned and deposed within one year, Qāytbāy was able to secure his position, remove any threats to his authority, and to unite the army under his control.\textsuperscript{1744} In essence, he was, like al-Zāhir Baybars, al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn, and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, a successful state builder and ruled the sultanate for almost three decades, during which he fought two major wars against both Shāh Suwār and the Ottomans.

Qāytbāy rallied rival mamlūk factions against Shāh Suwār and directed their energies against the Turkmen rebels. In fact, he started to hold military reviews within weeks after he assumed the sultanate.\textsuperscript{1745} The first expedition sent out by the sultan was under the command of the atābak Jānibak Qulaqsīz. It reached Aleppo quickly and immediately commenced operations against the rebels. The Mamlūks were initially victorious and were able to take ‘Aynṭāb. However, the rebels quickly recaptured it and then ambushed the Mamlūks after destroying their scouting parties. After a series of clashes in which the Egyptians were almost victorious three times, Shāh Suwār’s forces eventually routed them with heavy losses and captured the commander, Jānibak.\textsuperscript{1746} This defeated force was composed primarily of Khushqadam’s

\textsuperscript{1743} Ibn Taghrī Birdī, History of Egypt, 129; Ibn Ajā, al-ʻIrāk, 35-36; Petry, Twilight, 58.
\textsuperscript{1744} Ibn Ajā, al-ʻIrāk, 36-37; Petry, Twilight, 58.
\textsuperscript{1745} Ibn Ajā, al-ʻIrāk, 38-39; Petry, Twilight, 58.
\textsuperscript{1746} Ibn Ajā, al-ʻIrāk, 39-40; Petry, Twilight, 59; Waterson, Knights, 254.
mamlūks.¹⁷⁴⁷ Therefore, their defeat weakened one of the factions that composed a major threat to the new sultan and thus in a way was simultaneously a victory and a defeat for Qāytbāy.

When news of the defeat reached Cairo, the ruling elite were shocked. However, the sultan did not delay in acting decisively. He managed to dispatch a small force of 500 mamlūks that same year to serve as a show of force and to indicate that the sultan was ready to respond to Shāh Suwār’s threats even after a defeat.¹⁷⁴⁸ During this struggle Qāytbāy took extraordinary measures to ensure he had the manpower to deal with his enemy. He brought the full weight of the sultan’s authority down upon the army and the amīrs in a way that resembled the strength, forcefulness, and single-mindedness of the early Mamlūk sultans.

Qāitbāy ordered all the Şultānī Mamlūks to present themselves, their mounts, and their weapons for inspection on pain of court martial and deprival of iqṭā’. He would tolerate no relief from duty unless a fief-holder provided a substitute or the sum of one hundred dinars. Non-landed stipendiaries were permitted to buy their way out for twenty dinars. Senior officers, Qāitbāy’s collaborators, were summoned to these councils and compelled to take charge of a cavalry unit or risk demotion.¹⁷⁴⁹

The second expedition, led by the atābak Azbak, set out in early 1469 CE. Extra funds were sent with the expeditionary force to recruit Syrian archers and infantrymen and Turkmen scouts.¹⁷⁵⁰ This campaign started off as a success. The Egyptian army defeated Shāh Suwār’s forces in battle and took his brother, Mughūlābāy, prisoner and later sent his severed head to Cairo.¹⁷⁵¹ They pursued the Dhū al-Qādrids to a narrow gorge. At this point the amīrs of the Mamlūk army disagreed on the next course of action and half of the force returned to Aleppo while the other half, headed by the great amīrs Azbak and Qurqumās, continued the pursuit. Shāh Suwār and the remnants of his army awaited the mamlūks in the gorge and sprang an ambush. The Egyptian forces were destroyed. Qurqumās died in the battle and Azbak managed to flee and rejoin the other half of the retreating Mamlūk army, which was harried all the way back to

¹⁷⁴⁷ Abd al-Tawwāb, Qāytbāy, 140.
¹⁷⁴⁸ Ibn Ajā, al-ʻIrāk, 42; Petry, Twilight, 61.
¹⁷⁴⁹ Petry, Twilight, 62.
¹⁷⁵⁰ Petry, Twilight, 63.
¹⁷⁵¹ Ibn Ajā, al-ʻIrāk, 45; Petry, Twilight, 64.
Aleppo.\textsuperscript{1752} Despite this major defeat, there was some good news that arrived in Cairo this year. The local governor of Malāṭya defeated Shāh Suwār’s forces in a pitched battle.\textsuperscript{1753} On another front, a group of loyal Turkmen took Sīs from Suwār’s supporters.\textsuperscript{1754}

The third and last expedition against Shāh Suwār set out from Egypt in 1471 CE. The sultan went to great pains to gather the necessary funds for another major military campaign against the upstart Turkmen.\textsuperscript{1755} Furthermore, the amīr assigned to command this force, Yashbak the dawādār,\textsuperscript{1756} spent a considerable amount of money from his own resources to outfit his own baggage train and contingent of mamlûks.\textsuperscript{1757} Yashbak marched north to Aleppo at a leisurely pace to preserve the energy and morale of his army and arrived at the front with a force that was well-rested and in high spirits. Yashbak detached a flying column form the main army under the command of the amīr Īnāl al-Ashqar. This smaller contingent was charged with raiding, harrying, and flushing out Shāh Suwār and his forces. On the other hand, Yashbak reserved his main force to conduct sieges and to fight in major battles. This strategy brought about some excellent results and the rebels were driven back and lost ground to the advancing Mamlûks.\textsuperscript{1758} At the end of 1471 CE Shāh Suwār was forced into a pitched battle and the two sides met at the Jayḥūn River in Anatolia. The rebel amīr attempted to lure the mamlûks into making a crossing and into a trap by hurling insults at them. But Yashbak maintained strong discipline in his army and his men did not fall for the ruse. When the two forces did finally clash, Shāh Suwār’s army was routed.\textsuperscript{1759} What remained of the rebel forces withdrew to the fortress of Zamanṭū (Anatolia) where they

\textsuperscript{1752} Ibn Ajā, al-‘Irāk, 45-47; Petry, Twilight, 64-65.

\textsuperscript{1753} Ibn Ajā, al-‘Irāk, 47; Petry, Twilight, 66.

\textsuperscript{1754} Ibn Ajā, al-‘Irāk, 47.

\textsuperscript{1755} Ibn Ajā, al-‘Irāk, 48-49.

\textsuperscript{1756} This amīr was one of Qāiybāy’s main supporters and right hand men. He was very powerful and could have potentially challenged the sultan for the throne. However, he decided to strike out on his own and to conquer Iraq from the Aq Quyuńlū. This propect was supported by Qāiybāy, who saw Yashbak’s departure as a relief due to the pressure mounting around this powerful amīr. The sultan also saw it as advantageous to have an ally as a neighbor if Yashbak succeeded in conquering the Iraq and forming his own principality in the region. See Petry, Twilight, 83-88. For a detailed analysis of Yashbak’s last campaign see Bernadette Martel-Thoumian, “Les Dernières Batailles du Grand Émir Yašbak min Mahdī,” in War and Society in the Eastern Mediterranean, 7th-15th Centuries, eds. Yaacov Lev (Leiden, New York: Brill, 1997), 301-342.

\textsuperscript{1757} Petry, Twilight, 68.

\textsuperscript{1758} Petry, Twilight, 68-69.

\textsuperscript{1759} Ibn Ajā, al-‘Irāk, 54; ‘Abd al-Tawwāb, Qāiybāy, 146-147; Petry, Twilight, 69-70: Waterson, Knights, 256.
were besieged for several months. The stalemate ended when Shāh Suwār was lured out by promises of safe conduct only to be put in chains and dragged back to Cairo where he and his brothers were executed.\footnote{Ibn Ajā, \textit{al-ʻIrāk}, 55-61; Petry, \textit{Twilight}, 70-72; Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 257.}

The war against Shāh Suwār by no means indicates the weakening of the Mamlūk army. It is true that this resourceful rebel amīr was able to defeat several Mamlūk expeditionary forces that were sent against him in some very well-executed ambushes and that he managed to maintain a state of war against one of the strongest powers of the time for over five years. However, when one analyzes the conflict, it becomes clear that all of the rebel victories were the result of ambushes and guerilla tactics. Furthermore, every time the two sides met in open battle, the Mamlūk army was victorious. Shāh Suwār could win a few ambushes, but to win the war he had to be able to defeat the Mamlūk army in open battle, and despite his skill and bravery as a commander, his Turkmen followers did not measure up to the well-trained, disciplined, and well-armed mamlūks who were sent against them.

\textbf{7.34 The Ottomans}

The Mamlūk sultanate was defeated and conquered by the Ottomans in a campaign that spanned 1516-1517 CE. After the Mamlūks were defeated in the Battles of Marj Dābiq in Syria (1516 CE) and Raydāniyya in Egypt (1517 CE), their sultanate ceased to exist and both Syria and Egypt became provinces of the Ottoman empire. Modern scholarship attributes these military defeats and the subsequent fall of the sultanate to the state of weakness of the army and the loss of the martial vigor of its soldiers by the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. However, the Mamlūks and Ottomans had butted heads in a major war only two decades earlier which lasted from 1485-1491 CE. In this conflict a number of major battles were fought between the two sides and the Mamlūks were victorious in all of them, winning the war as a whole. This war is the ultimate proof that the Mamlūk army maintained its high standards of training, vigor, and military effectiveness through the Circassian period. In fact, this event in Mamlūk history is for the most part overlooked; Shai Har-El’s work is the only detailed study of this conflict. Carl Petry also discusses the conflict to a certain extent in his work on the late Mamlūk sultanate.
However, despite the outcome of this war, these scholars continue to support the theory that the Mamlūk army was in a poor state and had fallen from the great heights of its illustrious past.\textsuperscript{1761}

In the first Mamlūk Ottoman war the two antagonists had very different objectives. It is important to understand these aims in order to determine the real victor of this conflict. The Mamlūks for the most part maintained a defensive policy. This had been the case since the foundation of the sultanate and did not change during the Circassian period. Their “foreign policy sought to maintain the territorial status quo” and did not involve expansion and the conquest of new territories.\textsuperscript{1762} Thus, the Mamlūk policy was designed to quell internal revolts and to guard against external threats.\textsuperscript{1763} This policy can be seen at work when the Ilkhanid empire collapsed; the Mamlūks did not seek to conquer the domains of their former rivals, even though they were militarily the most powerful empire in the region at the time.\textsuperscript{1764}

The Mamlūks used a buffer system to protect their domains. Initially, Syria had been the main buffer that protected the Egyptian heartland during the wars with the Ilkhanids and the Crusader States. In the later periods of the sultanate a new southeastern Anatolian buffer region was added to safeguard Syria.\textsuperscript{1765} This Anatolian buffer was composed of two zones: vassal principalities and walled cities and towns directly controlled by the Mamlūks with a governor and garrison representing the sultans. The buffer principalities were semi-autonomous areas controlled by Turkmen clans and princes and they included the Dhū al-Qādrid and the Ramaḏān principalities.\textsuperscript{1766} There were seven fortified towns along the frontier spanning the area between the Taurus Mountains to the Euphrates River. They were Ṭarsūs, Ayās, Serfendikār, Sīs, Derende, Malāṭya, and Devregī. These fortified towns not only provided a well-defined frontier to guard against external threats, but also served to contain the Dhū al-Qādrid and Ramaḏān principalities in their territories.\textsuperscript{1767} The Mamlūks also established and maintained client

\textsuperscript{1761} Petry, Protectors or Praetorians?, 24-26; Petry, Twilight, 199-232; Har-El, Struggle, 5.

\textsuperscript{1762} Har-El, Struggle, 27; Loiseau, Les Mamelouks, 21, 128-129; Fuess, “Les Janisaires,” 212.

\textsuperscript{1763} Petry, Twilight, 88.

\textsuperscript{1764} Har-El, Struggle, 27.

\textsuperscript{1765} Har-El, Struggle, 28, 30-31.

\textsuperscript{1766} Har-El, Struggle, 49-42.

\textsuperscript{1767} Har-El, Struggle, 46-47.
relationships with principalities beyond their borders to form an “invisible frontier” and a buffer that separated them from the Ottomans, chief among which was the principality of Karamān.\textsuperscript{1768}

The Ottomans, on the other hand, pursued a very aggressive offensive and expansionist strategy. They had been pushing eastward against Karamān since the reign of Mehmed II.\textsuperscript{1769} With such policies, a conflict with the Mamlūks was inevitable. In fact, the steady Ottoman push eastward, the conflicts between the Mamlūks and their vassals and the rivalries among these vassal principalities all led to the collapse of the Mamlūk defensive frontier.\textsuperscript{1770} In fact, cordial relations between the two powers could only exist as long as the Ottomans focused their energies on the west. When they turned their attention toward the east, peace between the two powers became almost impossible to maintain.\textsuperscript{1771} Furthermore, the fact that Qāytbāy welcomed and aided Sultan Bayezīd’s rebel brother, Jem, did not help the relations between the two powers either.\textsuperscript{1772} The Ottoman conquest of Karamān and the undermining of Mamlūk authority over their vassals, especially signaled by the switch in allegiance of the Dhū al-Qādrids’ to the Ottomans and Ottoman assistance to them in their fight against the Mamlūks, were the initial sparks to the conflict that ensued.\textsuperscript{1773}

War broke out between the two sides in 1485 CE. In the spring of that year aggression was initiated by the Ottomans when a large army under Karagoz Mehmed Pasha, the beglerbegi (chief beg or chief lord/commander) of Karamān, took the fortress of al-Kūlāk and proceeded to move against Ṭarsūs, Aḍana, and Sīs.\textsuperscript{1774} The Mamlūk garrisons in the region withdrew without putting up much resistance. Several Turkmen tribes initially attempted to fight the invaders, but were forced to submit to the Ottomans, who managed to occupy the whole Aḍana-Ṭarsūs

\begin{footnotes}
\item Har-El, \textit{Struggle}, 47.
\item Petry, \textit{Twilight}, 89.
\item Har-El, \textit{Struggle}, 57.
\item Har-El, \textit{Struggle}, 79.
\end{footnotes}
Qāytbāy spent several months preparing an army to respond to the Ottoman aggression, which departed from Cairo in the autumn of 1485 CE. The core of this force was composed of 3,000 Royal Mamlūks and a large force of amīrs’ mamlūks. It also included nine Amīrs of One Hundred and many Amīrs of Forty and Ten and even a considerable number of the khāṣṣakiyya. This army was joined in Aleppo by the Syrian provincial forces. The atābak, Uzbek, was in overall command of the Mamlūk army during this campaign. The Mamlūk army reached Aḍana in early 1486 CE where it met the Ottomans in battle, easily defeating them and killing Ferhād Beg, the Ottoman commander (Bayezīd II’s son-in-law), some of the other top commanders, large numbers of soldiers, and taking about 800 prisoners. The Mamlūk army then settled down to besiege and retake Aḍana.

Upon hearing of the setbacks in Anatolia Bayezīd II dispatched another army under the command of another son-in-law, Hersek-oglu, to join the army of Karamān and the remnants of the first defeated Ottoman force under Karagoz Mehmed Pasha. This new force arrived at Aḍana in mid-March of 1486 CE where another major engagement took place outside the walls of the city. The army of Karamān was driven off early in the battle, which allowed the encirclement of the remaining Ottoman forces. It was a decisive Mamlūk victory. At the end of the day the Ottomans lost up to 40,000 men, Hersek-Oglu was captured, and upon hearing of these defeats, the Ottoman garrisons of Ṭarsūs and Aḍana surrendered without any resistance. The victorious Mamlūks returned to Cairo and paraded through the streets to the jubilation of the crowds with captured battle standards, the heads of dead enemies on spear points, and leading large numbers of Ottoman prisoners in chains. Considering that the Ottomans had suffered a major defeat only once before at the hands of Timur, the events at Aḍana in 1486 CE came as a

1775 Har-El, Struggle, 135, 138.
1777 Har-El, Struggle, 140.
1778 Har-El, Struggle, 140-141.
1779 Ibn Iyās, Badā‘i‘, vol. 3, 226; Ibn Ajā‘, al-ʻIrāk, 186; Petry, Twilight, 95; Har-El, Struggle, 141-142.
The defeats at Aḍana served as a wake-up call for Bayezīd II. The Ottoman sultan set about reorganizing his army, retraining its various elements, and appointing more competent commanders. For instance, Karagoz Pasha was arrested and replaced by Ya‘qūb Pasha as the beglerbegi of Karamān. The standing army (the janissary infantry and the kapi-kulu palace cavalry guard) was increased in size and re-equipped. Newer and more efficient cannons and arquebuses were introduced, which allowed for more accuracy and mobility. The navy was also transformed with the addition of new warships and a new structure of command.

In the spring of 1487 CE the Ottomans were ready for a new campaign and an army set out once again for the Aḍana region. The entire Ottoman force numbered between 60,000-120,000 men with 4,000-6,000 Janissaries and 3,000 kapi-kulu cavalry composing the professional core of this army. These were joined by the armies of Rumelia and Anatolia (composed of sipāḥī cavalrymen), the army of Karamān, 10,000 azabs, and were heavily equipped with cannons, cannon wagons, and arquebuses. Overall command of this army was given to the grand wazīr Dāvūd Pasha. If one were to take the lower estimate of 60,000, this expedition must still be considered a major invasion of the region of Cilicia. The Ottoman forces quickly reoccupied Aḍana and Ṭarsūs and the Mamlūks once again had to respond to the offensive after an abortive attempt at peace following their victories in 1486 CE.

Qāytbāy responded to the renewed Ottoman offensive by mobilizing an even larger force than the one he had sent north in 1486 CE. The army that was assembled to face the Ottomans in 1488 CE numbered up to 40,000 men. At the core of this army were 4,000 Royal Mamlūks and a large number of amīrs’ mamlūks. Eleven Amīrs of One Hundred and fifty Amīrs of Forty and Ten served as the officers of the army, while overall command was given once again to the

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1780 Petry, Twilight, 94.
1781 Har-El, Struggle, 147.
1782 Har-El, Struggle, 147.
1783 Har-El, Struggle, 148, 164.
1784 Petry, Twilight, 95; Har-El, Struggle, 148-151.
atābak Uzbek. Furthermore, the provincial armies of Syria were added to this main force as well as Arab infantrymen and Turkmen tribesmen recruited from Syria. Ibn Iyās states that “such a large expeditionary force has not left Egypt since the time of Barqūq.”

The Ottomans moved on to occupy Ayās after capturing Aḍana and Ṭarsūs, and gained the strategic advantage of securing control of all the entry points to Cilicia. When the Mamlūk army arrived in northern Syria, they found that “all entrances to Cilicia from the sea via the Mediterranean, and from the land via the Syrian Gates, were virtually closed.” The Ottomans conducted joint land and sea operations to secure this advantage. After destroying the harbors of Ayās and Tripoli, the Ottoman fleet anchored on the shoreline opposite the Bagras Mountain pass (also known as Bāb al-Malik in Mamlūk sources) through which the Mamlūk army had to pass to enter Anatolia. The cannons and muskets of the Ottoman ships made trying to traverse the narrow defile of the Bagras Mountain impossible without suffering extremely high losses. Despite the odds, Uzbek commanded his forces to march towards the Bāb al-Malik pass. The following events can be described as nothing but fortunate. A powerful storm sank and drove to shore many of the Ottoman vessels, while the remaining ships sailed out to sea. The Ottoman soldiers and sailors who had survived the storm and managed to make it to land were slaughtered by the waiting Mamlūks.

The two armies met on a plain, called Āghā Çiyārī, between Aḍana and Ṭarsūs late in the summer of 1488 CE. Uzbek decided to launch an immediate attack on the Ottomans, who had arrived from Aḍana after hearing that the Mamlūk army had managed to cross into Cilicia, before they could rest and organize after the march. The battle was very strongly contested between the two sides. In the initial stages of the fighting the azab infantry (irregular light infantry) skirmished against the Mamlūk’s Syrian infantry and drove them off the field. On the

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Mamlūk right wing, the army of Damascus was put to flight by the Rumelian army. However, the nā’īb of Damascus, Qānsūh al-Yahyāwī, rallied his forces and rejoined the battle on the left wing with the army of Aleppo and pushed back the armies of Anatolia and Karamān on the Ottoman right. In the center the royal Mamlūks launched a full charge that cut the Ottoman army into two parts. One after the other the Ottoman contingents of the center and the right wing fled the battlefield in the direction of their camp at Aḍana with the Mamlūks in pursuit. Despite this victory, Uzbek ordered a general disengagement when he saw that his forces had lost all semblance of order as they chased the enemy, and also because the army of Rumelia that had defeated the army of Damascus on the Mamlūk right wing was still an active threat.1791 However, with most of the Ottoman army routed, the Mamlūks were left in control of the battlefield.

The Mamlūk victory shattered the Ottoman army. The Ottomans lost 30,000 men (or even up to two thirds of their fighting force) in the battle compared to 8,000 casualties suffered by the Mamlūks.1792 The Ottoman command took stock of their losses, their lack of supplies, and the possibility of getting trapped in Aḍana if they opted to enter the city. Therefore, the Ottoman army withdrew back across the Taurus Mountains through the Cilician Gates in the dark of night.1793 After the withdrawal of the remnants of the main Ottoman force, Ṭarsūs and Aḍana were retaken by the Mamlūks without much difficulty.1794 The victory was celebrated in Cairo, and once again the triumphant Mamlūk army marched back with booty, prisoners, and this time there were contingents of janissary deserters within their ranks. Qāytbāy welcomed these new and experienced troops enthusiastically and they formed a unit called al-Dīwān al-‘Uthmānī, which existed until the reign of al-Ghawrī.1795 Furthermore, Uzbek had also taken several officials from Aleppo who had anticipated an Ottoman victory and thus had decided to betray the

1791 Ibn Ajā, al-ʻIrāk, 190; Petry, Twilight, 97; Har-El, Struggle, 184-189.
1792 Har-El, Struggle, 189.
1793 Har-El, Struggle, 189.
1794 Har-El, Struggle, 190.
1795 Ibn Iyās, Badā‘i‘, vol. 3, 256; Petry, Twilight, 97-98.
Mamlûks. They were dealt with very harshly and were paraded through Cairo naked before being flayed alive.\textsuperscript{1796}

A new campaign was launched from Cairo in 1489 CE because as soon as the Egyptian army returned to the capital, Ağdana and Ṭarsûs were once again taken by Ottoman forces.\textsuperscript{1797} Uzbek set out at the head of 3,000 Royal Mamlûks and a contingent of awlād al-nās who had been specially trained in the use of firearms.\textsuperscript{1798} This time the Ottomans decided not to meet them in open battle. Instead they left part of their forces to garrison the towns and forts along the frontier and withdrew ahead of the main Mamlûk advance. Uzbek detached a part of his army to besiege these forts and with the rest he raided deep into Anatolia. However, running low on supplies he withdrew without fighting a major battle.\textsuperscript{1799}

By 1490-1491 CE both sides were exhausted by the war. A peace treaty was drawn up that strongly favored the Mamlûks and ensured that they achieved their objectives. They had won every battle of the war and the Ottomans had no choice but to accede to Mamlûk demands because of the dangers they also had to face on their western frontier. According to the peace treaty, the Ottomans were to cede any forts or towns they had taken back to the Mamlûks and the Ottomans formally recognized the status of the Mamlûk sultan as the defender of Islam and the exclusive guardian of Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{1800} Thus, the Ottomans failed to realize the goals of their expansionist policy, whereas the Mamlûks fulfilled their objective of restoring and maintaining the status quo.

The clashes between the Mamlûk and Ottoman armies tell us a lot about the military state in the two empires in the late fifteenth century. First and foremost, the performance of the Mamlûk army on the battlefield and during campaign once again shows that it had not decreased very much (if at all) in quality and efficiency since the days of Baybars and Qalâwûn. The Mamlûks won every single engagement against the Ottomans, who always outnumbered them

\textsuperscript{1796} Ibn Iyâs, \textit{Badāʾiʾ}, vol. 3, 265; Petry, \textit{Twilight}, 98.
\textsuperscript{1797} Petry, \textit{Twilight}, 98; Har-El, \textit{Struggle}, 192.
and employed the most modern weapons. The Mamlūks however, were aware of these technologies and used them too. For example, they included infantry armed with arquebuses in their expeditionary forces as mentioned above. Furthermore, Uzbek kept his heavy mamllūk cavalry out of the Ottomans’ artillery range and timed his charges to coincide with the reloading of the Ottoman guns, thus neutralizing any effect they could have had.\(^{1801}\) The Mamlūks inflicted grievous casualties on the Ottoman army. However, the Ottomans were able to recover due to their huge reserves of manpower. Unlike the Mamlūks who had to import their military elite from the Caucasus region, the recruits of the janissary corps came from the Balkans region, which was within the confines of the Ottoman empire. There was less difficulty in transporting these recruits to Istanbul than in bringing mamlūks to Cairo and it also cost much less.\(^{1802}\) Therefore, the main weakness of the Mamlūk sultanate, as it always had been, was a lack in sources of manpower for their military elite and the huge negative effects large losses could potentially have on the army.

Overall, the Mamlūk soldiers proved their mettle against the Ottomans in the late fifteenth century as they had done before against the Crusaders and the Mongols. But despite victory in this war, they were conquered by the very same Ottomans they had defeated after losing two battles against them in 1516-1517 CE. The armies that faced off against one another at Marj Dābiq in 1516 CE were not different in composition or size to those that fought at Aḍana in 1486 CE and at Āghā Çiyārī in 1488 CE. However, the outcome was very different.

### 7.4 Case Study: The Battle of Marj Dābiq reconsidered

The Ottomans under Selīm I (r. 1512-1520 CE) defeated the Mamlūks under Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī (r. 1501-1516 CE) at the Battle of Marj Dābiq in 1516 CE. At a glance, it seems that irreparable damage was done to the Mamlūk army in this clash, which led to the swift conquest of the sultanate by the advancing Ottomans. In fact, Albrecht Fuess calls this battle “A total defeat” of the Mamlūk army.\(^{1803}\) However, I contend that this damage was psychological and not physical. In fact, the bulk of the Mamlūk army returned to Egypt from the battlefield. In

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\(^{1801}\) Petry, *Twilight*, 97.

\(^{1802}\) Petry, *Twilight*, 95, 98; Waterson, *Knights*, 265.

comparison to the Ottomans, Mamlûk losses at this battle were negligible. Furthermore, the Mamlûks were poised to win this battle, as they had done in their previous clashes with the Ottomans, but a series of unfortunate events that occurred in swift succession quickly turned the tide against al-Ghawrî and his troops. Thus, this battle was not really a military defeat (i.e., due to Ottoman military superiority and Mamlûk military inferiority), but rather a psychological one.

On the Mamlûk side, the situation was not too different after Marj Dâbiq from what it had been in 1299 CE after the Battle of Wâdî al-Khazindâr or in 1401 CE after the withdrawal from Syria during the Timurid invasion. Both of these incidents illustrate the only two major defeats and setbacks that the Mamlûks suffered prior to 1516 CE. In both of these cases the Mamlûks were driven out of Syria to Egypt. But on these occasions they were able to recover and retake their lost domains within a year. The major difference between these two defeats and the one suffered at Marj Dâbiq was that after the latter, the victorious Ottomans took the initiative and continued their push into Egypt, rather than just occupying Syria. This move prevented the Mamlûks from recovering and for the first time their power base and the center of their sultanate was subjected to a major invasion.

The causes for the breakdown of relations between the Mamlûks and the Ottomans that led to the fateful clash between them on August 24, 1516 CE at Marj Dâbiq near Aleppo cannot be discussed in detail here.\textsuperscript{1804} Qanşûh al-Ghawrî set out for Aleppo with his army when news reached him that Selîm I was marching against Shâh Ismâ‘îl of the Safavid Empire (r. 1501-1524 CE) only two years after having dealt him a crushing defeat at the Battle of Chaldirân in 1514 CE.\textsuperscript{1805} The reason for this renewed Ottoman campaign in the east was that Shâh Ismâ‘îl had mobilized a new army and had renewed hostilities against the Ottomans by destroying their garrison at Āmid and killing Selîm’s governor.\textsuperscript{1806}


\textsuperscript{1805} Ibn Iyâs, \textit{Badā‘i‘}, vol. 5, 28; Ibn Iyâs, \textit{An Account}, 1.

\textsuperscript{1806} Ibn Iyâs, \textit{Badā‘i‘}, vol. 5, 22; Petry, \textit{Twilight}, 216.
The primary sources and modern scholarship vary in their interpretations of al-Ghawrī’s motives for marching to Northern Syria. Some mention that he intended to fight the Ottomans alongside the Safavids. Others state that he only wanted to threaten the Ottoman flank and perhaps force them to abandon their campaigns against the Safavids in Southern and Eastern Anatolia. Petry asserts that the Mamlūks marched to Aleppo to observe the situation and capitalize from it, especially if the Ottomans were defeated. Ibn Iyās’ chronicle provides a similar explanation. However, Ibn Iyās states that al-Ghawrī wanted to see how the events unfolded and to be ready for an invasion of Syria because he was aware that the victor of the ensuing clash would almost certainly invade the domains of the Mamlūk sultanate. One must remember that, as mentioned earlier, throughout its existence the Mamlūk sultanate sought to maintain the balance of power and the status quo in the region. Thus, it should come as no surprise that al-Ghawrī was probably concerned regarding the outcome of another clash between the Ottomans and the Safavids, especially if another Chaldirān were to occur. Whatever the case, these actions caused Selīm I to change course and head for Syria to deal with the Mamlūk threat, after the failure of diplomatic efforts to effect a withdrawal of the Mamlūk army in exchange for concessions from the Ottomans.

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1808 George William Frederick Stripling, The Ottoman Turks and the Arabs, 1511-1574 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1942), 40; Ṭaqqūsh, Tārīkh al-Mamālīk, 499.
1809 Stripling, Ottoman Turks, 40; Waterson, Knights, 281.
1810 Petry, Twilight, 216, 222.
1811 Ibn Iyās, Badā‘i‘, vol. 5, 22; Ibn Iyās, An Account, 1.
1812 Another Ottoman victory could have caused the collapse of the Safavid Empire and might possibly have even resulted in an Ottoman conquest. If this had occurred, the Mamlūks would have found themselves facing a much larger and more powerful Ottoman Empire that could threaten them both from the north through the Taurus Mountains and from the east and northeast along the Euphrates frontier.
1813 Al-Ghawrī refused to withdraw unless the Ottomans promised not to attack the Safavids and to concede territories to the Mamlūks. Ibn Iyās, Badā‘i‘, vol. 5, 60-64; Ibn Iyās, An Account, 32-37; Stripling, Ottoman Turks, 42; Waterson, Knights, 281-282; Petry, Twilight, 222-224; V.J. Parry, “The Reigns of Bāyezīd II and Selīm I, 1481-1520,” in A History of the Ottoman Empire to 1730: Chapters from the Cambridge History of Islam and the New Cambridge Modern History ed. M.A. Cook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 73.
7.41 The Armies

Before recounting the main events of the battle, it is necessary briefly to discuss the two armies that faced off against one another. Estimates for the size of Mamlūk army at Marj Dābiq vary greatly from 30,000 to 60,000 troops. Of these 12,000-15,000 were mamlūks (5,000 of whom were Royal Mamlūks – both qarānīsa or veteran mamlūks of previous sultans and jǔblān, who were al-Ghawrī’s own purchased mamlūks). The remainder were awlād al-nās and auxiliaries.\(^1\) There are even lower estimates such as the one given by Michael Winter who puts the Mamlūk forces at 5,000-7,000 soldiers (including 944 Royal Mamlūks)\(^2\) to a maximum of 20,000 troops.\(^3\) On the other side, Selīm I had a much larger force at his disposal. He may have crossed the Taurus Mountains with as many as 200,000 soldiers. The army that fought the Mamlūks at Marj Dābiq numbered around 130,000 men and included the sipāhī cavalry of the Rumelian and Anatolian armies, 8,000-10,000 janissaries, the yāyā freeborn infantry, and others.\(^4\)

7.42 The Battle

On the day of the battle the two armies formed up in the traditional manner with left and right wings and a center. The Ottoman army, in addition to this formation, had also set up a laager (or a wagenberg) composed of wagons chained together and defended by artillery, bows, and handguns.\(^5\) The battle commenced with a powerful mamlūk cavalry charge against the Ottoman positions. In the center, the atābak, Sūdūn al-‘Ajamī, led the veteran qarānīsa in a deadly onslaught against the Ottomans. He was joined in this headlong attack on the right by Sībāy, the nā‘ib of Damascus, who led his mamlūks and the army of Damascus and on the left by Khāyrbek, the nā‘ib of Aleppo. This charge shook Selīm’s army. The Mamlūk cavalry broke

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\(^1\) Robert Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 133-134; Parry, “Reigns,” 74; Stripling, Ottoman Turks, 38; Tamīm Ma‘mūn Mardam Bik, al-Malik Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī al-Ashraf wa al-Wāzūr Lālā Muṣṭafā Bāshā dhī al-Sayf al-Aḥnaf (Damascus: Dār Ṭlās li al-Dirāsāt wa al-Tarjama wa al-Nashr, 2007), 234.

\(^2\) This estimate is too low because Ibn Zunbul gives the number of just the qarānīsa at 2,000 mamlūks; Ibn Zunbul, Wāqi‘at, 33. Also see Parry, “Reigns,” 74.

\(^3\) Winter, “Ottoman Occupation,” 496, 498; similar figures are also presented in Waterson, Knights, 281.

\(^4\) Robert Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 135-136; Waterson, Knights, 281.

through the Ottoman lines in several places. The Ottoman right and left wings were put to flight. The Mamlūks captured seven *sanjaq* (battle standards) and several wagons, artillery pieces (mounted on wagons), and arquebuses. This information indicates that the Mamlūks were in fact able to break through the defensive *laager* and must have wrought havoc in the ranks of the enemy. The Ottomans suffered 10,000 casualties from this initial Mamlūk charge and Selīm was left with only his Janissaries. He even contemplated surrendering, fleeing, or calling for a truce.\(^{1819}\)

Despite this initial success and the seemingly guaranteed victory of the Mamlūks at this point, the tide of the battle shifted very suddenly and the Ottomans were able to launch a counter attack. The *qarāniṣa*, who had borne the brunt of the fighting, felt betrayed because the sultan held his own mamlūks, the *julbān*, back at the crucial moment in the battle. Moreover, at this vital point the Mamlūk army lost its three primary commanders, as both Sūdūn and Sībāy were killed and Khāyrbek defected to the Ottoman side after spreading rumors that al-Ghawrī had died. This demoralized the Mamlūk army, and both the right and left wings withdrew from the battle along with most of the surviving *qarāniṣa*, while those among the veterans who had broken through the Ottoman lines fell to looting the enemy camp. Thus, al-Ghawrī was left with his *julbān* and whatever few troops he could rally from the fleeing armies of Syria and Damascus and the *qarāniṣa*. However, this meager and demoralized force was unable to withstand the renewed Ottoman attacks. The final straw that completed the defeat and the rout of the Mamlūk army was the death of Qāṇṣūh al-Ghawrī from a stroke, heart attack, or suicide by poison.\(^{1820}\)

The Mamlūk army was completely broken in this battle. It retreated to Egypt where the new sultan, Ẓūmānībāy, started to prepare for the reconquest of Syria. The victory at Marj Dābiq opened Syria up to the Ottomans, and inflicted such a heavy blow on the Mamlūks that it almost ensured the conquest of Egypt the following year. But was this a military disaster that physically


destroyed the Mamlūk army or was it a psychological blow that damaged its morale and desire to fight? Below we will see that the Mamlūk army was not destroyed and escaped from this battle almost fully intact to fight another day, and that it was in fact the spirit and morale of the Mamlūk troops and their commanders that suffered in this encounter.

7.43 Analyzing the Causes of the Mamlūk Defeat at Marj Dābiq

This section will examine and analyze the causes for the Mamlūk defeat at Marj Dābiq. During the initial stages of the battle, it appeared that the Mamlūks were going to win the day, but as the narrative goes, there were a number of setbacks on the Mamlūk side that shifted the balance in the Ottomans’ favor. The most important of these events was the treason of Khāyrbek and his defection to the Ottoman side with his mamlūks and the army of Aleppo which caused the disintegration of the whole left wing of the Mamlūk army. Another factor was the lack of trust and divisions among the different mamlūk factions (namely the qarāniṣa and the julbān) and al-Ghawri’s failure to support the veterans with his julbān at the crucial point when the Ottoman army was on the brink of falling apart. Furthermore, the death of some of the most important Mamlūk leaders, including the sultan, during the course of the battle demoralized the Mamlūk army and ensured that it would not recover from the multiple blows it had suffered. Lastly, the vast numerical superiority of the Ottomans allowed them to regain the offensive and overwhelm the remaining mamlūks despite the heavy losses they had suffered during the battle.

The primary and secondary sources are unanimous in stating that the Mamluks’ fortunes started to shift at Marj Dābiq when Khāyrbek withdrew his troops from the battle and defected to Selīm I’s side.1821 This was not a spontaneous act as Khāyrbek had been in correspondence with Selīm I and had come to an agreement with the Ottoman sultan. This should come as no surprise and is in no way indicative of a downturn, deterioration, or disintegration in the army, since we have seen the past track record of rebelliousness by some of the army and officers and disloyalty in the Mamlūk sultanate. Furthermore, it was mentioned above that during the first Ottoman-

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1821 Some sources mention another prominent amīr, Jānbirdī al-Ghazālī, who also defected with Khāyrbek to the Ottomans. He was the other prominent commander of the left wing of the Mamlūk army. With his defection there was no one to rally and organize the remnants of the demoralized and confused soldiers who still held the left against the Ottomans. See Ibn Zunbul, Wāqiʻat, 35; Ayalon, Gunpowder, 87; Nāfī‘, al-ʻAlāqāt, 208, 212. Winter says that this amīr fled to Egypt and was involved in fighting the Ottomans as they advanced toward Cairo in 1517. He started his cooperation with the Ottomans after Raydāniyya. See Winter, “Ottoman Occupation,” 500, 504.
Mamlūk war, there were officials in Aleppo who had thrown their lot in with the Ottomans during the Āghā Çiyārī campaign. When the Mamlūks emerged victorious, these officials were severely punished. Moreover, when the viceroy of Aleppo broke ranks with the Mamlūk army, he started spreading the rumor that Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī had died and that the day was lost and urged the other elements of the army to flee for their lives. Such false rumors and misinformation, in addition to the departure of the left wing of the army, allowed the encirclement of the Mamlūk center by the Ottoman right wing, and did much to further demoralize and confuse the mamlūk soldiers. Of all the factors and reasons for the defeat at Marj Dābiq, Khāyrbek’s treachery was definitely the heaviest blow, one from which the Mamlūks could not recover.

The second factor that aided the Ottomans in achieving victory at Marj Dābiq was the factionalism and lack of unity within the ranks of the Mamlūk army. The extent of this factionalism is evident in the sources when al-Ghawrī commanded the qarāniṣa to lead the first charge in the hope of thinning their ranks. The mamlūks of his predecessors were still a powerful group and a threat to his absolute authority. As mentioned earlier, the charge of the qarāniṣa followed by the armies of Damascus and Aleppo broke through the lines of the Ottoman army, put several of its units to flight, and even caused Selīm I to contemplate a truce or a retreat. At this crucial moment al-Ghawrī continued to maintain his partisan attitude, and instead of charging into the battle at the head of his own Royal Mamlūks and finishing off the Ottomans, he held back his julbān, who barely saw any action that day. The Mamlūk sultan seems to have been blinded by the partisanship of internal Mamlūk politics because it affected his generalship, and he failed to take advantage of a golden opportunity to win the battle and save his realm. It should come as no surprise that the qarāniṣa felt betrayed and their morale and desire to fight for al-Ghawrī disappeared. Some of them disengaged from the enemy and withdrew from the battle.

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Others busied themselves with looting the Ottoman camp. The desertion of the qarāniṣa, who spearheaded the Mamlūk army’s attack, not only put an end to the assault on the Ottoman army, but also had a domino effect on the morale and resolve of the other units of the Mamlūk army, which also began to withdraw from the battle.

The third blow to the Mamlūks at Marj Dābiq was the loss of their senior commanders. These casualties left a vacuum at the top of the command structure of the army and led to its further disintegration and ensured the victory for the Ottomans. Khāyrbek’s defection with his troops, as discussed above, left the remnants of the left wing leaderless and confused. In addition to this commander’s treachery, the atābak and commander of the center, Sūdūn al-ʿAjamī, and the commander of the right wing and the army of Damascus, Sībāy, were both killed in the fighting as they led the charges that had initially given the Mamlūks the upper hand in the battle. Furthermore, al-Ghawrī also died, as previously noted, shortly afterwards and his body was never recovered or identified which added to the confusion. This was an especially heavy blow to Mamlūk morale not only because the sultan and commander of the army had died, but also because al-Ghawrī was the first and only Mamlūk sultan to fall in battle, which may have been viewed as an omen of what was to come. Thus, the Mamlūk army lost its commander-in-chief and the commanding officers of its three main bodies. In addition to these casualties and the defection of Khāyrbek, Baybars, a relative of the sultan (qarīb al-ṣulṭān) and Aqbāy al-Ṭawīl, both amīrs of one hundred, were also killed. Forty other amīrs from Egypt and Syria also lost their lives in the fighting. As a result of the elimination of the top command of the Mamlūk army, there was nobody left who could successfully rally and inspire the fleeing mamlūks to launch a counter attack or even to organize a disciplined withdrawal from the battlefield.

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1823 Ibn Iyās, Badāʾiʿ, vol. 5, 69; Ibn Iyās, An Account, 42; Ibn Zunbul, Wāqiʿat, 33; Ayalon, Gunpowder, 87; Petry, Protectors or Praetorians, 25, 192; Petry, Twilight, 225; Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 136; Stripling, Ottoman Turks, 47; Nāfiʿ, al-ʿAlāqāt, 213; Taqqūsh, Tārīkh al-Mamālīk, 501; Parry, “Reigns,” 74; Ziada, “Mamlūk Sultans,” 511.


1826 Ibn Iyās, Badāʾiʿ, vol. 5, 73.

1827 Ibn Iyās, Badāʾiʿ, vol. 5, 71-72; Ibn Iyās, An Account, 44.
The last factor that played a role in the defeat of the Mamlūks was the numerical superiority of the Ottoman army. The higher estimates put the Mamlūk army at 30,000 to 60,000 soldiers (including 12,000-15,000 mamlūks).\textsuperscript{1828} At Marj Dābiq Selīm I’s army numbered 130,000 men.\textsuperscript{1829} Thus, the Ottomans had a numerical advantage ranging from 2:1 (if the Mamlūk army was 60,000 strong) to 4:1 (if the Mamlūk army was 30,000 strong). Therefore, despite suffering extremely heavy losses to the initial attacks of the Mamlūk cavalry, Selīm I was able to rally his troops and bring up reserves for his counter attack as the mamlūk assault started to falter.

\textbf{7.44 The Late Mamlūk Army’s Weapons and Equipment and the Role of Gunpowder}

\textit{Weapons at Marj Dābiq}

The Mamlūk defeat at Marj Dābiq is often attributed to the weakening of their military and the outdated manner in which it fought. Most of the scholarship on this era heavily emphasizes the lack of modern artillery and handguns in the Mamlūk army that was defeated by an Ottoman army that had embraced gunpowder weapons wholeheartedly. The secondary literature claims that it was due to the poor condition of the Mamlūk soldiers and their refusal to incorporate firearms\textsuperscript{1830} into their military that cost them their sultanate.\textsuperscript{1831} Despite these assertions, the evidence clearly shows that firearms played a negligible role in the outcome of the battle. Furthermore, there is evidence that indicates that the Mamlūk army had units armed with arquebuses at the battle. It was only the elite Mamlūk cavalry that did not adopt firearms which would have required them to dismount, thus giving up their traditional fighting style. Moreover, the casualties suffered by both sides in this battle indicate that the “outdated” methods, fighting style, and tactics of the Mamlūk cavalry were in fact more effective and deadlier than the modern weapons used by the Ottomans.

\textsuperscript{1828} Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 133-134; Parry, “Reigns,” 74.
\textsuperscript{1829} Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 135-136; Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 281.
\textsuperscript{1830} For a detailed discussion of the debate on gunpowder and firearms in the Mamlūk sultanate see Ayalon, \textit{Gunpowder} and Irwin, “Gunpowder.”
The fact that the Ottomans used field artillery and arquebuses at the Battle of Marj Dābiq is not in doubt. However, one must ask: to what extent were these weapons used and how effective were they in reality? Ibn Iyās and Ibn Zunbul both mention that the Ottomans deployed units armed with handguns and artillery pieces at this battle. Ibn Iyās does not state how effective they were in the fighting that took place. Ibn Zunbul mentions that when the battle started to turn in Selim I’s favor, the artillery and musketry of the janissaries wrought havoc among the mamlūks. He states that every cannonball that struck its mark killed “fifty, sixty, or one hundred” soldiers. The question that must be asked here is: how many cannonballs actually hit their mark? It seems not too many; because casualties on the Mamlūk side were relatively light (500-1,000 men). Furthermore, both Ibn Iyās and Ibn Zunbul state that the initial charge of the Mamlūks broke through the Ottoman lines which consisted of a laager defended by artillery and musket men. These figures and statements by the primary authors show that the artillery and musketry deployed by the Ottomans at Marj Dābiq must have taken a very long time to reload and also must have been very inaccurate since the casualties inflicted by the Ottomans were low. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, in the battles against the Ottomans between 1485-1491 CE, Mamlūk commanders such as Uzbek kept their elite troops out of artillery range and charged only when the Ottomans were reloading their cannons.

In the sixteenth century cannons and arquebuses were rather inaccurate and ineffective weapons. They created confusion and fear on the battlefield through the noise and smoke that they produced. At this time the composite recurved bow was still a much more accurate weapon than the handgun and had a much faster firing rate. An arrow fired from such a bow had a longer range than an arquebus and a trained archer could fire six arrows a minute as opposed to one or two shots fired by an arquebusier in the same time. Furthermore, the composite recurved bow could be used from horseback, whereas the early matchlocks could only be fired by infantrymen because of their weight and size. The only disadvantage of the composite recurved bow was that it had a heavy drawing weight and was difficult to use. One needed long years of

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1832 Ibn Zunbul, Wāqi‘at, 35.
1833 Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 137.
1834 Ibn Iyās, Badā‘i‘, vol. 5, 69; Ibn Iyās, An Account, 42.
1835 Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 123; Stripling, Ottoman Turks, 47-48.
training to perfect the art of archery with this weapon.\textsuperscript{1836} Thus, it should come as no surprise that the Mamlûk cavalry was maintained as a force of heavy mounted archers,\textsuperscript{1837} because dismounting such expensively trained elite troops and arming them with matchlocks would have been very wasteful; it would have made no sense militarily. The Mamlûk cavalrymen were supported by units of infantrymen, some of whom were armed with gunpowder weapons and they themselves continued to serve as the elite cavalry and backbone of the army.\textsuperscript{1838}

The rejection of firearms by the Mamlûk cavalrymen does not indicate that these weapons were rejected by the sultanate. As mentioned above, units armed with arquebuses were created and formed a part of the Mamlûk army. In the previous section, we also noted that Qāytbāy armed the \\textit{awlād al-nās} and the ḥalqā soldiers with handguns and sent them to fight against the Ottomans in 1490 CE.\textsuperscript{1839} If these troops were operating against the Ottomans in the late fifteenth century, there is no reason why they would not have also been used at Marj Dābiq, especially since al-Ghawrī was very interested in gunpowder weapons\textsuperscript{1840} and had set out from Cairo with an army of mamlûks and \\textit{awlād al-nās}.\textsuperscript{1841} Furthermore, many of the Syrian infantrymen who joined the army as it marched towards Aleppo were also armed with matchlock muskets. As a matter of fact, Khāyrbek maintained a unit of arquebusiers in Aleppo as a part of

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\item \textsuperscript{1836} Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 124-125.
\item \textsuperscript{1837} When referring to mounted archers, quick moving and lightly armed and armored nomadic cavalry comes to mind. However, there were cases when the function of both the mounted archer and heavy cavalry were combined to form a hybrid warrior who functioned as both a mounted archer and who could also hold his own in hand-to-hand combat. The mamlûks are one such example among several because the mamlûks were trained as both heavy shock cavalry and mounted archers and functioned as both on the battlefeild. The Byzantine emperor, Leo IV, describes heavily armored Turkic mounted archers in his \textit{Taktika}. He states that the Turks “are armed with swords, body armor, bows, and lances. Thus, in combat most of them bear double arms, carrying the lances high on their shoulders and holding the bows in their hands. They make use of both as need requires…” see George Dennis, \textit{The Taktika of Leo IV text, translation, and commentary by George Dennis} (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010), 455. There is also evidence to show that the nomadic cavalry of several steppe peoples of the Eurasian Steppe used a variety of both light and heavy armors including quilted armor, lamellar cuirasses, hardened leather armor, chain mail, and round breastplates. For more information on these types of armor and their use on the steppe see Witold Swietoslawski, \textit{Arms and Armour of the Nomads of the Great Steppe in the times of the Mongol Expansion (12\textsuperscript{th}-14\textsuperscript{th} Centuries)} (Lodz, Poland: Oficyna Naukowa MS, 1999), 21-39. Lastly, the elite savarān cavalry of the Sasanians functioned both as heavy shock cavalry and as mounted archers. They and their horses were heavily armored in both chain mail and plate armor. The Sasanians also had separate units of armored cavalry archers. See Farrokh, \textit{Shadows}, 182.
\item \textsuperscript{1839} Har-El, \textit{Struggle}, 201-202; Ayalon, \textit{Gunpowder}, 63; Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 269; Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 122.
\item \textsuperscript{1840} Ayalon, \textit{Gunpowder}, 48-52, 59-78.
\item \textsuperscript{1841} Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 133.
\end{itemize}
his household guard in addition to his mamlûks.\textsuperscript{1842} It is erroneously assumed that because al-Ghawrî’s famous arquebusier regiment, \textit{al-tabaqâ al-khâmisa}, was not present at Marj Dâbiq (they were deployed with the Red Sea fleet against the Portuguese)\textsuperscript{1843} that the Mamlûk army in Syria did not have any infantry armed with handguns.\textsuperscript{1844} Another explanation for the scarcity of gunpowder weapons in the Mamlûk sultanate is the fact that the Mamlûks had to import much of the raw materials required to manufacture them in large quantities.\textsuperscript{1845}

On the Ottoman side, the number of soldiers armed with muskets formed a rather insignificant portion of the whole army. The bulk of the army was composed of the \textit{sipâhî} cavalrymen, who fought in a manner similar to that of the mamlûks, and \textit{yâyâ} infantry, along with other levies from different regions of the empire. The elite core of Selîm I’s army was composed of the janissaries, who probably comprised the most significant unit armed with muskets. There could not have been more than 8,000-10,000 janissaries at Marj Dâbiq because, even as late as 1560 CE, the records show that there were only 13,357 janissaries in the Ottoman army, the largest number to that date.\textsuperscript{1846} Furthermore, at the Battle of Raydâniyya in 1517 CE half of the 8,000 janissaries present were pikemen and the other half were marksmen.\textsuperscript{1847} This unit must have been organized and armed in a similar manner a year earlier at Marj Dâbiq. One cannot assume that the 4,000-5,000 janissaries who were marksmen were all armed with matchlocks. The primary weapon of the janissaries was the recurved composite bow, and by the battle of Marj Dâbiq only some of the regiments had been armed with arquebuses. Most of the janissaries were probably still archers at this point and firearms only became the primary weapon of the janissaries at a much later period.\textsuperscript{1848} As a matter of fact, in 1571 CE at the naval battle of Lepanto, most of the janissaries were still using the composite recurved bow.\textsuperscript{1849} Thus, out of an

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Fuess, “Les Janissaires,” 214.
\item Mesut Uyar and Edward J. Erickson, \textit{A Military History of the Ottomans: From Osman to Ataturk} (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Praeger Security International, 2009), 38.
\item Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 136.
\item Uyar and Erickson, \textit{Military History}, 42.
\item Irwin, “Gunpowder,” 135.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
army of 130,000 soldiers, Selîm probably had no more than 2,000-2,500 janissaries armed with muskets. The awlād al-nās, ḥalqa soldiers, the black slaves,\textsuperscript{1850} and the Syrian infantrymen who were armed with arquebuses in the Mamlûk army may have even outnumbered the janissary arquebusiers at Marj Dābiq. Therefore, firearms in the form of artillery and musketry could not have been the deciding factor at this battle because these weapons were still very undeveloped, inaccurate, and unreliable. Furthermore, both sides employed them to a certain degree indicating that there was not a significant technological gap between the two armies.

### 7.45 The Casualties

Despite being utterly defeated and put to flight at Marj Dābiq, the Mamlûks suffered very few losses while inflicting high casualties on the Ottomans. The Mamlûks lost 500-1,000 men during the battle and the Ottomans lost 10,000-15,000 men.\textsuperscript{1851} The light losses on the Mamlûk side are further supported by the sources which state that the retreating Mamlûk troops suffered heavier losses at the hands of the civilian populace of Aleppo, who took this opportunity to avenge the depredations that the Mamlûk soldiery had committed on their way to face the Ottomans, than they did on the battlefield.\textsuperscript{1852} This information indicates two things. First, the Ottoman army and its modern weapons did not inflict heavy losses on the Mamlûks. Second, the retreating Mamlûk soldiers were in such a state of demoralization and panic that groups of civilians were able to rob and kill several of them.

The size of the Mamlûk army at the Battle of Raydāniyya was larger than the one that had marched with al-Ghawrî to Marj Dābiq. Once again, this information indicates that Mamlûk losses in 1516 CE were negligible.\textsuperscript{1853} On the other hand, the heavy losses inflicted upon the Ottomans by the Mamlûk cavalry at Marj Dâbiq demonstrate that the Mamlûk army was a formidable force and that the mamlûks were well trained and fierce opponents. This image contradicts the idea that the Mamlûk army had become a totally obsolete military force in the later periods of the sultanate. As a matter of fact, Selîm I did not realize that he had won the day

\textsuperscript{1850} Some black slaves were recruited into arquebusier units by al-Ghawrî and earlier Sultans. See Ayalon, *Gunpowder*, 56-71.


at Marj Dābiq and refused to allow his troops to pursue the retreating Mamlūks because he feared that they were trying to draw him into an ambush.\textsuperscript{1854} This uncertainty and caution on the part of the Ottoman sultan shows that even he did not believe that he was victorious due, probably, to the heavy casualties his army had suffered compared to those of the Mamlūks and due also to the fact that his forces were almost fully routed in the early stages of the battle.

7.46 The Final Verdict on the Outcome of the Battle

With this re-examination of the Battle of Marj Dābiq, it can be concluded that the outcome of the battle was not decided by Ottoman military superiority or by the incompetence of the Mamlūk soldiery, but rather by psychological factors that destroyed the morale of the Mamlūks leading to the disintegration of their army during the course of the battle. Initially the battle looked as though it would produce yet another resounding Mamlūk victory (to follow all the victories against the Ottomans between 1485-1490 CE). However, all the events and factors discussed above dealt a major blow to the morale of the Mamlūk sultanate’s forces and turned what looked like a sure victory into a rout.

The Mamlūk army performed consistently well in the last decades of the sultanate. It defeated the Ottoman army in every major encounter until Marj Dābiq (and almost won the day there too). Furthermore, at this point, firearms were not very accurate or reliable weapons. They were not employed in such large numbers by the Ottoman army that they could have played a decisive role in the battle. What is more, there was a considerable number of foot soldiers in the Mamlūk army who were also armed with arquebuses. Thus, the defeat at Marj Dābiq does not in any way indicate that the Mamlūk army had deteriorated, lost its military capabilities, its vigor, or refused to employ units armed with gunpowder weapons. Rather, a series of unfortunate events broke the morale of the troops during the battle. Ibn Zunbul mentions several factors that led to the final outcome at Marj Dābiq, but what he most emphasizes is the disunity and treason within the ranks of the Mamlūks, even in the heat of the battle. He states that the Ottomans were firmly united and fought as if all the soldiers had one heart and one intention and that not one of them had envy or hatred in his heart for his comrades. This author goes on to add that this is the best situation for those who desire victory, and that such unity comes from divine providence.

\textsuperscript{1854} Stripling, \textit{Ottoman Turks}, 47.
granted to those whom God wishes to bless with victory.\footnote{Ibn Zunbul, \textit{Wāqiʿat}, 34.} To a medieval observer this may not have seemed too far from the truth because the Mamlūks’ almost assured victory at Marj Dābiq turned into an ignominious defeat. Yet, as this case study has demonstrated, this defeat was largely a psychological one. Perhaps it could also be attributed to bad luck. The Mamlūk army withdrew from the field of battle in disorder. One can only speculate on the outcome of this conflict had there been no treason in the Mamlūk army and had al-Ghawrī ordered his \textit{julbān} to support the \textit{qarāniṣa} at the decisive moment during the battle.

\section*{7.47 The Aftermath: Raydāniyya and the Final Defeat of the Mamlūk Sultanate}

Five months after the Battle of Marj Dābiq Selīm I invaded Egypt and put an end to the Mamlūk sultanate after defeating its army in another pitched battle at Raydāniyya. This was the first and only time that Mamlūk Egypt suffered a full scale invasion. Moreover, the way in which the decisive battle was fought was also very unusual because the Mamlūks used new tactics to fight the Ottomans instead of the tried and tested methods upon which they had always depended.

Selīm I’s decision to invade Egypt after his victory at Marj Dābiq went against the trend and pattern that had developed throughout Mamlūk history. Prior to the defeat at Marj Dābiq the Mamlūks lost only two decisive battles: the Battle of Wādī al-Khazindār against the Ilkhanids in 1299 CE and the defense of Syria against Timur in 1400-1402 CE. After both of these encounters, the Mamlūk army withdrew to Egypt in a state of disarray, low morale, and a weak fighting spirit. Al-Ghawrī’s forces, defeated at the Battle of Mark Dābiq, resembled the Mamlūk army in these earlier encounters. The big difference between the first two defeats and the last one was that in the first two instances the victorious invaders did not pursue the Mamlūk army to Egypt as Selīm I did in 1517 CE. As a matter of fact, after their victories, both the Ilkhanids and Timur withdrew from Syria as the Mamlūks, having reorganized themselves and recovered from the shock of defeat prepared to launch a counter offensive the following year. One can hypothesize that if either the Ilkhanids or Timur had followed up their victories with a swift invasion of Egypt while the defeated Mamlūks were disorganized and demoralized, their sultanate might have not survived until 1517 CE. In fact Albrecht Fuess argues that if the
Mamlūks had more time to prepare their defenses they may have had a chance at stopping and defeating the Ottoman invasion of Egypt.\textsuperscript{1856}

The question that must be asked here is: why did Selīm I decide to invade Egypt? Previous invaders had not done so in the past. Furthermore, he had suffered very heavy casualties at Marj Dābiq, whereas the Mamlūk army withdrew almost fully intact. He would also have had to undertake the difficult march through the desert and fight a rested enemy on the defensive. Moreover, Selīm I was reluctant to stretch his forces, communications, and supply lines out too thinly, especially with the Safavids still threatening his flank.\textsuperscript{1857} As a matter of fact, there are indications that the Ottoman sultan wanted to end the war with the Mamlūks.\textsuperscript{1858} He sent an emissary to them with peace terms. However, Selīm’s demands were far too heavy for the Mamlūks, especially since he wanted to be recognized as the sovereign of Egypt, in whose name the Mamlūks ruled that region, and as the guardian of Mecca and Medina.\textsuperscript{1859} It could be argued that the terms of this peace were purposely made unacceptable so that the Mamlūks would refuse them. However, there was already a state of open hostility between the two sides, so at this point there was no real need for a new \textit{casus belli} to justify further hostilities. Whether Selīm I had originally intended to invade and conquer Egypt or not, it was his new ally, Khāyrbek, who convinced the reluctant Ottoman sultan to advance. It was the urging of this former Mamlūk governor of Aleppo that tipped the balance in favor of an invasion of the very heart of the Mamlūk sultanate.\textsuperscript{1860} It is not surprising that Khāyrbek sought the destruction of the Mamlūks because he had betrayed them at Marj Dābiq (and probably cost them the battle with his actions) and knew that as long as the sultanate existed, his life was in danger.

The two armies met near Cairo at Raydāniyya in 1517 CE. Ṭūmānbāy (r. 1516-1517 CE), the new Mamlūk sultan and a nephew of Qānṣūḥ al-Ghawrī, had initially planned a very mobile defensive campaign against the advancing Ottomans. He had wanted to ride out and meet them immediately after they had crossed the desert and before they could reach water and rest. He also

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{1857} Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 284.
\textsuperscript{1858} Ṭaqqūsh, \textit{Tārīkh al-Mamālīk}, 503.
\textsuperscript{1859} Ibn Iyās, \textit{Badā’i’}, vol. 5, 124-125; Ṭaqqūsh, \textit{Tārīkh al-Mamālīk}, 503.
\textsuperscript{1860} Ḥasan, \textit{Tūmānbay}, 33; Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 284.
\end{flushright}
wanted to harass them with raids, ambushes, and guerilla tactics in order to wear them down while they advanced, in the hope of forcing them to withdraw or to weaken them enough to defeat them in a pitched battle. However, he was unable to put his plan into effect because of rebellions in Egypt, the poor morale of his army which had not yet recovered from Marj Dābiq, and the refusal of several of the high ranking amīrs to ride out. All these factors forced Ṭūmānbāy to take up a defensive position at Raydāniyya.

In their last major battle the Mamlūks chose to use new and unusual tactics rather than the tried and tested methods that had worked for them more often than not. Ṭūmānbāy went to great lengths to secure modern weapons for the upcoming clash. He sought to attain naval aid and to purchase gunpowder weapons from the Knights of Rhodes in exchange for the release of Christian prisoners. He ordered that a defensive line should be established facing the Ottomans at Raydāniyya. This defensive line was composed of a long trench and wagons chained together, reinforced with large shields. Over 200 artillery pieces were mounted on wagons and carts and deployed along this line, which was also manned by large numbers of men armed with arquebuses. The ensuing battle was hard fought between the two sides. Ibn Iyās states that once again the Ottomans suffered very heavy losses and that Sinān Pasha, Selīm I’s wazīr and former tutor, was among the casualties. However, the Ottomans turned the tide of battle with a flanking maneuver that took the Egyptian defensive line in the rear. The Egyptians, who had committed to a stationary defense, were quickly overcome. It is interesting that in this encounter the Ottomans employed the mobile tactics for which the Mamlūks were famous.

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1861 And the news of the Ottomans advancing towards them, rather than their riding out to reconquer Syria must have also had a negative effect on their spirits.

1862 This sultan did not have a chance to consolidate his position and to assert full control over the army and the amīrs due to the short period of time that passed between his accession to the sultanate and Selīm I’s invasion of Egypt.

1863 Ṭaqqūsh, Tārīkh al-Mamālīk, 504-505.


1867 Ibn Iyās, An Account, 112-113; Ṭaqqūsh, Tārīkh al-Mamālīk, 505, 507; Waterson, Knights, 284.
These same tactics had resulted in Ottoman defeats in the several battles fought between these two adversaries in the late fifteenth century.\footnote{Waterson, \textit{Knights}, 284.}

It is clear from the example of Raydāniyya that all those scholars who attribute the fall of the Mamlūk sultanate to its refusal to adopt gunpowder weapons are gravely mistaken on two accounts. First, the Mamlūk army did adopt firearms in several of its non-mamlūk units. Second, it may have been Ṭūmānbay’s decision to overemphasize these weapons at the expense of the striking power and mobility of the Mamlūk cavalry that lost him the battle at Raydāniyya. One can only speculate as to why this decision was made. The arguments that the Mamlūks’ military efficiency and martial spirit had diminished do not hold up because they had performed very well against the Ottomans in the late fifteenth century and even at Marj Dābiq, where treason and misfortune were the main causes for the Mamlūk defeat. Ṭūmānbay may have believed that the Mamlūks’ morale had still not recovered, or he may have not trusted them enough to depend on their martial skills in this battle. Perhaps he had heard rumors about Ottoman firepower at Marj Dābiq and thought that the best way to counter it was to depend on artillery and musketry rather than on the Mamlūk heavy cavalry. Whatever the case may be, the Mamlūks did not employ their traditional method of fighting (at which they were superb) in one of the most important battles of their sultanate, and this led to their demise.

7.5 The Weakness of the Mamlūk Army and the Şāliḥi Mamlūk Model

Despite its many strengths and advantages, the Şāliḥi Mamlūk Model (and in the later period of the sultanate the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model in its nascent form) did have its weaknesses as well. At times these weaknesses seem more pronounced and, as a result, have led several scholars to conclude that the Mamlūk army was in a state of perpetual deterioration and weakening after the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, and especially during the Circassian period. The Mamlūk army’s excellent performance throughout its history is ignored for the most part by these historians.

One of the main flaws of the Şāliḥi Mamlūk Model was loyalty, or lack thereof. This characteristic was ever present within the army and the elites of the sultanate from its inception.
to its fall. We have seen that the Mamlūk sultanate came into existence through an act of betrayal. The Bahriyya murdered Tūrānshāh, put an end to the Ayyūbid line in Egypt, and set up their regime, which was based on their status as a socio-military elite. Furthermore, during the sultanate’s existence several of the most successful rulers such as Baybars, Qalāwūn, Barqūq, and Barsbāy, to mention a few among many, attained power by deposing their predecessors.

None of the sultans were able to establish a dynastic line to which the whole army and sultanate owed allegiance. David Ayalon correctly makes this point in his article “The Circassians in the Mamlūk Kingdom.” He states that during the latter half of the sultanate the concept of one generational loyalty impeded the establishment of a stable political and military environment in contrast to the one created by the Ottomans.

…it was impossible for the Mamlūks of one sultan to transfer their allegiance to his successor. At this time in particular, the Mamlūks purchased and liberated by the reigning sultan formed the entire basis of his rule, and were the sole support on which he leaned in opposing the other groups of royal Mamlūks, and especially the Mamlūks of his predecessor. The sultan and his mushtarawāt formed a sort of vicious circle. They enjoyed pre-eminence only as long as he reigned; and he could retain his power only as long as he based his rule on his Mamlūks. Each sultan, on ascending the throne, tried to clear the way for his mushtarawāt to seize power, and sought to increase their number as rapidly as possible. The accession of a new sultan was frequently accompanied by brutal purges on a vast scale, and especially by the relentless persecution of his predecessor's Mamlūks. In other words, he would try to eliminate the Mamlūks who had only just before been the mushtarawāt, and thus had been the ruling element in the state. In order to destroy the immense power they had concentrated in their hands, and to weaken their opposition as a united and organized body, the sultan was not content merely to remove them from their dominant position.\footnote{Ayalon, “Circassians,” 145-146. This statement also supports the idea of the eventual development of the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model as more and more factions emerged with the death/removal of a sultan and the rise of a new one in his place.}

In contrast to the Mamlūks, Ayalon describes the Ottomans as being successful and attributes the strength and stability of their regime to the fact that they were able to secure the loyalty of their patrimonial household and the elite slave soldiers within it to the dynastic line of Osmān, the eponymous founder of the dynasty.
One of the main reasons for the amazing stability and compactness of the Ottoman slave family (down to the end of Suleiman the Magnificent's reign) was the fact that in the Ottoman State the sultanate was hereditary within the reigning family, and often passed from father to son. Thus the allegiance of the slaves was transferred from one sultan to his successor.\textsuperscript{1870}

Ayalon also asserts that “the legitimacy of kingship had become weakened already in Baḥrī times.”\textsuperscript{1871} I would take that a step further to state that the type of legitimacy and stability that the House of Osmān had enjoyed (as described by Ayalon) never existed in the Mamlūk sultanate. That is not to say that the sultanate itself did not enjoy long periods of stability under able rulers, but rather to confirm that the loyalty of the amīrs and the rank and file mamlūks did not belong to any one house of lineage, but rather on a complex network of patronage within the army and the socio-military elite of Syria and Egypt during this period.\textsuperscript{1872} In fact, recent research, such as that conducted by Sievert, shows that the seemingly chaotic and unstable practices of succession and the transition of power in the Mamlūk sultanate promoted its stability and longevity.\textsuperscript{1873}

One may argue that Qalāwūn was able to establish a mini-dynasty within the Mamlūk sultanate. However, the only rulers who could command real allegiance and loyalty from among the scions of the House of Qalāwūn were al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn himself and al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. The others, for the most part, were mere figureheads and puppets for the great amīrs of the sultanate who were the real brokers of power through their patronage networks in the post-Nāṣirid period.\textsuperscript{1874} Therefore, the attempts to establish long-lasting dynasties by several Mamlūk sultans failed, most often with the deposition of their heirs by the army usually led by the atābak who in most cases assumed the role of sultan. The mamlūks of a deceased sultan were more

\textsuperscript{1870} Ayalon, “Circassians,” 145.
\textsuperscript{1871} Ayalon, “Circassians,” 145.
\textsuperscript{1872} Jo Van Steenbergen has conducted a study on power relations, patronage, and conflict in his book \textit{Order out of Chaos}. It gives a good idea on the inner workings of power politics in the Mamlūk sultanate. However, it is focused primarily on the period after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s death and prior to the rise of the Circassians. See Jo Van Steenbergen, \textit{Order out of Chaos: Patronage, Conflict and Mamluk Cocio-Political Culture, 1341-1382} (Leiden: Brill, 2006). Also see Chamberlain, “Military Patronage States,” 141-152.
\textsuperscript{1873} Sievert, \textit{Der Herrscherwechsel}, 139.
\textsuperscript{1874} Holt, “Virtuous Ruler,” 239-242.
likely to have a stronger bond and loyalty to one another and high ranking amīrs from among their *khushdāshiyya* than to their former patron’s offspring.\textsuperscript{1875}

Factionalism in the Mamlūk sultanate is connected with concepts of loyalty and survival. Mamlūk factions were based on the *khushdāshiyya* and at times on ethnicity.\textsuperscript{1876} However, despite the bonds formed through experience (*khushdāshiyya*), kinship, and ethnicity there was a fluidity and flexibility among the individuals and groups that formed these factions, which allowed for both slow and sudden shifts in the balance of power in the sultanate. The *khushdāshiyya* unit was not always a self-contained and united group and conflicts among members of one *khushdāshiyya* did take place.\textsuperscript{1877} For example, during the events that led to the fall of Yalbughā, the Yalbughāwiyya divided into two groups, one that fought against Yalbughā and another that supported him. Al-Sakhāwī states that it is unknown whether Barqūq was among the rebellious Yalbughāwiyya or among those who remained loyal to their patron.\textsuperscript{1878}

Factionalism came into play in the Mamlūk sultanate under various circumstances. One situation could be seen with the death of a sultan. His mamlūks (*mushtarawāt/julbān*), who had been the mainstay of his power and at the top of the social, political, and military hierarchy during his reign, were pushed aside by the new sultan and his own mamlūks. The mamlūks of the previous sultan were then relegated to the secondary status of the *mustakhdamūn/qarāniṣ*. This group could at times form a united front to safeguard their rights and positions against the *mushtarwāt/julbān* of the sultan, or at other times, one of the many factions that formed the collective of former sultans’ mamlūks known as the *mustakhdamūn/qarāniṣ* could also align itself with the sultan against another faction from within this collective group. An example of these factions at work was mentioned earlier. Upon the death of al-Ashraf Barsbāy in 1437 CE, the Ūūrriyya of Barqūq, Nāṣiriyya of Faraj, and the Mu’ayyadiyya of Shaykh, who formed the bulk of the *qarāniṣa*, united under the command of the atābak Jaqmaq against Barsbāy’s Ashrafiyya *julbān* and defeated them, thus allowing Jaqmaq to take the position of sultan for

\textsuperscript{1875} The deceased sultan’s son and heir would have likely sought to create a new support network for himself at the expense of his father’s mamlūks as al-Nāṣir Muhammad had done during his third reign.

\textsuperscript{1876} e.g. Kitbughā and his attempts to elevate the Mongol ethnicity in the sultanate or the struggles between the Circassians and the Turks for dominance in the late fourteenth century.

\textsuperscript{1877} Clifford, *State Formation*, 216, 220.

\textsuperscript{1878} Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Daw’,* vol. 3, 10-14.
himself. Probably the best example of this factionalism at its most destructive is the conduct of these groups at the Battle of Marj Dābiq. Qānṣūh al-Ghawri’s refusal to commit his julbān to support the qarāniṣa at the crucial point in the battle in the hope of depleting their numbers and weakening these veteran mamlūks (who were potential opponents to his rule) was one of the main reasons for the Mamlūk defeat on that fateful day.

The other weakness of the Mamlūk sultanate and the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model was that it always suffered from a lack of manpower. The mainstay of the sultanate was the regular army, which was composed almost exclusively of mamlūks. Most of these mamlūks were imported into Egypt and Syria from the Kipchak Steppe (in the early period) and the Caucasus (during the Circassian period). Others were brought in from the domains of the Mongols, Anatolia, and other locales beyond the boundaries of the sultanate. The whole process of the acquisition, training, and education of the mamlūks has been described earlier and has also been discussed in great detail by several historians such as Ayalon, Humphreys, Northrup, Rabie, Levanoni, Irwin, and Waterson among others. The fact that the mamlūks were imported from distant lands and that they had to undergo many years of training before they became full-fledged soldiers made them both expensive to import, train, and maintain and also made it difficult to replace casualties.

One way in which the Mamlūk army did become diminished in the later periods of the sultanate was in its size. The difficulties in acquiring new recruits from their native homelands due to decreases in the populations of the steppe regions and the Caucasus compounded with the effects of outbreaks of plague epidemics in Egypt and Syria made it more difficult to maintain armies as large as those that served Baybars and Qalāwūn. Ibn Shāhīn estimates the numbers of mamlūks in the army at 25,000 during the early fifteenth century. This figure includes the Royal Mamlūks (10,000), the amīrs’ mamlūks in Egypt (8,000), and the amīrs’ mamlūks in Syria.

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1881 This was also a prevalent weakness in the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model in the Circassian period because despite the army being composed of several factions and interest groups, the mamlūk soldiers still formed the bulk of the army.
1882 David Neustadt, “The Plague and Its Effects upon the Mamlūk Army.” JRAŚ, 1 (1946), 67. Note: This article was written by David Ayalon who used the name David Neustadt.
These figures seem a bit high for this period, especially when the extremely large number of 47,000 halqa troopers (both in Syria and Egypt) is added to the mamlūks. However, if one were to take 25,000 soldiers as the strength of the whole regular army of the Mamlūk sultanate at this time, it shows a considerable drop from Baybars’ army which may have numbered up to around 40,000 regular troops.

This drop in numbers was mentioned earlier when discussing the strength of the Royal Mamlūk corps of several of the Circassian sultans and the sizes of various expeditionary forces that were sent out during this period. For instance, Baybars is said to have had between 4,000-16,000 Royal Mamlūks, whereas Qalāwūn had 7,000-12,000 Royal Mamlūks. On the Other hand, Circassian sultans such as Barqūq had 2,000 julkān/mushtarawāt at the end of his first reign in 1389 CE and 4,000-6,000 at the time of his death in 1399 CE, Barsbāy had 2,000-3,000 purchased mamlūks, and Qāytbāy’s mamlūks would have numbered 8,000 men at his death had it not been for the plagues that decimated the ranks of the army. Comparing the numbers of the Royal Mamlūks of the early sultans with those of the Circassian rulers shows a decrease that was also probably felt by all the other mamlūk elements of the army. Furthermore, unlike the Ottoman army’s heavy reliance on freeborn recruits, such as the azabs and the timariot cavalry, to form a considerable proportion of its military, the Mamlūk military did not recruit extensively from the population of the sultanate into the ranks of the regular army and neglected this potential pool of manpower.

In addition to not being able to acquire and train large numbers of mamlūks due to logistical and fiscal difficulties, different forms of attrition took their toll on the army in the Circassian period. The losses suffered on the battlefield and in the internal struggles of the

\[\text{\textsuperscript{1883}}\text{ Ibn Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī, Zubdat Kashf, 104.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{1884}}\text{ Ibn Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī, Zubdat Kashf, 104.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{1885}}\text{ Ayalon, “Studies I,” 222-223. The disparity and inconsistency of these figures in the sources as presented by Ayalon could be due to exaggerations by the authors, inaccurate information, or may indicate the strength of the unit of Royal Mamlūks at different times during the reign of the sultan(s) being discussed.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{1886}}\text{ Al-Maqrīzī, al-Khiṭat, 95; al-ʻAmāyira, al-Jaysh, 58-59.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{1888}}\text{ Ibn Iyās, Badā‘i’, vol. 3, 325; al-ʻAmāyira, al-Jaysh, 59.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{1889}}\text{ The Ottoman army will be discussed in more detail in section 6.6.}\]
sultanate were compounded by the high death tolls that were a result of the outbreaks of plague. It is not my purpose to provide a detailed study of the plague and its effects on the Mamlūk army here, but rather to illustrate these effects with a few examples. During the fifteenth century there were fourteen serious outbreaks and two minor epidemics of plague that took a toll on the army. According to Ayalon (Neustadt), out of the total population, the plague affected foreigners and children the most. Soldiers of foreign origin and children lacked the immunity to fight these epidemics. To add to this, the Royal Mamlūks, living in close quarters with each other in their barracks, must have been even more susceptible to falling victim of the plague.

The effects of the plague were felt more at some times than at others. These outbreaks affected the whole population, but as mentioned earlier, had an even more profound effect on the mamlūks. For instance, during the outbreak of 1419 CE Ibn Iyās states that a half of Cairo’s population and the peasantry in the region perished. He also mentions that the epidemic of 1429 CE was so great that it killed 200 people every day. He also says that the plagues of 1443 CE and 1449 CE took an especially heavy toll on children, mamlūks, black slaves, and on foreigners. There are also specific numbers given in some instances on how many mamlūks died as a result of these epidemics. In the 1460 CE outbreak, 1,500 of Īnāl’s julbān died. Ibn Iyās states that this number only indicates those who died from among the julbān and does not include any other units from among the Royal Mamlūks. Furthermore, in 1476 CE, 2,000 of Qāytbāy’s mamlūks died and another 1,000 Royal Mamlūks died in 1497 CE. These numbers represent a considerable proportion of the Royal Mamlūks of these sultans. For instance, it was mentioned earlier that Qāytbāy could have left 8,000 mamlūks at his death had it not been for the plague. That means that one quarter of this sultan’s mamlūks died in epidemics. Qāytbāy had a very large number of mamlūks compared to some of the other Circassian rulers. For instance,

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1890 Ayalon (Neustadt), “Plague,” 68.
1892 Ibn Iyās, Badā‘i’, vol. 2, 45
1895 Ibn Iyās, Chronicle, 74. Ayalon (Neustadt) incorrectly quotes 1,400 as the number of julbān who died. Ayalon (Neustadt), “Plague,” 70.
over a half of Īnāl’s mamlūks died as a result of the plague and consequently he only left 1,200 mamlūks at his death.\textsuperscript{1897} Thus, even though the Mamlūks were able to replenish their forces between epidemics, the overall numerical strength of the army fell during the Circassian period in comparison to the early period of the sultanate.

This section has demonstrated that the Mamlūk army had its weaknesses from the very inception of the sultanate. These weaknesses were more noticeable at certain times than others, leading to the misconceived conclusion that the army perpetually deteriorated over time. However, such hasty conclusions (i.e., like the ones that state that the downturn of the Mamlūk army started during al-\textbar Nasīr Muḥammad’s reign) do not account for the longevity of the Mamlūk sultanate and periods in which there was a noticeable upturn in the condition of the army. The only negative outcome that I have seen to have definitely occurred to the army was a shrinking in its size for the reasons outlined above.

7.6 Beyond the Mamlūk Sultanate: The Military Models and the Organization of the Ottoman Army

The current study’s main aim is to examine the structure and composition of the Mamlūk army throughout the Mamlūk period. It also argues that the Mamlūk army remained mighty and effective throughout the duration of the Mamlūk period, despite the occasional changes that its structure and composition underwent during the reigns of sultans such as al-\textbar Nasīr Muḥammad. Furthermore, using two military models, I have proposed that the army went through several transformations, yet continued to be a formidable fighting force even in the later period of the sultanate. In addition to thoroughly examining the Mamlūk army’s structure, composition, and military effectiveness, I have also stated that another objective of this thesis is to link Mamlūk military history to the periods that preceded and followed the sultanate as well as to the broader field of military history. I have already discussed the development of the Diversified Army Model and the transition to the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model in Chapter 3. I now intend to briefly discuss the Ottoman military (up to the early seventeenth century) and to compare it to the Mamlūk army in order to show both continuities and changes to the military models that have been central to the discussion of the military of the Mamlūk sultanate throughout this study. This

\textsuperscript{1897} Ayalon (Neustadt), “Plague,” 71.
section is not a detailed examination of the Ottoman military; rather it aims to strengthen the links between Mamlûk and Ottoman military history and to encourage further studies in this transitional period.

The Ottoman military, like that of the Mamlûks, transformed over time. The earliest forces of the Ottomans under Osmān (r. 1299-1323 CE), the eponymous founder of the dynasty, were composed primarily of lightly armed raiders. A majority of these men were mounted archers who were skilled at hit and run attacks and ambushes. At the center of this loosely organized force was Osmān’s personal retinue, which probably did not number over a few hundred men and was composed of Turks, Byzantines, Catalans, and slaves. This force was able to defeat smaller disorganized Byzantine armies and was even able to capture some fortresses and small, poorly fortified towns by gaining control of the countryside in Bithynia (North West Asia Minor). However, the early Ottomans were unable to face a disciplined Byzantine army, and when confronted with such a force in the early fourteenth century, Osmān and his troops fled to the mountains. Furthermore, Osmān’s followers lacked the discipline and technical skills to capture large fortified cities as exemplified by his failed attempt to capture Nikaia (Izni).¹⁸⁹⁸

The Ottoman army underwent its first transformation under Orhān I (r. 1323-1362 CE) and Murād I (r. 1362-1389 CE), Osmān’s immediate successors. Under these rulers Osmān’s force of raiders changed into an army “that was capable of conducting effective sieges and field battles,” and was composed of both infantry and cavalry.¹⁸⁹⁹ As a result of a growing experience in siege warfare and military discipline, Orhān was able to conquer Prousas (Bursa), Nikaia (Izni), Nikomedia (Izmit), Ankara, and Dimetoka in Bithynia. Murād expanded his conquests into the Balkans. He took the Macedonian cities of Serrai in 1383 CE and Thessaloniki after a four year siege in 1387 CE and also captured Nish in the Morova valley in 1386 CE as a prelude to his attack on Serbia.¹⁹⁰⁰


¹⁸⁹⁹ Imber, Ottoman Empire, 253-254.

¹⁹⁰⁰ Imber, Ottoman Empire, 255.
The early Ottoman army transformed from a band of irregular raiders into a disciplined force capable of conducting sieges and fighting pitched battles against large and disciplined enemy armies. This transformation saw the rise of several different units that dominated the battlefields of Europe and West Asia for several centuries and that enabled the Ottoman sultans to carve out a huge empire around the Mediterranean that endured until the early twentieth century. The largest element of the Ottoman army for much of the duration of the empire was the timariot army, which was composed of freeborn provincial cavalrymen who were paid through land revenue assignments known as timar. Like the iqtā’, the timar granted its holder the right to collect revenues and varied in size. Small timars accommodated one horseman and a small number of retainers. On the other hand, important leaders could be assigned an entire principality as a timar, which supported a much larger number of cavalry men. During the early sixteenth century the timar holders of Rumelia (the European part of the empire) and Anatolia and their retainers numbered between 50,000-90,000 cavalrymen. This number increased to 100,000-200,000 horsemen by the early seventeenth century (although most scholars agree that the lower figure is probably more accurate). However, only a portion of this huge reserve of military manpower was mobilized during any given campaign. There were 50,000-80,000 timar holders and their retainers present during military expeditions in the sixteenth century. The numbers of these provincial horsemen present depended on the scale of a military campaign and whether the sultan or one of his representatives (such as the grand vizier) was leading the campaign. The timariot cavalrymen provided their own weapons and armor, which they were expected to purchase and maintain from the incomes that they received from their timars. They were also expected to arm and maintain a number of retainers, depending on the size of their timars. These provincial horsemen were required to purchase light chain mail armor, helmets, and armor for their horses. Because they purchased their own arms, there was

little uniformity in the way that these troops were attired and armed. They rode to battle armed a
variety of weapons (depending on what local craftsmen could produce), which included swords,
lances, daggers, and bows and arrows. Thus, based on these descriptions the timariot
horsemen fought as light or medium cavalry. The timar system provided the Ottoman regime
with a large standing army of cavalrymen at no direct cost to the sultan’s treasury, “relieving
the central Ottoman bureaucracy of the burden of revenue raising and paying military
salaries.”

The other major element of the Ottoman army was the Sultans’ standing army. This force
was composed of several units, predominantly composed of slaves (kapu kulu), that were paid
directly by the sultan from the royal treasury. The most famous of these royal forces was the
janissaries. This unit was probably established during the reign of Murâd I and served as the
sultan’s private bodyguard. It was initially composed of prisoners of war and slaves captured
during raids. At its inception this royal guard only numbered a few hundred men.

By the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century the janissary corps became militarily more important and
formed the backbone of the Ottoman army. The janissaries were an elite unit that, like the
mamluks, acquired an espirit de corps. They were experts at siege warfare and at storming
fortified positions. On the battlefield they fought at the center of the army and often held their
ground during crucial points when the other elements of the army had fled. However, unlike
the mamluks, the janissaries fought as infantrymen. For example, at the Battle of Ankara in
1402 CE it was the janissaries who continued to fight and defend the sultan after the other units
of the Ottoman army had fled. Likewise, at the Battle of Varna in 1444 CE after large portions of
the cavalry fled the field, the janissaries turned the tide in the Ottomans’ favor by standing firm,

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1905 Imber, *Ottoman Empire*, 267-268.
stopping the Hungarian charge, and even killing the king.\textsuperscript{1912} The janissaries did not have to provide their own arms and armor and were instead armed by the sultan. Initially the primary weapon of the janissaries was the bow, which was gradually replaced by handheld gunpowder weapons during the sixteenth century. They also used axes, daggers, and swords, polearms, and clubs for hand to hand combat.\textsuperscript{1913}

The numbers of the janissaries increased with time. As mentioned above, they probably numbered a few hundred men and served as the sultans’ bodyguard when the unit was established by Murâd I. By 1398 CE there were 2,000 janissaries; this number increased to 3,000 by the reign of Murâd II (r. 1421-1444 CE) and to 5,000-10,000 under Mehmed II (1444-1446 CE and 1451-1481 CE). The size of the janissary corps continued to grow in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. There were 13,000 janissaries in 1574 CE, 35,000 in 1597 CE, 37,600 in 1609 CE, and 39,740 in 1670 CE.\textsuperscript{1914} Although initially the members of this military unit came from prisoners of war and slave raids, a system was eventually established that facilitated the replenishment and growth of the Janissary corps. This system was the \textit{devshirme} or Collection through which young Christian boys from among the subjects of the empire were levied primarily from the Balkans and taken to Istanbul where they either joined the administration or the janissary corps.\textsuperscript{1915} Some historians argue that the exponential growth in size of the janissary corps caused its eventual decline because “standards of recruitment became more and more slack” and with time the corps lost its military efficiency.\textsuperscript{1916} The increase in the size of the janissary corps also put a strain on the treasury.\textsuperscript{1917} The Ottomans may have been trying to increase the size of their elite forces as a response to the more powerful enemies they were facing by the end of the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{1918} This may be true because until the first half of

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{1912} Imber, \textit{Ottoman Empire}, 257.
\bibitem{1916} Inalcik, \textit{Ottoman Empire}, 48; Veinstein, “On the Ottoman Janissaries,” 120.
\bibitem{1917} Veinstein, “On the Ottoman Janissaries,” 120. For a detailed analysis of Ottoman military expenditure between 1500-1700 see Murphey, \textit{Ottoman Warfare}, 53-63.
\end{thebibliography}
the sixteenth century the numbers of the janissaries were restricted in order to control expenditure and to maintain high military standards “to accord with the maxim of Lutfi Pasha, Grand Vizier, from 1539-1541, that: ‘troops should be few, but they should be excellent.”’

Such statements are similar to those that have been made regarding the Mamlūk army and its efficiency. The current study has argued against such simplified conclusions based on changes to the composition and structure of the Mamlūk military. An in depth discussion of the development of and changes made to the structure and composition of the janissary corps and how these changes affected its military effectiveness cannot be undertaken here. However, further research on the topic and a comparison to the conclusions of this study could perhaps draw the Mamlūk and Ottoman periods even closer.

In addition to the Janissaries the sultans’ standing army also consisted of divisions of palace cavalry, armorers, and gunners. The sultans’ palace cavalry was divided into six divisions: sipāhīs (Cavalrymen), silāḥdārs (Sword bearers), ulufejis (Stipendiaries) of the left and right, and ghureba (strangers) of the left and right. During the reign of Mehmed II there were 600 Cavalrymen, 600 Sword bearers, 700 Stipendiaries, and 400 Strangers. Like the janissaries, these cavalry divisions also grew in size so that by 1607 CE there were 7,805 Cavalrymen, 7,683 Sword bearers, 3,448 Stipendiaries, and 1,903 Strangers. These cavalry divisions were elite units whose members graduated from the palace schools and always accompanied the sultan on campaign or during ceremonial occasions. The Corps of Armorers also formed a part of the sultan’s standing army. It was comprised of armorers, smiths, and weapon makers who were responsible for manufacturing and maintaining the armor, weapons, and tools of the standing army. This corps numbered 500 men in the mid-sixteenth century and grew to 6,000 by 1630 CE. The Corps of Gunners was responsible for the manufacture, maintenance, and use of artillery in the sultans’ army. This body came into existence in the mid fifteenth century when

\[^{1919}\text{Imber, }\textit{Ottoman Empire}, 258.\]
\[^{1920}\text{Imber, }\textit{Ottoman Empire}, 258-259.\]
\[^{1921}\text{Imber, }\textit{Ottoman Empire}, 258.\]
\[^{1922}\text{Imber, }\textit{Ottoman Empire}, 268.\] For more details on the Corps of Gunners see David, “Ottoman Warfare,” 285.
artillery began to be used more frequently in siege warfare. The members of this corps were recruited using the devshirme, but there were also Muslims and Christians serving in this unit.1923

The azabs were another infantry corps that served in the Ottoman army. Unlike the Janissaries, the azabs were not an elite unit; they were conscripts who were levied from among the inhabitants of the towns and villages of the Ottoman empire.1924 When recruiting azabs the sultan’s representative inspected all the young men who were fit for war and selected potential soldiers from this pool. It fell to a certain number of households to provide and supply a single azab conscript. For example, if an azab was selected from a pool provided by twenty households, then the other nineteen households from this group had to pay for his expenses on campaign.1925 The numbers of azabs in the Ottoman army varied and depended on military necessity.1926 The azabs served both as battlefield troops and in garrisons. However, because they were not as valuable as the janissaries, they were deemed expendable and were often placed in the front lines during battle. By the second half of the sixteenth century the azabs had “lost their importance as battlefield troops.”1927

The akinjis formed the last important unit of the Ottoman army. These troops were the light cavalry of Rumelia with whom the earliest traditions of Ottoman warfare were preserved.1928 These raiders were led by their own hereditary leaders and were a distinct fighting force that operated independently from the main Ottoman army. The akinjis operated independently by conducting raids along the empire’s frontier region when there was no ongoing formal military campaign and in conjunction with the main Ottoman army when the sultans waged war against their enemies.1929 They did not receive wages from the sultan but derived their livelihood from their livestock and farmlands. The bulk of their income was in the form of loot that they captured during their raids or while accompanying the sultan’s armies on


1925 Imber, *Ottoman Empire*, 259.


1927 Imber, *Ottoman Empire*, 260.

1928 Imber, *Ottoman Empire*, 260.

campaign.\textsuperscript{1930} When operating in conjunction with the main Ottoman army, the \textit{akinjis} rode ahead of the main body and sowed terror and confusion in the lands of the enemy.\textsuperscript{1931} Outside the campaigning season the \textit{akinjis} raided along the Danube frontier.\textsuperscript{1932} Initially, becoming a raider was voluntary, but by the sixteenth century the \textit{akinjis} were formally registered and conscripted like the \textit{azabs}.\textsuperscript{1933} In the late fifteenth century there were between 8,000-10,000 \textit{akinjis} and by the mid-sixteenth century their numbers rose to about 50,000-60,000 men.\textsuperscript{1934} After 1526 CE and the Kingdom of Hungary ceased to exist after its army was defeated at the Battle of Mohács. The Ottomans absorbed a part of Hungary which became an Ottoman province and the Danube frontier disappeared, thus ending the functions of the \textit{akinjis}. Plundering raids came to an end because the Austrian frontier was less vulnerable to raider attacks than Hungary had been.\textsuperscript{1935} In 1595 CE the \textit{akinjis} all but ceased to exist as an effective military force. The raiders accompanying an Ottoman military expedition into Wallachia were ambushed and wiped out as they were waiting to cross the Danube back into Ottoman territory in the the battle of Targovişte (Tergoviște).\textsuperscript{1936} From the sixteenth century onward the role that the \textit{akinjis} had played was performed by Tatar auxiliaries from the Crimean khanate.\textsuperscript{1937}

Gunpowder weapons were adopted by the Ottomans and played an important role during both sieges and field battles. As mentioned above, the Ottoman sultans created a Corps of Gunners as a part of their standing armies. However, the extent of the proliferation of these weapons in the Ottoman army and their effectiveness, especially up to an including the sixteenth century, is debatable. The discussion of the Battle of Marj Dābiq, above, and the role of gunpowder weapons in the outcome of the battle has demonstrated that in the early sixteenth century only a small proportion of the entire Ottoman army was armed with arquebuses and that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{1930} Imber, \textit{Ottoman Empire}, 261.
  \item \textsuperscript{1931} Imber, \textit{Ottoman Empire}, 262.
  \item \textsuperscript{1933} Imber, \textit{Ottoman Empire}, 263.
  \item \textsuperscript{1934} Imber, \textit{Ottoman Empire}, 263; Murphey, \textit{Ottoman Warfare}, 35; Agoston, “Empires and Warfare,” 116.
  \item \textsuperscript{1935} Imber, \textit{Ottoman Empire}, 264.
  \item \textsuperscript{1936} Imber, \textit{Ottoman Empire}, 265; David, “Ottoman Armies,” 296.
  \item \textsuperscript{1937} Imber, \textit{Ottoman Empire}, 265; David, “Ottoman Armies,” 296.
\end{itemize}
these weapons were less accurate and fired at a slower rate than the composite bow, which was the weapon of the choice of the mamlûk cavalry. In fact, Irwin argues that even at the Battle of Lepanto in the late sixteenth century, large numbers of janissaries were still using the bow rather than the arquebus. Furthermore, Lala Mehmed Pasha, the Ottoman commander in Hungary in 1600, commented that the numbers of arquebusiers in the Ottoman army were few, whereas there were large numbers of such troops in the armies of the Ottomans’ European rivals. Kelly Devries argues that during the mid-fifteenth century gunpowder technology was still in its infancy and artillery was “ineffective if handled poorly.” He claims that it was not gunpowder technology and the use of siege guns that enabled Mehmed II to conquer Constantinople, but rather it was this sultan’s foresight, tactical planning, and effective use of the guns he had that won the siege. In fact, Devries states that the artillery used by the Byzantines and their allies was technologically more advanced than Mehmed II’s guns. Despite this information, gunpowder weapons did make an impact because they are constantly mentioned in the sources that describe Ottoman military engagements. They appear in accounts of the siege of Constantinople (1453 CE), the Battle of Bashkent (1473 CE), the Battle of Chaldirān (1514 CE), the Battle of Marj Dābiq (1516 CE), and the Battle of Mohâcs (1526 CE). Gunpowder weapons must have had an impact to be mentioned so prominently in the accounts of the most decisive military encounters of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. I agree with Devries that it was the way in which these weapons were used that made their impact seem more decisive than it really was.

The Ottomans adopted the use of gunpowder weapons through their contacts with their European foes in the Balkans. In addition to acquiring this new weapon the Ottomans also learned a very effective tactic from the Hungarians, the wagenberg. The Ottomans borrowed this tactic from the Hungarians during the wars of the 1440s. The Hungarians in turn had learned it

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1940 Imber, Ottoman Empire, 284.
1943 Imber, Ottoman Empire, 274; Fodor, “Ottoman Warfare,” 218.
from their experiences during the Hussite Wars (1419-1434 CE) in Bohemia. This tactic involved chaining together a number of wagons reinforced with shields and armor. Men armed with arquebuses, crossbows, and polearms could defend these wagons against much larger and better armored mounted armies. The Ottomans adopted this tactic and merged it with their more traditional fighting methods. The wagenberg held the central position of the Ottoman battle line. The janissaries, armed with bows and hand guns, entrenched themselves behind this defensive structure. The remainder of the army (the timariot cavalry, the azabs, and the akinjis) drew up in front of and to either side of this defensive line. In addition to the janissaries, the artillery was also concentrated at the center. Thus, any enemy coming upon the center of the Ottoman lines was met with a considerable amount of firepower because almost all of the Ottomans’ gunpowder weapons were concentrated in a very small section of the entire battle line. Had the Ottomans distributed their gunpowder weapons evenly throughout their battle lines, it is highly unlikely that they would have had the same impact as they did concentrated at the wagenberg in the center. To an enemy unfamiliar with this type of warfare this tactic and concentration of firepower could be devastating. However, the Mamlūks proved that this was not an invincible tactic in their battles with the Ottomans during the Ottoman-Mamlūk war and at the Battle of Marj Dābiq. They timed their charges against the Ottoman wagenbergs to coincide with the reloading of their guns.

7.61 The Military Models in the Ottoman Army: Continuities and Changes

Although the Ottoman army’s structure and organization seem quite different from that of the Mamlūks, there were several similarities shared by the Mamlūk sultanate’s military and the military models on the Ottomans. At a glance, it appears that the Ottoman army was organized

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1946 Fodor, “Ottoman Warfare,” 221.
1947 Petry, Twilight, 97.
along the lines of the Diversified Army Model due to the various groups that it brought together. In fact, it can be argued that the Ottomans were able to better develop their military than the Mamluks along the lines of the Mamlûkized Diversified Army Model, which started to appear in the late Mamlûk sultanate and combined elements from both the Diversified Army Model and the Șâlihi Mamlûk Model.

At the core of the Ottoman military was the Sultans’ standing army. This force can be compared to the Royal Mamlûks. Both of these military bodies were the elite units of their empires; they were both composed of men who were of slave origin; they were both significant sections of their armies (not just the rulers’ bodyguards); and they were both under the direct command of the reigning sultans. However, there are several noteworthy differences between the elite forces of the Ottoman and Mamlûk sultanates. The Royal Mamlûks corps comprised the reigning sultan’s mamlûks and those he inherited from his predecessor(s). It was composed, for the most part, of mamlûks who had started their careers as slaves. Additionally, it was exclusively a cavalry force. The men who formed this unit were acquired from beyond the boundaries of the sultanate (the Kipchak steppe and later the Caucasus), which made it difficult and expensive to purchase, transport, train, and to replenish the ranks of the Mamlûk army. In fact, as discussed in the previous chapter, the number of Royal Mamlûks decreased by the reigns of the Circassian sultans in comparison to those serving earlier rulers such as Baybars and Qalâwûn. In contrast to the Royal Mamlûk corps, the Ottoman sultans’ standing army was composed of several elements: the Janissary corps, the six elite palace cavalry divisions, the Corps of Armorers, and the Corps of Gunners. The elite janissary infantry, which formed the heart of the Ottoman army, was supported by the cavalry divisions and by the sultan’s artillery, which made the Ottoman sultans’ standing army more dynamic and adaptable to the various styles of warfare that they had to wage on the various fronts of their empire. Furthermore, the bulk of this standing army was recruited through the devshirme system that collected boys and young men from the Balkans. Thus, the Ottomans tapped the vast supply of the manpower within the boundaries of their domains, which ensured that the standing army was not only replenished, but that it also grew larger with time. The early Mamlûk sultans such as Baybars and Qalâwûn are said to have had over 10,000 Royal Mamlûks. During the Circassian period these figures

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dropped to under 10,000 and the various sultans of this era had between 2,000-8,000 Royal Mamlūks.\footnote{See page 297 for details on the numbers of the Royal Mamlūks of individual Circassian sultans.} In contrast, the numbers of the janissaries and the elite palace cavalry divisions grew to include tens of thousands of men supported by thousands of armorers and gunners as discussed above.

The loyalty of the Royal Mamlūks and the Ottoman sultans’ elite standing army also differed greatly. In the case of the Royal Mamlūks the \textit{julbān} of the reigning sultan were his most loyal supporters. The other Royal Mamlūks whom he inherited were often seen as a threat to his power and to his supporters. There was no loyalty to one ruling house or family, especially during the Circassian period. In fact, it is the large number of factions that developed among the Royal Mamlūks and among the amīrs of the sultanate and their supporters by the Circassian period that transformed the Mamlūk army from the Šāliḥī Mamlūk Model to the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model, because even though the main elements of the military were still mamlūk, there were now a larger numbers of interest groups and factions. Thus, as discussed earlier, every successful mamlūk sultan was a state builder who had to reshape the ruling apparatus by centering it on his patrimonial household, which resulted in power shifts and transformations in the structure and composition of the Mamlūks army and its officer corps. On the other hand the janissaries and the other elements of the Ottoman sultans’ standing army were loyal to the Ottoman ruling family. There was no question that after the death of a sultan the successor had to come from the Ottoman imperial family. However, despite the janissaries’ loyalty to the Ottoman house, this did not stop them from being disloyal to individual sultans whose policies they disliked. For example, the janissaries forced Mehmed II to abdicate after his first reign in 1446 CE and returned his father to rule the empire. In 1512 CE the janissaries forced Bayezīd II to abdicate and replaced him with his son, Selīm I. It was also the janissaries who murdered Osman II in 1622 CE. The janissaries even showed insubordination towards strong sultans such as Selīm I whom they forced to withdraw from Tabrīz after their victory at Chaldirān in 1514 CE.\footnote{Inalcik, \textit{Ottoman Empire}, 21, 32, 61; Imber, \textit{Ottoman Empire}, 258; Veinstein, “On the Ottoman Janissaries,” 120-121.} Despite these incidents, the Ottoman empire was more politically stable than the Mamlūk sultanate because the army’s loyalty lay with the ruling family and every
new Ottoman sultan did not have to establish a new patrimonial household and completely restructure the military.\textsuperscript{1951}

The timariot provincial cavalry provided the second major element of the Ottoman army. This huge reserve of fighting men provided the bulk of the Ottomans’ forces. They were freeborn men who were granted the revenues from certain lands to maintain themselves and a number of retainers and to provide the sultans with military service in exchange. Perhaps the freeborn ḥalqa of the thirteenth and early fourteenth century can be viewed as the Mamlūk equivalent of this force, whose members maintained themselves with the revenues of the iqṭā’ that they were granted. However, this unit lost much of its military capabilities with the reallocation of iqṭā’ revenues after the Nāširī rawk and all but disappeared as an effective fighting force by the late Circassian period. Even at its height, the ḥalqa was only a fraction of the size of the Ottomans’ provincial cavalry force. One can argue that the amīrs’ and their mamlūks, also paid through the iqṭā’ system, provided a military force similar to the timariot cavalry. However, the loyalty of several of these amīrs, who were sometimes rivals of the ruler to the throne, was dubious. Their troops, who were also mamlūks, were loyal to their patrons and not to the sultan, which once again makes the situation very different to that in the Ottoman domains.

Both the Mamlūks and the Ottomans conscripted soldiers for campaigns and utilized auxiliaries. However, once again, the Ottoman system seems more centralized where even the auxiliary akinji raiders were eventually registered and expected to show up for campaigns just like the azabs and the provincial cavalry. On the other hand, the Mamlūks maintained relations with tribal chiefs and vassal princes (i.e., amīr al-ʿarab) who provided troops to support the regular army during campaigns as they were needed.

The Ottoman army displayed both continuity with the Mamlūks and changes. Both armies were centered on a corps of elite troops of slave origin. In the case of the Ottomans this standing army was much larger than the Royal Mamlūk Corps and contained infantry, cavalry, and specialist units. The Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model fits the organization of both of these armies because they were both composed of multiple groups which were centered on an elite standing army under the rulers’ command. However, the Ottoman army was more “diverse” than the military of the Mamlūk sultanate. The Mamlūk army, especially in the Circassian

\textsuperscript{1951} For more on the dynastic system of succession in the Ottoman empire and the role of the sultans’ slaves see Burbank, Empires, 133-140.
period, was composed primarily of mamlūks who were divided into several factions and interest groups. Hence, despite being primarily a mamlūk army, it was diversified because of the divides within it along factional lines. On the other hand, the bulk of the Ottoman army was composed of freeborn timariot sipāhīs, azabs, and akinjis who provided the empire with a vast reserve of military manpower at no extra expense to the central treasury. Thus, the Ottoman army can also be described as being organized along the lines of the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model because it was definitely very diverse, but at its core was a very powerful elite force of slave soldiers who were the most effective fighting force of the empire during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and which was also the most politically active and influential unit in the army due to their proximity to the capital and to the ruling family.

The Ottoman army’s greater diversity, geographic location, and large pool of military manpower enabled it to follow an expansionist policy. The Mamlūks, as discussed earlier, followed a defensive policy and sought to always maintain the status quo rather than attempt to expand. One of the main reasons for this policy was that the Mamlūk sultanate could not afford to squander its soldiers, whom it acquired with great difficulty from distant lands and took many years to train. Additionally, the Mamlūks were surrounded by Muslim polities, making it very difficult to wage a justifiable war of expansion. On the other hand, the Ottomans had vast reserves of manpower. Even the ranks of the elite janissaries were easily replenished through the devshirme system through the recruitment of Christian subjects from the empire’s Balkan provinces. The Ottomans’ geographic location was also conducive to an expansionist policy. The Byzantines and other Christian polities of the Balkans and Eastern Europe provided excellent targets. Expansion eastward was also an option for the Ottomans. The various Turkic principalities and tribal groups of Anatolia had been at war with one another throughout the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Thus, waging war against Muslim rivals in Asia Minor was not a contentious issue for the Ottomans. The Ottomans’ geographic location brought them into military contact with European as well as Muslim enemies. Through the conflicts with their foes in the Balkans and Hungary, the Ottomans experienced gunpowder weapons and tactics (i.e., the wagenberg) and eagerly adopted them and used them against their eastern enemies. At the same

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time, they maintained eastern elements and tactics in their military in the form of the mounted archer and light cavalry that had scored countless victories over slower and more heavily armored European foes. In addition to adopting gunpowder weapons from their European adversaries, the Ottomans, unlike the Mamlūks, were better able to manufacture their own cannons, gunpowder, shot, and handguns due to the availability of the resources required for production in their domains.\textsuperscript{1953}

The Ottoman army’s history, like the Mamlūk military, should not be viewed as linear. In fact, Rhoads Murphey argues that a process of continuous change, or in his words, “continuous military revolution,” was maintained in the Ottoman army up to the early eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{1954} Jonathan Grant also argues that the Ottoman army did not undergo a decline which lasted from the late sixteenth century to the early twentieth century. He states that the army underwent a series of changes and experienced downturns and revivals up to the mid-nineteenth century. He also argues that the Ottomans were able to maintain a technological and military parity with their main European rivals for much of this period.\textsuperscript{1955} These approaches are similar to those taken in the current study regarding the military history of the Mamlūk sultanate, and in a broader sense to the tendencies of recent scholarship in this field of Mamlūk studies in general. In this section I have compared the militaries of the Mamlūks and the Ottomans with regard to continuity and change. However, a deeper discussion and analysis of Ottoman military history and its Mamlūk counterpart fall outside the scope of the current study. It is my hope that more and deeper connections can be established between the military history of the Mamlūk sultanate and the polities that preceded and followed them in the Muslim world. John Lynn’s article “The Evolution of Army Style in the Modern West” outlines the evolution of the structure, technology, and fighting techniques of the armies of the west. Lynn traces this evolution through seven distinct stages over a continuum that stretches back 1,200 years from the twenty first century. In these stages he describes the main models that dominated military organization during any given period. These models were the feudal army, the medieval-stipendiary army, the aggregate contract army, the state-commission army, the popular-conscript army, the mass-reserve army, 


and the volunteer-technical army. Perhaps a similar approach can be taken when studying the development and transformation of the armies of the Muslim world. This may be too gargantuan a project to undertake in one study. However, a series of studies on the militaries of the Muslim world that link the military histories of the polities of the core Islamic lands and outline the transformations and evolutions over time will not only bridge gaps between various time periods and geographical locales, but also open doors to reassess ideas of military weakening and deterioration that have, until recently, been promoted by the linear approach to military history that has dominated many areas of this field.

7.62 Egypt’s Military after the Ottoman Conquest

The organization of the Ottoman army garrisoning Egypt after the conquest was unique and exhibited differences to the imperial army at the center of the Ottoman Empire. In this section I will briefly outline the military of Ottoman Egypt after the conquest and highlight some of the similarities that connect it to its predecessor in the Mamlūk sultanate. However, first I must quickly mention a problem that makes it difficult to study Egypt’s history after the Ottoman conquest. The Mamlūk period is richly documented by a large corpus of sources and historiographical material in the form of chronicles, biographical dictionaries, and documents. In contrast, there are very few sources from post-conquest Egypt, especially for the sixteenth century.1957

Egypt was administered differently to other Ottoman provinces. It was the largest province of the empire and both strategically and economically important. Michael Winter states that the timar system was not introduced to Egypt. The new rulers understood that this region’s prosperity was tied to “the complex and sensitive irrigation system of the water of the Nile” and opted not to interfere with “local technical, administrative and fiscal practices and traditions” to ensure its uninterrupted prosperity.1958 Winter goes on to explain that the timar system supported

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a very large cavalry army, which had to be ready to ride to any of the fronts on which the sultans were waging war. On the other hand, Egypt was far removed from the regions that bordered the enemies of the empire and its garrison was relatively small (10,000 men) compared to the size of the province. Like the Mamlūk military, the Ottoman army in Egypt formed a defensive force that rarely participated in the major wars on the European and Persian fronts. On the rare occasions that contingents were sent to fight in the imperial army, they were rather insignificant in size. Furthermore, those mamlūks who were willing to cooperate with the Ottomans and swore allegiance to the sultan were incorporated into the new administration and military. Therefore, a number of practices and administrative offices such as the amīr al-ḥajj (pilgrimage commander) and the daftardār (treasurer) were transferred from the Mamlūk sultanate to Ottoman Egypt. Thus, in Egypt there was a unique compromise between Ottoman institutions and those that were transferred from the Mamlūk sultanate.

The Ottomans abolished the iqṭā’ system in Egypt and replaced it with “a regime of tax collectors known as amīns.” These amīns were sent from Istanbul and collected the taxes of Egypt and delivered them to the central treasury. This system did not last very long and was replaced by tax farming (īltizām). Tax farms were auctioned off to the highest bidders, who were most often military men. Many of these grandees who acquired tax farming rights were mamlūk amīrs.

The Ottoman forces in Egypt were divided into seven corps or ojaqs. The janissaries were the largest of these units. They were stationed in Cairo and guarded the citadel. The azabs were subordinate to the janissaries and fewer in number. They were tasked with guarding the approaches to Cairo and the ports of Egypt. The chavush (created in 1524 CE) and the mutafarriqa (created in 1554 CE) were small elite units composed of infantry and cavalry and served as the viceroy’s guards. Finally, there were three cavalry corps (sipāhīs): the gunulluyān or volunteers who were armed with javelins and bows and arrows, the tufenkjiyān or musketmen, who were armed with hand guns, and the mamlūks who were designated as Cherakise ojagi (the

of the Circassian corps). These cavalry regiments, unlike the timariots, were paid monthly salaries rather than receiving their livelihoods through land revenues. Initially, it was the Circassian mamlūks that formed a distinct body within the military that identified with Egypt. However, by the early seventeenth century the entire soldiery that formed the Ottoman garrison of Egypt became a “territorial army,” which had strong ties to Egypt, esprit de corps, and special interests that did not always agree with those of the Ottoman central government. Among the reasons that Winter outlines for this development are “the long-standing administrative and military tradition of Egypt” and “the survival of Mamluk spirit and institutions.” Like its imperial counterpart, the Ottoman provincial army of Egypt was organized along the lines of the Mamlûkized Diversified Army Model. It was composed of several units based on ethnicity and factional interest groups. Two elements of this army, the janissaries and the Circassians, were composed of men of slave origin. These slave corps accounted for a significant part of the army thus in addition to being diversified it was also “mamlûkized.”

The survival of the mamlûks as a distinct group after the Ottoman conquest is an interesting phenomenon. In addition to forming the Circassian corps, mamlûks were also found in other corps, serving officers and governors, and also in the retinues of dignitaries and grandees. However, it was not these rank-and-file mamlûks that kept the pre-Ottoman Mamlûk identity alive, but rather the Circassian beys (Cherakise beyleri) or amīrs. They formed a separate class, distinct from the other beys and were instrumental in maintaining Mamlûk traditions and values. In military processions they marched separately under their own flags and banners. They were also mentioned in imperial decrees and grouped with other high ranking officers. They were appointed to administer villages and to the position of kāshif (short for kāshif al-jusūr al-ṣulṭāniyya or the supervisor of the imperial dams) in the countryside. The mamlûk beys were also instrumental in defending the regions to which they were assigned from bedouin raids and revolts. Thus, despite the heavy presence of Ottoman troops in Cairo, the mamlûk

1966 Winter, “Turks, Arabs, and Mamluks,” 107. For a list of the other reasons for the Egyptian army’s transformation into a “territorial army” see Winter, “Turks, Arabs, and Mamluks,” 107.
amīrs controlled much of the countryside and continued to rule “according to the law of the Circassians,” indicating that the administrative system in Egypt was still based on “Mamluk methods and traditions.”\textsuperscript{1969}

Despite identifying with the territory it garrisoned and having a strong sense of itself and internal cohesion and solidarity, the various elements of the Egyptian army sometimes revolted, rioted, and fought one another. Although the Circassians were integrated into the Egyptian army alongside other regular Ottoman units, there were several clashes between the mamlūks and the other Ottoman troops, especially the janissaries.\textsuperscript{1970} Shortly after the Ottoman conquest a series of revolts broke out in Egypt and Syria, which were led by Circassian amīrs. These uprisings included the rebellions of Jānbārdī al-Ghazālī (1520 CE), the governor of Syria; the rebellion of Ḫān and Ghānim al-Sayfī (1522 CE), the governors of Middle Egypt; the revolt of Aḥmad Pasha, al-khā’in (the traitor), who was the governor of Egypt and who attempted to gain independence from Istanbul and become a sultan in his own right.\textsuperscript{1971} Later in the sixteenth century there were a series of military revolts, primarily by the Ottoman regulars garrisoned in Egypt. For example, the Turkic soldiers of Egypt revolted in 1589 CE when they were told that those among them who owned shops would not receive any salaries due to a deficit in the treasury. These troops took out their anger on the governor’s (Uveys Pasha) retinue, killing several of his servants and retainers and pillaging his home. They also demanded the revocation of the salaries of the awlād al-‘arab\textsuperscript{1972} or Arabic speaking troops and murdered several of them in the course of their revolt. A similar uprising broke out in 1598 CE, and once again the awlād al-‘arab were the main targets of the rebels’ anger. In 1601 CE a group of soldiers attacked the dīwān and killed several officials due to their dissatisfaction with grain rations. The regulars revolted again in 1604 CE. In this year a group of soldiers attacked and killed the governor, Ibrāhīm Pasha, for resisting their demands for the ṭulba, an illegal levy that the horsemen of the army imposed on villagers in exchange for carrying out the policing in rural areas.\textsuperscript{1973} This last revolt, known as the ṭulba revolt, was suppressed by the new governor, Muḥammad Pasha, and ended a series of military

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{1971} Winter, “Turks, Arabs, and Mamluks,” 102.
\textsuperscript{1972} See Winter, “Turks, Arabs, and Mamluks,” 99.
\end{footnotes}
revolts in Egypt that had threatened Ottoman authority in the province.\textsuperscript{1974} These examples show that the “instability” caused by riotous soldiers that characterized Egypt in the late Mamlûk era continued into the Ottoman period. These problems with the discipline of the troops in Egypt could have stemmed from the fact that Egypt was a remote province of the empire that was distant from the main fronts on which the Ottomans fought their wars. It was considered a safe region to be garrisoned with little military action.\textsuperscript{1975} Thus, one can draw a comparison between the lack of discipline in the ranks of the Ottoman army in Egypt and to that in the Mamlûk army during times of peace. In both of these cases the soldiers were not occupied with fighting enemies and turned their attention and energy toward factional infighting and trying to secure as much resources and power for themselves as possible at the expense of rival groups and the civilians.

Patrimonial households continued to play an important role in Ottoman Egypt. In fact, the Ottoman empire, like the Mamlûk sultanate was a patrimonial state. The Ottoman sultan’s household was at the center of this polity. The viziers and the provincial governors also had their own households which were modelled on the sultan’s household. Many of these officials started their careers at the imperial court and diffused the sultan’s power from the center into these lesser households. Furthermore, groups of soldiers, especially the janissaries formed factions and interest groups that played a role in the power politics of the empire.\textsuperscript{1976}

In Egypt the governor’s household was the focal point of power and was a small scale imitation of the sultan’s household in the center. In addition to the governor, the commanders of the various divisions, the beys/amīrs, and the holders of official posts formed the elite class of Egypt and these individuals were also the heads of their own patrimonial households and parts of power networks. The governor’s household, like the Mamlûk sultans’ prior to the conquest, was centered on the citadel. The grandees and elites also had their entourages and retinues that congregated in their palaces, or bayts, in Cairo. This concentration of power in the citadel and the palaces of the grandees is similar to the networks spreading out from the mamlûk sultans’ royal court in the citadel to the households of the great amīrs in Cairo during the Mamlûk

\textsuperscript{1975} Winter, “Ottoman Egypt,” 14.
\textsuperscript{1976} Hathaway, “Military Households,” 40.
Additionally, the practice of recruiting and training boys from the Caucasus continued after the Ottoman conquest, thus the ranks of the Circassians continued to be replenished for centuries. In fact, by the eighteenth century the mamlūks had reemerged as the military elite of Egypt. The mamlūk novices were trained in the households of the elites in the same manner as they would have been in the Mamlūk period. However, the entourages of the Circassian beys and the other military elites were not solely composed of Circassian mamlūks. These retinues included freeborn mercenaries from Anatolia, Ottoman devshirme recruits, Kurds, Turkmen, Bedouins, and Egyptians. Regardless of their origin, these retainers were recruited and trained in the households of their patrons in a manner that survived from and was inspired by the Mamlūk period. In fact, these Mamlūk households, according to Hathaway, can be “regarded as a fundamental characteristic of Ottoman Egypt’s military establishment.” Furthermore, the client patronage system that was centered in Istanbul stretched to the provinces to create patronage networks to form a much larger version of the “military patronage state.” Hathaway says:

The habit of patronage through the household created common ground between imperial officials, both on the spot and in Istanbul, and local grandees. Ambitious local figures sought favor with the imperial center by joining the households of imperial functionaries in Cairo; imperial figures in turn injected their clients into the households of local grandees; local grandees even channeled members of their households into elite households in Istanbul. In this respect, the household served as a nexus between center and province.

This statement exemplifies the various links in the power networks that formed the “military patronage state” Ottoman Egypt and of the empire as a whole.

In this section I have briefly outlined how several Mamlūk practices continued to exist in the army of Ottoman Egypt. These practices include the military organization of the mamlūks

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1979 Hathaway, “Military Households,” 39-40. Hathaway mentions that it cannot be definitively stated that the inspiration for the household system in Ottoman Egypt came solely from the Mamlūks because households were a major feature of the Ottoman empire, with the sultan’s household forming the prototype that was imitated on smaller scales by the elites of the empire. See Hathaway, “Military Households,” 40; Hathaway, “Egypt in the Seventeenth Century,” 41-42.
1980 Hathaway, Military Households,” 44.
into their own regiment, the continued acquisition and training of mamlūks from the Caucasus, and the enduring power and influence of the great mamlūk amīrs through their households and power networks. I have also pointed out that parallels could be drawn between the riotous behavior of the Egyptian soldiery during times of peace during the mamlūk era and after the Ottoman conquest. Thus, the state of the military in Ottoman Egypt can be described as one in which Ottoman and Mamlūk traditions both merged and clashed. Furthermore, there was continuity from the Mamlūk period regarding the organization of the army, which was along the line of the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model. As mentioned earlier, the Diversified Army Model and the Şālihī Mamlūk Model became fused in the fifteenth century and the new model that emerged exhibited elements of both.

Conclusion

The military models devised to study the Mamlūk army have enabled me to show that, despite undergoing several changes based on the ruling sultan’s state building practices, the Mamlūk army remained a powerful and militarily efficient force throughout the Mamlūk period. In fact, there was not that much change at all regarding the training and effectiveness of the army despite some transformations in its structure and composition. As exemplified throughout this study, the Mamlūk army maintained high standards of the efficiency, military vigour, effectiveness, and functionality, which translated, with few exceptions, into a strong track record of victories and successes throughout the entire Mamlūk era. I have also shown that there were inherent weaknesses in the Mamlūk army that became more pronounced at certain times during its history. The most striking of these weaknesses were: loyalty (especially the one-generational aspect of mamlūk loyalty), factionalism, and manpower.

This study contributes to the most recent scholarship by focusing on the military of the Mamlūk sultanate and re-evaluating its development through this era by studying its structure, composition, and performance. I have introduced two primary military models to show the structural changes that the Mamlūk military underwent. The first of these models is the Diversified Army Model, which started to develop in the early periods of the Islamic caliphate and which came into full fruition under the ‘Abbāsids. This model exemplifies the armies of the caliphs and almost all the autonomous and semi-autonomous dynasties of the Muslim world prior to the rise of the Mamlūks. One of the guiding principles of the Diversified Army Model, as outlined in the advice literature, was the need for a military that was composed of several different groups that could counter-balance one another and through whom the ruler could exert complete control over his forces. These groups could be based on ethnicity, religion, or could even be interest groups composed of a variety of different people. This model was not exclusive to the Muslim world and as mentioned above there was a general tendency among the rulers and military commanders in premodern polities to create armies that can be described as following the principles of the Diversified Army Model. Recruiting militaries composed of diverse ethnic, religious, and interest groups not only allowed the commanders of such forces to maintain control over their men by playing them off against one another, but also allowed ancient and medieval polities to utilize soldiers from a variety of environments and backgrounds who brought with them their unique weapons and fighting styles, which made such militaries more
dynamic. Several examples of diverse armies from various epochs and geographic locales are presented in Chapter 2 including the Achaemenid army, the Roman army, the Byzantine army, the Safavid army, Nādir Shāh’s army, and the armies of medieval kingdoms of England and France.\textsuperscript{1982}

The Diversified Army Model was replaced with the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model in Egypt and Syria in the mid-thirteenth century CE because of the changes al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb made to the military, which resulted in an army with a disproportionately large and powerful mamlūk element. There were compelling driving forces and circumstances that caused this ruler to break with the Diversified Army Model, which had clearly been the preferred model for military organization in the Muslim world and in other pre-modern polities. Al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s experiences of betrayal at the hands of his army and his relatives caused him to abandon the Diversified Army Model and to rely on an army composed primarily of mamlūks, the only soldiers in his army who did not betray and abandon him during his bid for power after his father’s death in 1240 CE. This sultan gave his mamlūks preferential treatment and promoted them to prominent positions in his army and at his court. He also set the precedent of fighting against and killing other Ayyūbids, his opponents from among his relatives. This ruler’s precedential actions resulted in his mamlūks murdering his heir and seizing power after his death. The Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model became more firmly established with the rise of al-Ṣāliḥ’s mamlūks to power, which was also facilitated by the extraordinary political and military circumstances that were created by the dual threat to the Islamic world from the Mongols and the Crusaders. The danger that these enemies posed further justified the creation of an elite army by the early sultans of the Mamlūk regime, which was composed almost entirely of mamlūks.\textsuperscript{1983} It is true that several of these mamlūks came from a variety of racial backgrounds (although most of them were Kipchaks in the early period and Circassians in the later period), but they formed bonds of camaraderie and identified with their fellow mamlūks who became an interest group within the sultanate.

\textsuperscript{1982} See pages 117-123.

\textsuperscript{1983} For more on al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s break with the Diversified Army Model and the circumstances that allowed the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model to continue under his Mamlūk successors see pages 205-214.
The Mamlūk military went through several transformations with the progression of time. The most telling are the changes introduced by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad who transformed the army and the officer corps in a way that allowed him to exert complete control over it and over the realm. Like al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s driving impetus was his negative experiences with disloyal amīrs and subordinates who attempted to use him as a puppet and deposed him on two occasions. As a result of al-Nāṣir’s changes, large numbers of non-mamlūks were admitted into the military and rapidly promoted to high ranks. Additionally, to further shore up his support, this sultan fast tracked his mamlūks through their training in order to expand his support base in a short period of time. Despite the magnitude of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s changes, they were not permanent and the army was re-mamlūkized by Barqūq and the other Circassian sultans who followed him. Thus, the Mamlūk army fluctuated between the Diversified Army Model and the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model. In fact, by the latter half of the fifteenth century one can say that the two military models merged to form a new model that I have referred to as the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model. This military model exhibits characteristics of both prior military models. Throughout the Circassian period the ranks of the regular army were still dominated by mamlūk soldiers. However, there were several factions that emerged within the army to form interest groups. First, there were the factions within the ranks of the Royal Mamlūk Corps. The mamlūks of deceased sultans, although still Royal Mamlūks, formed separate groups that competed against one another, or they sometimes joined forces against the julbān of the ruling sultan. In addition to the factions within the ruler’s personal mamlūks, the great amīrs and their followers also established households and factions that mirrored that of the ruler and sometimes posed a significant threat to his power. The successful sultan was the one who was able to control the Royal Mamlūks and to bring as many of the amīrs and their followers as possible under his control or to form alliances with them.

Towards the end of the fifteenth century and in the early sixteenth century new units armed with gunpowder weapons were created by several sultans and incorporated into the ranks of the regular army. Although such steps were sometimes opposed by the mamlūks, they led to the further diversification of the army. However, the final outcome and potential long term

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1984 The return to Mamlūk principles of training and discipline was initiated by Yalbughā al-‘Umarī prior to the fall of the Qalāwūnids and Barqūq was one of his mamlūks see pages 314-317.
impact of these trials cannot be known due to the Ottoman conquest of the Mamlük sultanate in 1516-1517 CE. Had the Mamlûks survived as an independent sovereign polity for another century or two, it can be argued that the rulers and military commanders of the sultanate would have continued the diversification that was, once again, re-introduced into the Mamlûk army by Qāytbāy, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qāytbāy, and Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī. This diversification would have been driven by the military necessity to keep up with the armaments and the growing sizes of the armies of the Mamlûks’ neighbors and rivals and would have resulted in a more balanced form of the Mamlûkized Diversified Army Model that the Ottomans successfully created.

One objective of this study, in addition to analyzing the structure, composition, and efficiency of the Mamlûk army, is to create connections between the military histories of the eras that preceded and followed the Mamlûks. These links are established here through tracing the development of the Diversified Army Model from the early Muslim conquests to al-Ṣâliḥ Ayyûb’s break with it and the rise of the Şâliḥî Mamlûk Model and the establishment of the Mamlûk sultanate. As mentioned earlier, there was an eventual merging of the two military models during the Circassian period of the sultanate to form the Mamlûkized Diversified Army Model, which reached its maturity under the Ottomans. The Ottoman army was heavily dependent on a powerful force of slave soldiers who formed the sultan’s standing army and the backbone of the entire Ottoman military. This standing army, unlike the cavalry-dominated Mamlûk military, was composed of divisions of infantry, cavalry, artillery, and support units. In addition to this standing army, the Ottomans also recruited freeborn provincial cavalry, infantry, and auxiliaries, all of whom were registered in the regular army. Thus, the Ottoman army was mamlûkized because the most powerful and elite elements that formed the standing army and the backbone of the Ottoman military were of slave origin. It was also diversified because the regular army was composed of various units and there were several freeborn provincial forces that were added to it from the various parts of the empire, which were all controlled and paid (through various means) by the central government.

The Mamlûk regime was unique in many ways. One of the telling characteristics that defined the policies of every ruler in the sultanate was the fact that the mamlûks were a one-generational military elite and their loyalties were also one-generational. Several sultans attempted to create dynasties by naming their sons as their heirs and successors. However, in most cases these sons of mamlûk sultans were deposed and one of the powerful mamlûk amîrs
who had been involved with the deposition usually assumed power. In the one case where a mini
dynasty, the House of Qalāwūn, was established, it was only al-Nāṣir Muḥammad among the
descendants of Qalāwūn who was successful in becoming the undisputed ruler of the realm
during his third reign. The other Qalāwūnid scions were all puppets in the hands of the great
amīrs who were the real power brokers between the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and the rise
of the Circassians.

Due to the very fabric and nature of the Mamlūk sultanate and the Ṣāliḥī Mamlūk Model,
especially the fact that the loyalty of the mamlūks was not transferred from father to son, every
sultan was a new state builder. This is a very important idea with regard to the concept of loyalty
in the Mamlūk sultanate. Every sultan who came to power had to create or enlarge their
patrimonial households and power networks. This was usually done at the expense of the
household(s) of the previous sultan(s), which suffered purges that varied in severity (depending
on the political and military situation). As has been demonstrated earlier, even the most powerful
and successful Mamlūk rulers had to contend with internal plots, palace coup attempts, and
outright revolts both in Egypt and the Syrian provinces by mamlūk factions and amīrs. Those
sultans who were able to overcome these hurdles early in their reigns and to establish a powerful
patrimonial household and patronage networks were the ones who were able to secure their
positions and rule successfully.

The concept of state building, based on patrimonial households, in the upper echelons of
Mamlūk society was an ongoing phenomenon throughout the duration of the Mamlūk sultanate.
However, at certain times it was more palpable and had a more impactful effect on the realm and
could give a negative impression that the army and sultanate were in decline. One such point in
Mamlūk history was after the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. This ruler, as we have seen earlier,
was a non-Mamlūk who, during his third reign, was able to consolidate his position and built up
a very powerful patrimonial household and patronage network that differed from those of his
predecessors due to the unusual nature of his position as a non-mamlūk and to the political and
military situation in the region at this time. After his death, his successors did not have the means
or the time to create households and support systems of their own that could challenge the one
created by their predecessor. This episode was to repeat itself several times, albeit on a smaller
scale, almost every time a successful Circassian Mamlūk sultan attempted to establish a dynasty
by naming one of his sons as his successor. On every occasion that this happened the non-
mamlûk heir was quickly removed and a “real” mamlûk sultan arose from among the amîrs who then started a new cycle of state building.

Al-Nâṣir Muḥammad broke with “Mamlûk traditions” because he was creating a new patrimonial household and power network that would prop up his rule. He had to break with several of his predecessors’ practices because he needed to elevate his supporters to high positions as quickly as possible and because he himself was not a mamlûk, he did not have a *khushdâshiyya*, and could not therefore rely entirely upon mamlûks at his court and in his army. For this reason he started to include many non-mamlûks in the military and elevated several of them to high posts. This sultan’s changes to the army could be viewed as a step back towards the Diversified Army Model because he was attempting to bring in new elements and interest groups to curb the power of the mamlûks who had deposed him on two occasions. However, this does not mean that al-Nâṣir Muḥammad’s changes were the beginning of the end for the Mamlûk army. As demonstrated earlier, several of the men whom he promoted were well-trained and highly qualified, even though they had not undergone the training of the mamlûks. In fact, the military of the sultanate became “re-mamlûkized” later under the great amir Yalbughâ al-‘Umarî and under sultans such as Barqûq, Barsbây, and Qāytbây. This “re-mamlûkization” saw a return to the training principles of the early sultans, including the concept of slow promotion through the ranks based on experience and merit. Furthermore, this re-mamlûkization process also saw a return to an army and officer corps dominated by mamlûks.

Disloyalty and rebelliousness among the officers and rank and file mamlûks were ever present throughout the entire duration of the Mamlûk period. One of the defining characteristics of the Mamlûk sultanate was the frequent revolts and coups against the rulers, and the conflicts and betrayals within the ranks of the mamlûks. This study has shown that both in the Turkic and the Circassian periods of the sultanate, there were several coups and depositions of sultans; even the most successful rulers had to deal with plots and rebellions against their rule. Furthermore, the rank and file soldiery of the Mamlûk army has always been riotous and difficult to control. What sets aside the mamlûks of the early sultanate apart from the later sultanate is that as a result of the constant state of war with the Crusader States and the Mongols, these soldiers were kept busy fighting these enemies and thus their lust for loot was satiated. They were also unified against a common enemy and exerted their martial energies and committed their depredations in enemy territory. However, in the Circassian sultanate, when there were long periods of peace, the
mamlūks were more prone to commit these depredations against the local population, especially if the central government was late in paying them.

There was a strong instinct for survival that drove all who were involved in the power politics of the Mamlūk sultanate. Loyalties and allegiances could shift whenever an individual or group felt that their survival was at risk. It was the Bahriyya’s fear of losing their positions and power (and maybe even their lives) that drove them to assassinate Turānschāh. There must have been similar driving forces that led to the death of the Bahri leader Aqtāy and to Quṭūz’s murder after the battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt. This survival instinct continued to be a decisive factor in Mamlūk society. In fact, it rendered the factional, ethnic, family, and political lines and bonds as fluid, flexible, and porous through which individuals and groups constantly shifted their allegiances and positions. Thus, even though the basic bonds of loyalty in the Mamlūk sultanate were to the patron (vertical) and to the comrades-in-arms (horizontal), these loyalties often became blurred, as we have seen, due to an individual’s or group’s ambitions for power or due to their instincts to survive in a system that they had created, which was both egalitarian and hierarchical at the same time.1985

The most telling evidence that shows that the Mamlūk army maintained its military effectiveness is its track record on the battlefield. The Mamlūks won almost every field battle that they fought both in the early and late periods of the sultanate. They only suffered major defeats on a few of occasions, once at the hands of the Ilkhanids at the Battle of Wādi al-Khazindār in 1299 CE and on two occasions by the Ottomans at the Battle of Marj Dābiq in 1516 CE and the Battle of Raydāniyya in 1517 CE. The conflict with Timur in Syria cannot really be considered a defeat because when the two forces did clash the Mamlūk army had the upper hand, but it withdrew to Egypt because of internal strife and rumors of a coup back in the capital. It is also important to note that the Mamlūks defeated the Ottomans in the Ottoman-Mamlūk war of 1485-1491 CE. In this war, the Mamlūks won all the major field battles against armies similar in size, composition, and armaments to the one that would finally defeat them two decades later at Marj Dābiq. In fact, the defeat at Marj Dābiq cannot be considered a military defeat, but rather a psychological one because the Mamlūk army returned to Egypt almost fully intact after having

suffered minimal casualties. In fact, the only difference between this defeat and the previous ones suffered by the Mamlūks is that the Ottomans followed up their victory and marched on to attack Egypt before the Mamlūks could recover from the shock of defeat.

Levanoni asks in the conclusion to her monograph, if the Mamlūk system lost its military vigor after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s third reign, then how did the sultanate survive for as long as it did?\textsuperscript{1986} She states that the answer to this question “should be sought primarily in extraneous factors”\textsuperscript{1987} and that there were no major threats to the security of the Mamlūk sultanate, which allowed it to survive until the early sixteenth century. It is quite clear, however, that this is not a completely satisfactory answer. As the current study has shown, the Mamlūks faced several dangerous foes in the period after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s reign. Not only did they survive, but their military consistently vanquished enemies such as the Crusaders from Cyprus, the armies of Timur, Shāh Suwār, and the Ottomans (1485-1490 CE). My examination of the Mamlūk army using the models that I have devised has shown that the Mamlūks did not lose their vigor at a relatively early stage. In fact, their army was molded differently by every successful ruler, who in turn was a new state-builder and was in a continuous state of transformation and adaptation and fluctuated between the Diversified Army Model and the Şāliḥī Mamlūk Model. Ultimately these two military models became fused into the Mamlūkized Diversified Army Model in the late Circassian period. The Mamlūk sultanate survived as long as it did because it was a military regime propped up by a mighty and powerful army that maintained its military power, vigor, and efficiency for the entire duration of its existence.

\textsuperscript{1986} Levanoni, \textit{Turning Point}, 199.

\textsuperscript{1987} Levanoni, \textit{Turning Point}, 199.
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