

The Foreign Influences on the Mamluk Economy (1468-1517)

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Abstract: The last 50 years of the Mamluk sultanate saw the emergence of some aggressive leaders who challenged Mamluk supremacy. Their authority and regional prominence to occupy strategic routes and places were attempted. Thus, the objective this article is to determine the foreign influences on the Mamluk economy. This article found that in order to maintain the supremacy and to defend the realms, the Mamluks were involved in several wars with these leaders, something which contributed to the debilitation of the Mamluk economy.

Key words: Foreign • Influences • Mamluk • Economy

INTRODUCTION

The last fifty years of the Mamluk¹ sultanate saw the emergence of some aggressive leaders who challenged Mamluk supremacy.² They tried to extend their authority and regional prominence or attempted to occupy strategic routes and places. For example, in southeastern Anatolia (northern Syria), Shah Suwar from the Dhu al-Ghadir dynasty endeavoured to establish an independent principality free from Mamluk domination. Elsewhere, during the fifteenth century an aggressive principality governed by Hasan al-Tawil in central Iran also confronted Mamluk suzerainty in southwest Asia. Later, Ismail Safawi, who founded the Safavid monarchy and by the early sixteenth century had attained control over Iran invaded the Mamluk boundaries in the northeast. Further west, the Ottomans who had established their power in the Balkans, were looking to expand their domination to the East [1]. In order to maintain their supremacy and to defend their realms, the Mamluks were involved in several wars with these leaders, something which contributed to the debilitation of the Mamluk economy. Thus, this article seeks to explore the nature of the international relations

between the Circassian Mamluks and other foreign powers and to examine how these relationships might have influenced the Mamluk economy.

The Relationship Between the Mamluks and Dhu al-Ghadir[2]: Shah Suwar was the eighth ruler of the Dhu al-Ghadir dynasty and he threatened Mamluk supremacy shortly after the accession of Sultan Qaytbay in 1468 [3-5]. Shah Suwar deposed his brother, Shah Budaq (the seventh ruler of Dhu al-Ghadir), who received a diploma from the Mamluk sultan on 4 December 1465 and attempted to create an independent principality during the transition of power from Sultan al-Zahir Timurbughra (1467) to Sultan Qaytbay (1468-1495). Although he launched his uprising as a vassal of the Ottomans, he planned to break free from the Ottomans and the Mamluks and create an independent principality [6].

Qaytbay's early reign was very much disturbed by Shah Suwar's insurgency. He caused much anxiety to the sultan and posed a threat to the Mamluk frontier areas. The Mamluk historians such as Ibn Taghri Birdi (d. 1469) and al-Sayrafi (d. 1495) mention Shah Suwar's increasing power and state that he seized the major garrison town of

‘Ayntab and also occupied Darnada which guarded the trade routes [7-8]. Without delay, Qaytbay sent several military campaigns to stop the revolt but with tactical ability Shah Suwar defeated the early military expeditions from Cairo and Qaytbay’s forces were severely crushed in 1468 and 1469 [9]. Atabak Janibak, who led the military expedition, was arrested by Shah Suwar but Qaytbay was unwilling to pay the ransom to free him because it meant that he recognized Shah Suwar’s authority. Finally, a formidable amir named Yashbak defeated Shah Suwar after a war that had continued until 1472⁴. Shah Suwar was sent back to Cairo as a prisoner in 1473 and was hanged at the Bab Zuwayla.

Shah Suwar’s success in crushing several Mamluk military campaigns signalled that the sultan was unable to maintain his power abroad. It also caused him considerable financial difficulties. After the death of Shah Suwar, Shah Budaq was reinstated as the Dhu al-Ghadir ruler until he was challenged by another brother, ‘Ali Dawlat, in 1479 [10].

The Relationship Between the Mamluks and Hasan Al-tawil: During the 1470s and 1480s, Hasan al-Tawil sought to expand his power and supremacy in central Iran by attacking his neighbours [11]. Ibn Taghri Birdi reports that this prince of Aqqyunlu defeated Jahan Shah, the leader of Qaraqayunlu and ruler of Iraq and Adharbayjan at the end of 1468. According to the Mamluk sources, a few months after his victory Hasan al-Tawil approached Sultan Qaytbay and offered himself as an ally. Hasan al-Tawil’s first envoy came to congratulate the sultan on his enthronment. This was followed by others who promised their patron’s obedience [12-13].

At the same time that Hasan al-Tawil was sending his emissaries to Egypt, he continued to destroy his rivals in Iran and Central Asia. Hasan’s power became greater after he crushed Jahan Shah’s son, Hasan ‘Ali, and Sultan Abu Sa’id, the Timurid ruler of Bukhara and Samarqand in Central Asia. He also seized some commercial centres held by the Venetians on the Black Sea coast. The Ottomans who had commercial relations with the Venetians, perceived Hasan’s action as a threat to their share of the Black Sea trade [14-15].

Hasan al-Tawil did not create any problems to the Mamluk sultanate until September–October 1472, when the *na’ib* (viceroy) of Aleppo informed Cairo that Aqqyunlu’s contingent had trespassed on Mamluk territory. This contingent, however, had retreated. In November–December 1472, the viceroy of Aleppo once again informed Cairo about the movement of Hasan’s

troops. This time they had besieged al-Ruha under the command of Hasan’s son, Ughurlu Muhammad. In order to protect Mamluk suzerainty and to block the Aqqyunlu expansion, Sultan Qaytbay took immediate action by sending a military campaign led by Amir Yashbak. Yashbak arrived at Aleppo in March 1473 and without further delay marched to the Euphrates. The war between the Mamluks and Aqqyunlu broke out in April 1473. Hasan’s forces were severely defeated and he fled from the battle. After the battle, Yashbak was surprised when he found some correspondence belonged to Hasan al-Tawil addressed to the European rulers and which proposed that they join him against the Mamluks [16].⁵ Hasan made no further military campaigns against the Mamluk sultanate after his defeat.

According to the most prominent Mamluk historian, Ibn Iyas (d. 1524), the news of Hasan’s death reached Cairo in October–November 1478. He was succeeded by his son Khalil who was deposed after one year on the throne. Ya‘qub, who succeeded Khalil, reigned for more than ten years. During his tenure, Amir Yashbak was severely defeated by Ya‘qub’s vassal when he attacked the frontier fortress of al-Ruha in November 1480 [17]. After the death of Amir Yashbak, Sultan Qaytbay launched no further campaigns against the Aqqyunlu regime.

The Relationship Between the Mamluks and Isma’il Safawi: Isma’il Safawi who established Twelver Shi‘ism as the official interpretation of Islam within his empire, also posed a danger to the Mamluk kingdom. In 1501, he declared Tabriz his capital and himself Shah of Adharbayjan. He continued to expand his base in northwestern Iran and was declared Shah of Iran in 1502. Throughout the rest of the decade Isma’il continued to expand his territory, taking Hamadan in 1503, Shiraz and Kirman in 1504, Najaf and Karbala in 1507, Van in 1508, Baghdad in 1509, Khurasan and Herat in 1510. The Safawi propaganda also won over many Turcomans in Anatolia [18-19].

In August–September 1502, it was reported in Cairo that Ismail Safawi had marched into Mamluk territory in Aleppo province. Sultan al-Ghawri (1501-1516) reacted by sending a military expedition to observe the Isma’il’s movements and to protect Syria. In 1507, Isma’il once again invaded Mamluk territories by sacking Elbistan and Mar‘ash during their fight against ‘Ali Dawlat of Dhu al-Ghadir [20]. Isma’il later apologized for this to the Mamluks and no war broke out between the two parties. Nevertheless, Isma’il’s hostility towards the Mamluks

showed that he had no respect of the authority of that kingdom and his invasions were serious enough to force Sultan al-Ghawri to mobilize troops in order to protect his suzerainty.

The Relationship Between the Mamluks and the Ottomans: During the period under consideration the Ottomans had evolved into a great power and emerged as the main rival of the Mamluk sultanate. While Sultan Muhammad II (al-Fatih) (1451-1481) still lived, relations between the Mamluks and the Ottomans remained positive. According to Ibn Iyas, the Ottoman sultan offered assistance to Amir Yashbak against Hasan al-Tawil during the conflict between the Mamluks and Hasan. Sultan Muhammad also informed Cairo about Hasan's overtures to the European rulers [21]. Only once did the Ottoman sultan cause the Mamluk sultan anxiety, this being when he dispatched a military force against the still independent Qaraman principality of southeastern Anatolia in 872/1468 [22-23].⁶

Bayazid II (1481-1512), who succeeded his father in 1481, continued to maintain good relations with Sultan Qaytbay until 1483 when the Ottomans tried once again to extend their influence over the principality of Dhu al-Ghadir. The Ottomans incited 'Ali Dawlat (who replaced his brother Shah Budaq) into declaring his bid for autonomy [24]. Ibn Iyas mentions that in July-August 1483 'Ali Dawlat seized Malatya from its Mamluk governor under Ottoman inducement. After discovering how the Ottomans had assisted 'Ali Dawlat, Qaytbay sent substantial military expeditions against both of them during the period of 1484-1491. The wars only ended in 1491 after a peace treaty was signed [25-26].⁷ This was the consequence of the Ottoman's defeat at Qaysariyya in 1490 [27-28]. In the treaty, Bayazid recognized all Qaytbay's claims as supreme suzerain in Syrian southeastern Anatolia. After Bayazid's defeat, the Mamluk sources do not mention any further attempt by him to seize Mamluk holdings in Dhu al-Ghadir territories. In fact, wars with the Ottomans had exhausted the Mamluk economy. The military expenses of several great campaigns had proved extremely costly and had caused Qaytbay economic difficulties [29-30].

Salim I (1512-1520), an ambitious prince, succeeded Bayazid and executed his brothers who were his competitors for the throne. During his reign, relations between the Mamluks and the Ottomans became tense and worsened. Salim's offensive policy can be seen from his early days in power when he began attacking Muslim principalities on his eastern boundaries [31]. Because of

the threat and danger posed by Isma'il Safawi to Ottoman authority, Salim jailed or killed some 40,000 of his followers in Anatolia. Later Isma'il himself was defeated at Caldiran in 1514 [32].⁸ This triumph enabled Salim to expand his domination over the areas from Erzurum to Diyarbekir and in 1516-17, the local dynasties and tribal leaders in these areas acknowledged Ottoman suzerainty [33].

Salim posed a real threat to the Mamluks when he sent Khadim Sinan Pasha to crush 'Ali Dawlat because of his reluctance to assist the Ottomans during the war with Isma'il Safawi. 'Ali Dawlat was killed and his head was carried to Cairo by an Ottoman emissary. These events challenged Mamluk supremacy and Sultan al-Ghawri felt that a conflict with the Ottomans was inevitable. The old sultan with his massive army marched out of Cairo for Aleppo in May 1516 and arrived there in July 1516. The Mamluk and Ottoman forces met at the plain of Marj Dabiq, north Aleppo, on 24 August 1516 [34-35]. Several factors, such as the disloyalty of some amirs and the superiority of the Ottomans' weapons, led to the defeat of the Mamluks [36-37].

Salim then marched towards Aleppo where he received the title 'Servant of Mecca and Medina' [38]. Sultan Tumanbay (1516-1517), the newly-appointed sultan in Egypt, refused to submit to the Ottomans, thus causing Salim to cross the Sinai Desert with his forces and to march towards Egypt. Sultan Tumanbay and his forces were defeated in the battle of Raydaniyya in January 1517. The sultan was captured and executed. Following this, in July 1517, the Sharif of Mecca sent Salim the keys of the Holy Cities and proclaimed his submission [39].

The Effects of the International Situation on the Mamluk Economy

High Military Expenditure: As discussed above, the period under review witnessed Mamluk sultans facing many threats from external enemies. This caused them heavy financial burdens since they were forced to spend large amounts of money to cover military expenses [40-41]. Thus, the *nafaqa al-safar* [42]⁹ that the Circassian sultans had to give their troops before military campaigns was much higher than before [43-44].¹⁰ The cost of *nafaqa al-safar* for a small expedition (*tajrida khafifa*) was about 100,000 *dinars*. For a rather bigger one (*tajrida thaqila*) it was about 150,000 *dinars* [45]. This did not including the accelerated *jamakiyya* of four months and the cost of camels. The *nafaqa al-safar* for a big expedition was between 400,000 and 500,000 *dinars* [46].¹¹

Sultan Qaytbay had to spend much more money on troops and military expeditions compared to his Circassian predecessors because of the many armed conflicts in which he was involved with Shah Suwar, Hasan al-Tawil and the Ottomans [47-48]. The manuscript entitled *Tarikh al-Malik al-Ashraf Qaytbay* contains a list of Qaytbay's expeditions against Shah Suwar and Hasan al-Tawil during the first five years of his reign. The number of amirs and Mamluks participating in each campaign and the sums expended in connection with it are also supplied [49].

In the first campaign against Shah Suwar in February 1468, Sultan Qaytbay spent about 141,700 *dinars* on amirs and Royal Mamluks. This sum did not include the cost of horses, camels, fodder, *jamakiyya* and clothes. In the second expedition in August 1468, Sultan Qaytbay spent about 87,000 *dinars*. This amount included the cost of the provisions supplied to the army throughout the expedition (*iqamat*). In the third expedition in August 1468, he spent more than 300,000 *dinars* on his amirs and Royal Mamluks. This amount included the *nafaqa al-safar* and the *jamakiyya* of the Royal Mamluks and the fodder for their horses, but excluded the cost of the horses and camels, arms, etc. In the fourth expedition in September 1470, about 50,000 *dinars* were spent on the amirs and the Royal Mamluks, this sum not including the cost of horses, camels and arms. The fifth expedition against Shah Suwar was in April 1471 and cost about 610,000 *dinars*. This amount included the *nafaqa al-safar* and the *jamakiyya* and the cost of fodder, but excluded the cost of camels, horses and arms [50].

In the first expedition against Hasan al-Tawil in November 1472, Sultan Qaytbay spent about 65,000 *dinars* on the amirs and Royal Mamluks. In the second campaign in December 1472, he spent more than 500,000 *dinars* on his amirs and Royal Mamluks. This amount included the *nafaqa al-safar* and the *jamakiyya* [51].

The anonymous author of the *Tarikh* mentions that Sultan Qaytbay's expenses during his reign from February 1468 until January 1473 amounted to 3,770,000 *dinars*. This covered military payments before the campaigns, the buying of new Mamluks, weapons, horses, arrows, javelins, re-establishing, modifying and reconstructing buildings, grants, welfare and pious endowments [52].

As the seven expeditions referred to above cost Qaytbay 1,753,700 *dinars* this would mean that his military expeditions accounted for almost half of the realm's expenditure during the period covered by the anonymous author.

Sultan Qaytbay was also forced to spend a lot of money on military campaigns because of the wars with the Ottomans. For example, in a single campaign against the Ottomans in 1490 he spent as much as 500,000 *dinars* [53].

It can be seen, therefore, that although the wars with Shah Suwar and the Ottomans brought the Mamluks military success, they put a heavy strain on the economy.

During the short reigns of four incompetent sultans between 1495 and 1501, large sums of money were spent to stop the rebellions of the amirs. If the revolts took place in Syria the sultans had to spend much more money on sending military forces. Sometimes they bought the loyalty of amirs by bribery. Sultan al-Ghawri also spent a large amount of money on mobilizing the military expedition to counter the Ottoman armies.

Financial Difficulties in Covering Military Expenditure:

During the period under consideration, the cost of military expeditions as well as payments to the armies increased and the state treasury could not cover all of the expenses. Ibn Iyas reports on the problems of the feudal fiefs (*iqta'*) from the year 1495 and the insufficient resources of the treasury [54]. At the same time, the offices responsible for the army's pay, i.e. the *diwan al-wizara'* (the office of the wazir), the *diwan al-ustadariyya* (the office of majordomo) and the *nizarat al-khass* (the office of the keeper of the privy purse) were financially unstable [55-57]. Indeed, the *diwan al-wizara'* started to face a problem in the early part of the Circassian period, seeing depleted revenues from districts such as Giza, Manfalut and Qatya not as before. Meanwhile the financial situation of the *diwan ustadariyya* and *nizarat al-khass* also became unsatisfactory [58-59].

The financial problem faced by Sultan Qaytbay can be seen in his cancelling the *nafaqa bay'a* as a condition for being appointed as a sultan. He knew that the treasury did not contain sufficient funds to cover the *nafaqa*. Similarly, in 907/1501, Sultan al-Ghawri could not pay the *nafaqa al-bay'a* to his Mamluks because the realm's financial problems. al-Ashraf Tumanbay, the last sultan, also found the treasury depleted. He too accepted the sultanate only on condition that he need not pay the *nafaqa al-bay'a* [60].

In order to cover military expenses during the period under review the sultans had recourse to various expedients. For example, Sultan Qaytbay tried to use the money of *awqaf* (pious endowments) in the first campaign against Shah Suwar but was opposed in this by the 'ulama'¹². He then reduced the pensions of retired Mamluk

officers and troops and reduced the payments to widows, orphans and others. However, during the Mamluk-Ottoman war, money was squeezed from the *awqaf* and public estates in order to cover military expenses [61-62].

Sultan al-Ghawri also obtained financial resources from the *awqaf*, reduced the salaries and payments and ordered some rich individuals to cover military expenses [63]. In 1516, the year of the battle of Marj Dabiq, al-Ghawri found quite a simple solution for the maintenance of his Royal Mamluks. He made every one of his amirs responsible for providing a certain number of Royal Mamluks in accordance with his rank and with the size of his fief. He also did not pay the *nafaqa al-safar* to the *awlad al-nas* (sons of Mamluks) who took part in the campaign. The caliph al-Mutawakkil III was also told to provide *nafaqa al-safar* himself; this had previously been provided by the earlier sultans [64].

The Effects of High Military Expenditure on the Economy:

The Mamluk sultans often resorted to confiscation and extortion to cover their military expenses. This was in addition to the imposition of heavy taxes on the agricultural, industrial and commercial sectors [65]. It was the deficit in revenue from these three main sectors which caused the Mamluk sultans to confiscate and extort in order to obtain money speedily. It was customary that on the eve of a military expedition, the sultans would confiscate and extort money from various sections of the population. Normally, the victims in the urban areas were the merchants, noblemen, members of the civil administration, orphans, widows, '*ulama*' and *awqaf*. The merchants, who had to contribute larger sums than any other section of population, normally paid thousands of *dinars* at one time. Meanwhile, the rural areas had to supply horses or their equivalent in money [66-67].

Many sultans used confiscation and extortion during the period under review. In his chronicle, Ibn Iyas provides many accounts of these policies which he reports occurred nineteen times between 1468 and 1515 [68-69].¹³ In 1468, for example, a group of noblemen was ordered to provide an amount of money for Sultan Qaytbay in order to cover military expenses before troops started their journey to Aleppo to stop the revolt of Shah Suwar. One of these noblemen, al-Shihabi Ahmad b. al-'Ayni, was directed to give 200,000 *dinars* and was beaten and imprisoned when he failed to pay the sum. He was eventually freed after agreeing to pay in monthly instalments. In 1490, Sultan Qaytbay extorted money from civilians and merchants in Egypt and Syria in order to pay

the *nafaqa al-safar* to the Mamluks and to cover other expenses in the war with the Ottomans. The Jewish traveller, Obayda of Bertinoro, describes the difficulties faced by the Jews and the non-Jews of Egypt as a result of Qaytbay's extortions. According to Ibn Iyas, Sultan Qaytbay reintroduced *muqarrar jibayat al-dinar* (a tax on the collection of *dinars*) in 1486 when he faced financial problems in preparing a military expedition against the Ottomans. He ordered the *muhtasib* (market inspector) to assemble all the merchants and to ask them to provide 40,000 *dinars* to cover his expenses. There was an uproar because the merchants refused to pay. After discussion between the two parties, the merchants finally agreed to provide only 12,000 *dinars* [70].

In 1496 and 1497, in order to pay the *nafaqa al-safar* to the Mamluks, Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad b. Qaytbay (1495-1498) extorted from the merchants, shopkeepers, Jewish and Christian communities and noblemen. Sultan al-Zahir Qansuh (1498-1499), the successor of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad, also followed the same practice in order to cover military expenses. al-Ashraf Janbalat's policy (1500) was similarly very harsh. In order to cover his military expenses, he confiscated properties belonging to the magnates, merchants, Jews, Copts and others. In 1501, the shopkeepers, the merchants and the owners of stores faced difficulties because of the extortions by Sultan al-Ghawri to cover the *nafaqa al-safar* of the Mamluks. The same situation was experienced in 1502 by foreign merchants who conducted their business in Alexandria and Damietta. In 1514, the populace of Ghazza, Safad, Tarablus, Aleppo and Hamat were also ordered to pay twenty *dinars* per person in order to cover the expenses of Mamluk cavalry. Sultan al-Ghawri confiscated properties belonging to the '*amma* (civilians) and the *khassa* (notables) to cover military expenses [71].

Ibn Iyas explicitly states that confiscation and extortion had negative effects on the economic life in Egypt, with centres of business, such as the port of Alexandria and the port of Damietta, being severely affected due to the government's financial demands on the merchants and shopkeepers. Both local and foreign merchants were unable to conduct their business peacefully under the policies of confiscation and extortion and they experienced losses because large amounts of money had to be paid to the government without returning any profit [72].

Confiscation by the government also affected the agricultural sector where some fief holders lost interest in improving their lands and maintaining the irrigation

system. Their sole concern was to gain as much profit as they could from their land before it was confiscated by the sultan. The uncertainty of their financial position also caused the fief holders to impose various dues on the peasants [73].

The industrial sector was also affected by the government's policies. Indeed, in 1491, the owners of the textile factories in Damascus complained to the governor about the amount of money they had to pay to the government. The long-term effect of government pressure was a slowing down in industrial production and the increasing importation of industrial products from Europe [74].

Wars between the Mamluks and their rivals also caused disruption to trading activities and commercial relations. A table listing the Arab merchants in Bursa [75],¹⁴ as reconstructed by Halil Inalcik from the records of the *qadi* (judge) of Bursa in the years 1479-1500, clearly attests to the lack of commercial activity that took place during the wars between the Mamluks and the Ottomans (1485-1490) [76].¹⁵ Elsewhere, Sultan Qaytbay is reported to have complained about the Ottoman embargo on the passage of products into Syria and Egypt [77].

The death of Sultan Qaytbay in 1495 was followed by almost five years of violent power struggles over the sultan's throne and this also had effects on trading activities and commercial relations. The installation of al-Ghawri as sultan in 1501 seemed to calm the political situation within the kingdom, but other undermining forces continued to disturb commercial activities in the region [78].

When Sultan al-Ghawri learnt about Isma'il Safawi's overtures to European powers to form an alliance against him, he seized the resident consuls of these governments in Cairo and threatened to execute them if they complied with their patron's schemes. al-Ghawri was reported on several occasions to have attempted to stop trading relations with Venice because of its contacts with Isma'il Safawi. As a result of this, no galleys were sent from Venice to Alexandria in 1505, 1508, 1513 and 1515 [79-80]. These pauses clearly led to disruptions in the trading activities between the two countries.

The drastic steps taken by Salim to crush Isma'il Safawi also affected the commercial activities of the Mamluk merchants. Thus, in 1514 he banned all silk imports from Iran and disallowed business in raw silk in the Ottoman dominions. With the intention of stopping all Iranian silk exports to European countries, the sultan also extended the embargo to include Arab lands under Mamluk authority. He proclaimed that any Turk, Iranian or

Arab found with Iranian silk in his possession would have their cargo confiscated. These measures caused losses for the silk merchants and disrupted a long-established pattern of international trade [81].

An additional pressure on the economy during the period under review was the monetary system which was also in an unstable situation due to military expenditure. The Mamluk sultans manipulated the currency in order to achieve fiscal advantage in the short term, reducing the weight of individual coins as well as debasing them [82-85]. This necessarily had an adverse effect on economic activities which were unable to run smoothly.

CONCLUSION

The second part of the fifteenth century saw the emergence of a few aggressive leaders, namely, Shah Suwar, Hasan al-Tawil, Isma'il Safawi and the Ottomans who challenged and posed threats to Mamluk supremacy. The ensuing conflicts proved that the Mamluk sultan was at times unable to maintain his power abroad. Warfare with external enemies also caused the regime heavy financial burdens. The cost of military expeditions as well as payments to the armies increased and the state treasury could not cover all of the expenses. This contributed significantly to the exhaustion of the Mamluk economy. This was in turn compounded by the policies of confiscation and extortion resorted to by the Mamluk sultans in order to obtain the much-needed money. Not surprisingly, this harsh measure had a negative effect on economic life in Egypt, disrupting agricultural and industrial production, commerce and monetary affairs and in general ensuring that economic activities could not run smoothly.

¹ In Islamic history the word 'Mamluk' means a slave, more specifically a white slave, used in the military establishment. In the Ayyubid kingdom, the Mamluks served as the armies and later took the throne and appointed themselves as the sultans. For more than two hundred and fifty years they ruled Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Palestine. The era of Mamluk rule can be divided into two periods. The first is from 1250 until 1381 and is known as the 'Turkish Mamluk' period. The second period covers 1382 to 1517 and is known as the 'Circassian Mamluk' period. It is widely accepted among historians that the Mamluk kingdom reached its zenith under the Turkish sultans and then fell into a prolonged phase of deterioration under the Circassians.

- ² Between 1468 and 1517, the period under consideration, seven individuals were installed as sultans. Two of them (Qaytbay and al-Ghawri) ruled for a combined total of forty-four years while the remaining five (al-Nasir Muhammad, al-Zahir Qansuh, al-Ashraf Janbalat, al-'Adil Tumanbay and al-Ashraf Tumanbay) reigned for a total of only five years. Indeed, there was a good deal of political turmoil during the reign of the latter five sultans, while even under the rule of two longest reigning sultans there were internal and external problems.
- ³ Zayn al-Din Kharaja b. Dhu al-Ghadir (1337-1353) was the founder of Dhu al-Ghadir dynasty and he received a diploma from Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad b. Qalawun in 1337 which recognized him as na'ib (viceroy). This Turkmen dynasty ruled for nearly two centuries (1337-1522) from Elbistan over the region Mar'ash-Malatya.
- ⁴ Yashbak was one of the grand amirs during Qaytbay's reign and served as the sultan's hatchet man. He was appointed as dawadar (executive secretary) and famous for his bravery in the battles. See Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians?*, pp. 15,43.
- ⁵ Hasan al-Tawil also formed a coalition with Venice, the King of Cyprus, the Knights of St. John and the Emir of Alaiyye (Alanya) against the Ottomans.
- ⁶ According to Halil Inalcik, the Ottomans were successful in their efforts to conquer Qaraman in that year. See Halil Inalcik and Donald Quataert, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300-1914*,
- ⁷ The Ottoman armada also contributed to the wars by attacking the Syrian coasts.
- ⁸ In spite of Isma'il's loss, he had managed to flee and re-establish his armed forces in central Iran.
- ⁹ A payment given to the Mamluk troops on the eve of the military campaign.
- ¹⁰ Besides nafaqa al-safar, the Mamluk armies also received other payments from the sultan, namely jamakiyya (the monthly pay), nafaqa al-bay'a (the payment on the accession of a new sultan to the throne), kiswa (a yearly or half-yearly sum to cover the cost of the Mamluks' clothes), lahm (the daily meat ration), adhiyya (sheep distributed to the Mamluks on the eve of 'Ayd al-Adha), 'aliq (the fodder ration which was distributed twice a week) and al-khayl wa al-jimal (horses and camels which were distributed irregularly).
- ¹¹ Normally about 1,000 mamalik sultaniyya (Royal Mamluks) participated in a small expedition. In a bigger expedition, about 1,500-2,000 mamluk sultaniyya took part. An expedition which consisted of 3,000 mamluk sultaniyya was considered a very big one.
- ¹² Scholars trained in disciplines regarded as essential to the preservation of the Muslim commonwealth.
- ¹³ The years given by Ibn Iyas are 1468, 1469, 1470, 1486, 1487, 1490, 1488, 1489, 1490, 1496, 1497, 1498, 1499, 1500, 1501, 1502, 1511, 1514 and 1515.
- ¹⁴ Bursa was an early capital of the Ottoman state and became a centre of trade between the Ottoman dominions and Syria and Egypt. The Ottomans considered their commercial relations with the Mamluks to be very important.
- ¹⁵ On this subject, Inalcik says that in 893/1487 the income in Bursa from taxes on imported saffron, gum lac and pepper amounted to 100,000 akca (over 2,000 Venetian gold ducats). This had been even higher (135,000 akca) before and the reduction can be ascribed to the wars between the Ottomans and the Mamluks.

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