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Mamluks of Jewish Origin in the Mamluk Sultanate

Students of the Mamluk Sultanate (1250–1517) generally do not refer to the phenomenon of mamluks (i.e., slaves, and more specifically military slaves) of Jewish origin. David Ayalon noted that "there is hardly any trace of a Mamlūk of Jewish origin in the Mamlūk sultanate."[1] Moreover, it is thought that Jews were not considered suitable for warfare.[2] The only exception is perhaps the well-known "renegade" Taghrī Birdī the dragoman, who entered the service of the Mamluk Sultanate in the late fifteenth century and functioned as an envoy to Venice and other European powers and as a grand dragoman. John Wansbrough dedicated an article to this unique figure. Almost every European traveler visiting the sultanate in the closing decades of the fifteenth century and at the beginning of the sixteenth century mentions him (Meshullam de Volterra is the first to mention him, in 1481). While Taghrī Birdī was probably of Spanish origin (perhaps of Valencian origin but born in Montblanch, southwest of Barcelona), it is not clear if he converted to Islam from Christianity or Judaism (he was perhaps a Marrano).[3] In ad-

I would like to thank my colleagues and friends Almog Kasher and Amir Mazor for reading a draft of this paper and making useful comments.

[1]David Ayalon, "Baḥrī Mamlūks, Burjī Mamlūks—Inadequate Names for the Two Reigns of the Mamlūk Sultanate," *Tārīḫ* 1 (1990): 45, n. 45. Ayalon intended to discuss the subject in more detail but unfortunately he passed away without publishing his research on the "racial composition" of Mamluk society.

[2]Gulay Yilmaz, "Becoming a Devşirme: The Training of Conscripted Children in the Ottoman Empire," in *Children in Slavery through the Ages,* ed. Gwyn Campbell, Suzanne Miers, and Joseph C. Miller (Ohio, 2009), 121.

[3]John Wansbrough, "A Mamluk Ambassador to Venice in 913/1507," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 26, no. 3 (1963): 503–5. On Taghrī Birdī, see also Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "European Arts and Crafts at the Mamluk Court," *Muqarnas: An Annual on the Visual Culture of the Islamic World* 21 (2004): 50; C. E. Bosworth, "Tardjumān," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., 10:236; Nicholas Coureas, "Envoys between the Mamlūk Lands and Cyprus under Venice (1473–1517)," in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras VIII,* ed. Urbain Vermeulen, Kristof D'hulster, and Jo van Steenbergen (Leuven, 2016), 372–75; Marc von der Hoch, "Muslim Embassies in Renaissance Venice: The Framework of an Intercultural Dialogue," in *Cultural Brokers at Mediterranean Courts in the Middle Ages,* ed. Marc von der Hoch, Nikolas Jaspert, and Jenny Rahel Oesterle (Paderborn, 2013), 169–70; Frédéric Bauden, "The Role of Interpreters in Alexandria in the Light of an Oath (*Qasāmah*) Taken in the Year 822 AH/1419 AD," in *Continuity and Change in the Realms of Islam: Studies in Honour of Professor Urbain Vermeulen,* ed. Kristof D'hulster and Jo van Steenbergen (Leuven, 2008), 33; Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of*

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dition, as Wansbrough put it, "[d]espite his Turkish name and his patronymic Ibn ʿAbdallāh," and despite the fact that he was a minor amir, it is not at all clear if he was "a *mamlūk* in the then accepted sense of the term" [i.e., a military slave].[4] He appears to have occupied a civil post in the chancery and not a military one.[5] In a wider context he may be related to the phenomenon of Jews or Christians sent as envoys to Venice by Muslim powers during the fifteenth century,[6] and more specifically to the phenomenon of European converts (so-called "renegades") who by the closing decades of the fifteenth century came to play a major role as dragomans and envoys of Mamluk and Ottoman sultans to Venice.[7] Having

Europe (New York and London, 2001), 78–79; Anne Wolff, *How Many Miles to Babylon?: Travels and Adventures to Egypt and Beyond, 1300 to 1640* (Liverpool, 2003), 153–54; L. A. Mayer, "Motsaʾam ha-Notsri shel ha-Mamlukim," *Tarbiz* 23, nos. 3–4 (1952): 219–20; Pierre Moukarzel, "The Translators at the Chancellery of the Mamluk Sultans in Cairo," *Sawt al-Jamiaa* 11 (2017): 152.

[4]Wansbrough, "A Mamluk Ambassador," 503; and see ibid., 507, n. 1. See more on the name Taghrī Birdī below at n. 34.

[5]Ibid., 505, n. 4.

[6]Von der Hoch, "Muslim Embassies," 165–68; for the sixteenth century, see for example Emrah Safa Gürkan, "Mediating Boundaries: Mediterranean Go-betweens and Cross-confessional Diplomacy in Constantinople, 1560–1600," *Journal of Early Modern History* 19, nos. 2–3 (2015): 116–20. On Jews and Christians functioning as interpreters in the Mamluk Sultanate see: Bosworth, "Tardjumān," 237; Eliyahu Ashtor, *Toldot ha-Yehudim bi-Mitsrayim ve-Suriya taḥat Shilton ha-Mamlukim* [The history of the Jews in Egypt and Syria under the rule of the Mamluks] (Jerusalem, 1944, 1951, and 1970), 1:326; Bauden, "The Role of Interpreters," 36, 58–60; Samīr Maḥmūd al-Durūbī, "Aṣnāf al-tarājimah fī dīwān al-inshāʾ al-mamlūkī," *Majallat Majmaʿ al-Lughah al-ʿArabīyah al-Urdunī* 65, no. 1 (2003): 34–36. On Christians and Jews functioning as interpreters or translators under the Ottomans, see Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery,* 78–79; and see also Kemal Çiçek, "Interpreters of the Court in the Ottoman Empire as Seen from the Sharia Court Records of Cyprus," *Islamic Law and Society* 9, no. 1 (2002): 6–8. On Jews from Spain (mainly from Toledo, Seville, and Valencia) arriving in the Mamluk Sultanate during the second half of the fifteenth century, see Ashtor, *Toldot ha-Yehudim,* 2:80.

[7]Von der Hoch, "Muslim Embassies," 169–72; Nicholas Coureas, "The Dispatch of Envoys between Mamlūk Egypt and Lusignan Cyprus: Evidence from the Chronicle of Leontios Makhairas," in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras VIII,* 355; Bosworth, "Tardjumān," 237; Wolff, *How Many Miles to Babylon?* 11, 153; Snezhana Rakova, "Between the Sultan and the Doge: Diplomats and Spies in the Time of Suleiman the Magnificent," *CAS Working Paper Series* 8 (2015–6): 19–20; Gürkan, "Mediating Boundaries," 112, n. 15. On converts in the Mamluk Sultanate as envoys to Europe and as interpreters of European languages, see more generally Coureas, "The Dispatch of Envoys," 349, 355; Ashtor, *Toldot ha-Yehudim,* 2:90–91; Mayer, "Motsaʾam ha-Notsri," 218; and see also Arnold von Harff, *The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff, Knight, from Cologne, through Italy, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, Ethiopia, Nubia, Palestine, Turkey, France and Spain, which he accomplished in the Years 1496 to 1499,* trans. Malcolm Letts (London, 1946), 69. On converts as dragomans in the Ottoman Empire, see more generally Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery,* 78–79; Gürkan, "Mediating Boundaries," 112–16; Tobias P. Graf, *The Sultan's Renegades: Christian-European Converts to Islam and the Making of the Ottoman Elite, 1575–1610* (Oxford, 2017), 133–36.

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been a slave,[8] however, he belongs to the phenomenon of slaves, mostly of European origin, mentioned as dragomans *(tarājimah,* sing. *tarjumān)* and functioning as interpreters and translators of European languages in the Mamluk Sultanate starting in the Circassian period of the sultanate (1382–1517), anticipating a similar phenomenon under the Ottomans.[9] The phenomenon of dragoman slaves functioning as interpreters and translators of European languages in the Mamluk Sultanate has, to date, received relatively little attention.[10] More generally, Taghrī Birdī is part of the phenomenon of the gradually increasing presence of European/Anatolian slaves within the Mamluk Sultanate from the late Turkish period of the sultanate (ca. 1350–82), but more conspicuously during the Circassian period of the sultanate, mainly from the historical territories of the Byzantine Empire ("Rūmīs"), but also from Western Europe ("Franks").[11] Indeed, Mamluk sources and European travelers' reports do not mention dragoman slaves who functioned as interpreters and translators of European languages until that period.

[8] At least according to Peter Martyr, he was captured by corsairs and sold into slavery in Egypt. See Wansbrough, "A Mamluk Ambassador," 504; and see also Samīr Maḥmūd al-Durūbī, *Muqaddimah fī dirāsat al-tarjamah wa-al-tarājimah fī dīwān al-inshāʾ al-mamlūkī* (Amman, 2008), 92–93; idem, "Aṣnāf al-tarājimah," 28–29. His name, being a Turkish name given normally to slaves, also strongly suggests that he was indeed a slave, even if he did not have a military career. See more on this issue in n. 68, below.

[9] On the phenomenon under the Ottomans, see for example Pál Ács, "Tarjumans Mahmud and Murad: Austrian and Hungarian Renegades as Sultan's Interpreters," in *Die Türken in Europa in der Renaissance,* ed. Bodo Guthmüller and Wilhelm Kühlmann (Tübingen, 2000), 307–16; and see also Graf, *The Sultan's Renegades,* 133–36.

[10] See on that the "Excursus on Slaves of European Origin Functioning as Dragomans during the Circassian Period" below.

[11] Koby Yosef, "Cross-Boundary Hatred: (Changing) Attitudes towards Mongol and 'Christian' *Mamlūk*s in the Mamluk Sultanate," in *The Mamluk Sultanate from the Perspective of Regional and World History: Economic, Social and Cultural Development in an Era of Increasing International Interaction and Competition,* ed. Reuven Amitai and Stephan Conermann (Göttingen, 2019), 188–89, 194–96; idem, "The Names of the *Mamlūk*s—Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Solidarity in the Mamluk Sultanate (1250–1517)," in *Egypt and Syria under Mamluk Rule: Political, Social and Cultural Aspects,* ed. Amalia Levanoni (forthcoming); and see also Robert Irwin, "The Image of the Byzantine and the Frank in Arab Popular Literature of the Late Middle Ages," in *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204,* ed. Benjamin Arbel, Bernard Hamilton, and David Jacoby (London, 1989), 227; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Mamluk Artistic Relations with Latin Europe," in *La frontière méditerranéenne du XVe au XVIIe siècle: Échanges, circulations et affrontements,* ed. Bernard Heyberger and Albrecht Fuess (Turnhout, 2014), 364; idem, *Practicing Diplomacy in the Mamluk Sultanate: Gifts and Material Culture in the Medieval Islamic World* (London, 2014), 107; and see also Ulrich Haarmann, "The Mamluk System of Rule in the Eyes of Western Travelers," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 5 (2001): 6–9.

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As mentioned by Wansbrough, it is significant that Taghrī Birdī appears in Mamluk chronicles for the first time only in 1502.[12] He is mentioned only by Ibn Iyās (d. ca. 1524) who simply refers to him as Taghrī Birdī al-Tarjumān ("the dragoman") and never mentions his *nisbah*. Ibn Iyās also does not provide a biographical entry for Taghrī Birdī (possibly, but not necessarily, because Taghrī Birdī outlived him);[13] thus we have no information regarding his master or his early career in the Mamluk Sultanate.[14] More importantly, as mentioned by Doris Behrens-Abouseif, Mamluk authors do not refer at all to the origin of Taghrī Birdī;[15] it is mentioned only by European writers. More generally, Behrens-Abouseif noted that "Mamluk chroniclers deliberately avoided dedicating attention to the presence of Europeans at the sultan's court or to the European background of some emirs."[16] Thus, most of the European mamluks (and especially Western European mamluks) are mentioned in European travel accounts (or in history books or documents written by Europeans) and only occasionally in Arabic sources (in contrast to mamluks of Turkish or Circassian origin).[17] Mamluk authors also tend not to refer to the religious monotheistic pre-Islamic background of specific mamluks.[18] All this partially accounts for the fact that to date Taghrī Birdī is possibly

[12] Wansbrough, "A Mamluk Ambassador," 505.

[13] Behrens-Abouseif, "Mamluk Artistic Relations," 367.

[14] Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá (Wiesbaden, 1960–1975), 4:32, 91, 120, 164, 195, 210, 316, 361–62; and see also Behrens-Abouseif, "European Arts," 53. (Behrens-Abouseif mentions that al-Sakhāwī does not provide a biographical entry. While al-Sakhāwī sometimes provides biographical entries for persons who died in the tenth Islamic century [roughly the sixteenth century], normally his biographical dictionary is limited to persons who died in the ninth Islamic century [roughly the fifteenth century]).

[15] Behrens-Abouseif, "European Arts," 53.

[16] Behrens-Abouseif, "Mamluk Artistic Relations," 367; and see also Robert Irwin, "How Circassian Were the Circassian Mamluks?" in *The Mamluk Sultanate from the Perspective of Regional and World History,* 110. And see n. 66, below.

[17] Behrens-Abouseif, "Mamluk Perceptions of Foreign Arts," in *The Arts of the Mamluks in Egypt and Syria—Evolution and Impact,* ed. Doris Behrens-Abouseif (Bonn, 2012), 313; and see also Irwin, "The Image of the Byzantine," 227; David Ayalon, "Mamlūk: Military Slavery in Egypt and Syria," in *Islam and the Abode of War* (Aldershot, 1994), 8–9.

[18] Mamluk historians only rarely explicitly mention that a mamluk was a Christian in his past. Aqūsh al-Raḥbī al-Manṣūrī (d. 1319) is said to have been a Christian from a Christian village near Irbil who was captured in a raid by Arabs and sold as a slave. See Abū al-Fidāʾ Ismāʿīl ibn ʿUmar Ibn Kathīr, *Al-bidāyah wa-al-nihāyah fī al-tārīkh* (Beirut, 1966), 14:95; ʿAlam al-Dīn al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Birzālī, *Al-muqtafī ʿalá kitāb al-rawḍatayn al-maʿrūf bi-tārīkh al-Birzālī,* ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī (Beirut, 2006), 4:370–71. Qarā Sunqur al-Manṣūrī (d. 1327) is said to have been a Circassian or a Christian from Qārā in Syria who was captured. See Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Al-durar al-kāminah fī aʿyān al-miʾah al-thāminah,* ed. ʿAbd al-Wārith Muḥammad ʿAlī (Beirut, 1997), 3:148. Iyās al-Nāṣirī al-Silāḥdār (d. 1349) is normally

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the only mamluk of Jewish origin that was identified in Mamluk sources. As for European mamluks, Behrens-Abouseif suggested that "there is more research to be done on this subject, for which it will be necessary to consult European sources and archives."[19] Still, some information regarding the pre-Islamic monotheistic background of mamluks (normally Christian but in rare cases also Jewish), and their specific origins in Europe, may be retrieved from Mamluk sources.

In what follows I will survey mamluks of Jewish origin that can be identified in Mamluk sources. Gaps in information about their geographical origin, which is usually lacking in Mamluk sources, will be filled with information given by European travelers or that can be deduced from the names given to them as slaves (see below). Like Taghrī Birdī, one of these slaves originated from Spain and functioned as a dragoman during the reign of al-Ashraf Barsbāy (1422–38). He is mentioned by European travelers and has been known to Mamlukists for a long time, but to date he was not identified in Mamluk sources. Mamluk sources provide information suggesting that he had a military career before he became a dragoman; thus he seems to have been a mamluk in the full sense of the word. Other Jewish mamluks seem to have been of Circassian origin according to the names given to them as slaves; all of them are from the Circassian period of the sultanate (1382–1517). Mamluk sources mention that some of these mamluks were known as "Jews" or were accused of becoming "Jews" and then humiliated. Some of the information has already been noticed by Mamlukists, but when they refer to such instances they normally dismiss it as slander without considering the possibility that these mamluks were actually Jews (at least in their past). While it cannot be denied that the word "Jew" could be, and was, used as a pejorative, it should be noted that during the Turkish period of the sultanate (1250–1382), when most of the mamluks were Turks, Mongols, or Turco-Mongols, there are no reports of mamluks known as or accused of being Jews. Only during the Circassian

said to have been a Christian Armenian who converted to Islam. See ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ ibn Khalīl ibn Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī al-Malaṭī, *Nayl al-amal fī dhayl al-duwal,* ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī (Sidon and Beirut, 2002), 1:186; Abū Bakr ibn Aḥmad Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah,* ed. ʿAdnān Darwīsh (Damascus, 1977–97), 2:684–85. Exceptionally, al-Malaṭī refers in detail to the Christian past of Iyās al-Fārisī the Cypriot (d. 1478). He is said to have been captured when Cyprus was conquered by the Mamluks in 1426. He arrived in Egypt when he was more than 12 years old and probably a grown-up. Al-Malaṭī says that before arriving in Egypt he had the opportunity to study Christian religious law *(ʿalá qāʿidat al-Faranj)* and that his father was a bishop *(usquf).* In the Mamluk Sultnate he became a jurisprudent *(faqīh)* and it was said that some of his rulings were according to the law of the Franks *(jazm al-Faranj).* See ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ ibn Khalīl ibn Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan bi-al-muʿjam al-muʿanwan,* ed. ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad al-Kundarī (Kuwait, 2011), 605–6. For less explicit references to the Christian past of some mamluks, see Yosef, "Cross-Boundary Hatred," 194–201.

[19]Behrens-Abouseif, "European Arts," 53.

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period, when most mamluks originated from the Caucasus and Europe where Jewish communities are known to have existed, do such reports appear. It is also only then that some European travelers visiting Egypt report that some of the soldiers of the sultanate were Jews. Moreover, during the Circassian period, such "accusations" apparently target only European or Circassian mamluks but never Turco-Mongols. All of this suggests that at least some of these mamluks were actually Jews, and that even if those specific individuals were not, the phenomenon of European and Circassian mamluks of Jewish origin was not unknown at that time.

Among the mamluks reported to have been Jews we find two Circassian-period sultans: the Circassian al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq (r. 1438–53), admittedly in a report that seems to be a personal attack on him, and the Albanian al-Ẓāhir Khushqadam (r. 1461–68).

Shāhīn al-Tarjumān/Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī: A Mamluk of Jewish Spanish Origin

Earlier than Taghrī Birdī by about a half of a century, Pero Tafur, the Castilian knight who visited Egypt ca. 1437,[20] reports that the sultan's grand dragoman was "a native of Castile who was a Jew of Seville and a renegade." We know that this Jew was already the grand dragoman in 1426, because Tafur reports that the Cypriot king Janus II (d. 1458) gave orders to deliver him money for services rendered to his father Janus I the king of Cyprus (d. 1432) during his imprisonment in Cairo in 1426.[21] In fact, Mamluk sources confirm that in 1426 the sultan's (chief) dragoman *(al-tarjumān)* delivered to Janus I the Mamluk sultan's message regarding the demands for his release.[22] According to Tafur, when he visited Egypt the interpreter was about 90 years old, but during Tafur's stay in Egypt one of his wives gave birth to a son.[23] Tafur adds that the interpreter from Seville was originally called Haym (i.e., Ḥayim) but was later given (i.e., in the Mamluk Sultanate) the

[20] Pero Tafur, *Travels and Adventures 1435–1439,* trans. Malcolm Letts (New York and London, 1926), v.

[21] Ibid., 67, 72; and see also George Hill, *A History of Cyprus* (Cambridge, 2010), 2:490–91; Johannes Pahlitzsch, "The Mamluks and Cyprus: Transcultural Relations between Muslim and Christian Rulers in the Eastern Mediterranean in the Fifteenth Century," in *Acteurs des transferts culturels en Méditerranée médiévale: Ateliers des Deutschen Historischen Instituts Paris,* ed. R. Abdellatif, Y. Benhima, D. König, and E. Ruchaud (Paris, 2010), 115. On Janus' imprisonment see also Coureas, "The Dispatch of Envoys," 353.

[22] Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Kitāb al-nujūm al-zāhirah fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah,* ed. Fahīm Muḥammad Shaltūt et al. (Cairo, 1963–72), 14:303.

[23] Tafur, *Travels,* 72–73.

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name Saym.[24] As far as I know, Saym the chief dragoman (or dragoman of the sultan) first appears in documents related to Venetians residing in Egypt in 1419 (his name is normally spelled in these documents as "Saim"); the earliest is dated to January 1419.[25] He also appears, under the name "Sain the chief dragoman of the sultan," in a treaty concluded in 1422 between Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy and Venice.[26] The information we have suggests that starting from at least January 1419 and during most (perhaps all) of al-Ashraf Barsbāy's reign (1422–38) the grand dragoman was originally a Jew from Seville.

Tafur's report did not go unnoticed by students of the Mamluk Sultanate. Ashtor noted that during the reign of al-Ashraf Barsbāy the chief interpreter was originally a Jew from Seville,[27] but he seems to have believed that he was a convert but not a slave. Ashtor wrote that he left Seville together with his father as a child in order to immigrate *(la-ʿalot)* to Jerusalem, and converted to Islam after his father's death.[28] According to Tafur, the chief interpreter was born in Seville "but had been carried as a child to Jerusalem with his father, who was a Jew."[29] The wording of Tafur may equally suggest that the chief interpreter was enslaved together with his father and then sold in Jerusalem (or to a master from Jerusalem). As we shall see in what follows, it is possible to identify al-Ashraf Barsbāy's chief interpreter in Mamluk sources and confirm that in all likelihood he was a slave.

A diplomatic treaty between the Catalan king Alfons the Magnanimous (d. 1458) and the Mamluk sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy, prepared in 1429 and signed in

[24] Ibid., 72.

[25] Georg Christ, *Trading Conflicts: Venetian Merchants and Mamluk Officials in Late Medieval Alexandria* (Leiden, 2012), 94, n. 193, 147–49, 172–73.

[26] Moukarzel, "The Translators," 151; idem, "The European Embassies to the Court of the Mamluk Sultans in Cairo," in *Mamluk Cairo, a Crossroads for Embassies*: *Studies on Diplomacy and Diplomatics,* ed. Frédéric Bauden and Malika Dekkiche (Leiden, 2018), 702, n. 61. Moukarzel thought that his name appeared first in the treaty concluded with Venice in 1422, but his name appears already in documents from 1419.

[27] Ashtor, *Toldot ha-Yehudim,* 2:90–91; and see also Behrens-Abouseif, "European Arts," 50; Pahlitzsch, "The Mamluks and Cyprus," 115; Mayer, "Motsa'am ha-Notsri," 219; al-Durūbī, "Aṣnāf al-tarājimah," 35; Moukarzel, "The Translators," 151; Christ, *Trading Conflicts,* 149, n. 28; Nicholas Coureas, "Envoys between Lusignan Cyprus and Mamluk Egypt, 838–78/1435–73: the Accounts of Pero Tafur, George Boustronios and Ibn Taghrī Birdī," in *Mamluk Cairo, a Crossroads for Embassies,* 727, 729.

[28] Ashtor, *Toldot ha-Yehudim,* 2:90–91; and see also Mayer, "Motsa'am ha-Notsri," 219 (*ʿala Yerushalayma*). According to Pahlitzsch "he moved to Jerusalem, where… he had converted from Judaism to Islam." See Pahlitzsch, "The Mamluks and Cyprus," 115. Christ mentions that he was "raised in Jerusalem." See Christ, *Trading Conflicts,* 149, n. 28. Behrens-Abouseif simply refers to him as "a converted European Jew." See Behrens-Abouseif, "European Arts," 50. Moukarzel also refers to him simply as a European convert. See Moukarzel, "The European Embassies," 702.

[29] Tafur, *Travels,* 72.

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1430, mentions the amir Sayf al-Dīn Shāhīn al-Tarjumān ("the dragoman") as an envoy of the sultan.[30] Given the importance of the treaty, Shāhīn al-Tarjumān was in all likelihood the sultan's grand dragoman. As far as I know, Mamluk sources do not refer to any other person as "al-Tarjumān" during the reign of al-Ashraf Barsbāy, so in all likelihood Shāhīn al-Tarjumān was the chief interpreter met by Tafur. According to Tafur, the interpreter from Seville was originally called Haym (i.e., Ḥayim) but was given the name Saym.[31] Given the fact that Europeans tended to heavily distort the names of the mamluks, it is quite likely that Saym (sometimes Sain) is a distortion of the name Shāhīn.[32]

There is also indirect evidence that helps link the interpreter met by Tafur to Shāhīn al-Tarjumān. As I have argued elsewhere, **Shāhīn** was a name that was normally given only to European/Anatolian mamluks (so-called "Franks" and "Rūmīs") starting from about the 1350s.[33] David Ayalon thought that the practice

[30] Mercè Viladrich, "Solving the 'Accursed Riddle' of the Diplomatic Relations between Catalonia and Egypt around 1430," *Al-Masāq* 14, no. 1 (2002): 25, 29; idem, "Jaque al Sultán en el 'damero maldito': Edición y traducción de un tratado diplomático entre los mercaderes catalanes y el sultanato mameluco (1429)," in *L'expansió catalana a la Mediterrània a la Baixa Edat Mitjana,* ed. Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol and Damien Coulon (Barcelona, 1999). The document is reproduced online in the "Arabic Papyrology Database" (APD) at www.apd.gwi.uni-muenchen.de:8080/apd/show2.jsp?papname=Viladrich_Sultan_1&line=1 (accessed 29 August 2018). On the document, see also Frédéric Bauden, "Mamluk Diplomatics: the Present State of Research," in *Mamluk Cairo, a Crossroads for Embassies,* 67 (items nos. 10–11).

[31] Tafur, *Travels,* 72.

[32] Moukarzel noted that the letter *shīn* does not exist in the Venetian dialect and was often replaced by Venetians by the letter *s,* and suggested that Sain is probably a deformation of Shāhīn. See Moukarzel, "The European Embassies," 702–3; idem, "The Translators," 151. He was not aware, however, of the document mentioning Shāhīn al-Tarjumān. It is tempting to speculate that Ḥayim was given the name Shāhīn also because of the vocal resemblance between the two names.

[33] Koby Yosef, "Ethnic Groups, Social Relationships and Dynasty in the Mamluk Sultanate (1250–1517)" (PhD. diss, University of Tel-Aviv, 2011) [in Hebrew], 1:97, 2:133–35; and see Table A below. Mamluk sources refer at times to "Frankish" *(Faranj,* sing. *Faranjī)* mamluks, but normally they mention "Rūmī" mamluks. While it is reasonable to assume that most European/Anatolian mamluks indeed arrived from territories held, or once held, by the Byzantines, there is evidence that some mamluks arrived from Western Europe; evidence that the label "Rūmī" was sometimes used interchangeably with the label "Frank;" and that both terms were sometimes used to denote Europeans or Christians in general. See Yosef, "Cross-Boundary Hatred," 188, n. 255, 191, n. 280, 195–96; and see Ayalon, "Mamlūk: Military Slavery," 9; Nadia Maria El-Cheikh, "Byzantium through the Islamic Prism from the Twelfth to the Thirteenth Century," in *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World,* ed. Angeliki E. Laiou and Roy Parviz Mottahedeh (Washington, 2001), 56; Koray Durak, "Who are the Romans? The Definition of Bilād al-Rūm (Land of the Romans) in Medieval Islamic Geographies," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 31, no. 3 (2010): 293–95; Yaacov Lev, "The Perception of the Others: Rūm and Franks (Tenth-Twelfth Centu-

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of giving specific names to mamluks originating from specific regions must have been very limited if these mamluks were not eunuchs. According to Ayalon, two exceptions to this rule were the names **Taghrī Birdī** and **Khushqadam**, which, as noted by Ayalon, were given to many Rūmī mamluks who were not eunuchs.[34] Eunuchs were normally given Arab-Muslim names that were not given to mamluks who were not eunuchs. Among the Arab-Muslim names that were given to eunuchs Ayalon mentioned three names that were given exclusively (or almost exclusively) to Rūmīs: **Fayrūz**, **Luʾu**ʾ, and **Muqbil**.[35] Some of the names given to eunuchs, however, were non-Arab names (mainly Turkish) that were given mainly to mamluks who were not eunuchs. In this category Ayalon mentioned only the name Khushqadam as a name given exclusively to Rūmīs. According to Ayalon, Shāhīn was a non-Arab name (a Persian name) that was commonly given to eunuchs; however, being a non-Arab name it was also given to mamluks who were not eunuchs. Ayalon did not mention whether it was given to slaves of a specific ethnic or geographical origin.[36]

As I have argued elsewhere, starting from the days of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (r. 1279–90) names were given to mamluks according to their origins. In contrast to what Ayalon thought, this practice was very widespread and it would seem that most names were given exclusively (or almost exclusively) to mamluks of specific origins. Names, however, could change their "ethnic destination" with changes in the ethnic composition of slaves brought to the sultanate, or with changes in perceptions of ethnic identities. Until the 1320s different names were given to Turks, "Tatars" (mainly Mongols), and to "other" slaves of European/Anatolian ("Franks" and "Rūmīs") or Caucasian origin (mainly Circassians). Starting in the 1320s Turks and "Tatars" began to be perceived as belonging to the same ethnic group (Turco-Mongols) and were given the same names, and slaves of European/Anatolian or Caucasian origin (mainly Circassians) were given different names (in previous publications I have sometimes referred to the group of European/Anatolian and Caucasian slaves as "non-Turks"). Starting in the 1350s it is possible to find names that were given (almost) exclusively to Caucasian slaves (mostly to

ries)," in *Dār al-Islām/Dār al-Ḥarb: Territories, People, Identities,* ed. Giovanna Calasso and Giuliano Lancioni (Leiden, 2017), 64–67.

[34]David Ayalon, "Names, Titles, and 'Nisbas' of the Mamluks," *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975): 197–98, n. 26.

[35]David Ayalon, "The Eunuchs in the Mamluk Sultanate," in *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet,* ed. Myriam Rosen-Ayalon (Jerusalem, 1977), 275–79. Ayalon mentioned that the name **Kāfūr** was given to Rūmīs and Hindīs (see ibid., 278–79) and that the name **Hilāl** was given to Rūmīs (see ibid.) I think that there is too little information to conclude that the name Hilāl was given exclusively (or almost exclusively) to Rūmīs, given the fact that, as Ayalon noted, some of the Arab names given to eunuchs were given to eunuchs of several origins.

[36]Ibid.

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Circassians but on some occasions also to other Caucasian people), and names that were given (almost) exclusively to European/Anatolian slaves (mainly referred to as Rūmīs), a phenomenon that must be related to an increase in the numbers of Circassian and European/Anatolian mamluks in the territories of the sultanate. By the Circassian period, the tripartite division between ethnic groups (Turco-Mongols, Caucasians, and Europeans/Anatolians) endorsed by a division of names became complete.[37] It should be remembered, however, that for various reasons mamluks could, on rare occasions, be given names that were normally not given to slaves from their place of origin.

We are lucky to have a report by the historian ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ ibn Khalīl ibn Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī al-Malaṭī (d. 1514) about the origin of his grandfather, Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī (d. 1430), which includes information hinting at the "ethnic destination" of the name **Shāhīn** during the Circassian period. According to al-Malaṭī, Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī was a "Tatar" (i.e., a Turco-Mongol) from Saray in the so-called Golden Horde who became a slave of the Circassian sultan al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (r. 1382–99). According to al-Malaṭī, "he was named Shāhīn only because at the beginning of the reign of al-Ẓāhir the Turco-Mongols were hated and excluded from positions" *(innamā summiya Shāhīn li-anna al-Tatar kānat fī awwal dawlat al-Ẓāhir fī maqt wa-ibʿād).*[38] This report makes it clear that at that time the name Shāhīn was normally not given to Turco-Mongols but to slaves belonging to one of the two other ethnic groups (Europeans/Anatolians or Circassians), and that it was given to Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī only because his master wanted to disassociate him from the group of Turco-Mongols against which he fought. In fact, almost all general remarks about "ethnic destinations" of names during the Circassian period are given by al-Malaṭī. Such remarks are normally given when referring to the fact that a mamluk received a name that did not fit his origin. One may speculate that because his grandfather Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī, who was a Turco-Mongol, received a

[37]For a general survey of name-giving practices during the Mamluk Sultanate, see Yosef, "The Names of the *Mamlūk*s." For a detailed discussion of the "ethnic destination" of about 300 names and a survey of mamluks that were given these names, see idem, "Ethnic Groups"; for changing perceptions of ethnic identities during the Mamluk Sultanate, see idem, "Cross-Boundary Hatred." Because the detailed survey of about 300 names is in Hebrew, and because the general survey of name-giving practices during the Mamluk Sultanate has not seen light yet, I have added to this article an appendix that briefly surveys the "ethnic destination" of some names; however, for references see idem, "Ethnic Groups."

[38]ʿAbd al-Bāsiṭ ibn Khalīl ibn Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī al-Malaṭī, *Al-rawḍ al-bāsim fī ḥawādith al-umūr wa-al-tarājim,* ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī (Beirut, 2014), 4:120. Elsewhere, and before *Al-rawḍ al-bāsim* was published, I have speculated that Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī was not a Turco-Mongol (see Koby Yosef, "The Term *Mamlūk* and Slave Status during the Mamluk Sultanate," *Al-Qanṭarah* 34, no. 1 [2013]: 24–26). This, however, turned out to be a mistake.

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name normally given to European/Anatolian mamluks (see below), al-Malaṭī became sensitive to the issue of name-giving practices.[39]

[39]Two references by al-Malaṭī to slaves that received a name that does not fit their origin have to do with mamluks of al-Nāṣir Faraj (1399–1412). According to al-Malaṭī, al-Nāṣir Faraj changed the name of one of his Circassian slaves from Qibjaq to Khushkaldī, one of the names given to Rūmīs *(ism al-Arwām),* "because he hated the Circassians and their names" *(li-bughḍihi fī ṭāʾifat al-Ǧarkas wa-asmāʾihim),* and because due to his affection for him *(mayl)* he wanted to dissociate him from the Circassians *(arāda an yanfiya hādhā ʿanhum).* Later on he made him a close companion and promoted him. See al-Malaṭī, *Al-rawḍ al-bāsim,* 4:220–21. According to al-Malaṭī, Aq Sunqur al-Yashbakī (d. 1454) was originally the mamluk of the *atābak* Yashbak but later on came to serve al-Nāṣir Faraj. He was a Circassian but al-Nāṣir Faraj changed his name to Aq Sunqur (i.e., before that Yashbak had given him another name) because he hated the Circassian ethnic group. See idem, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 579. From this it becomes clear that during the Circassian period the names **Aq Sunqur** and **Khushkaldī** were given to Europeans/Anatolians and the name **Qibjaq** to Circassians. It is known that al-Nāṣir Faraj, whose mother was Greek, was assisted by Rūmīs in his struggle against the Circassians. See Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah and Saʿīd ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ ʿĀshūr (Cairo, 1934–73), 3:1174. In order to dissociate some of the Circassian slaves who were his followers from their ethnic group he changed their names to names given to European/Anatolian slaves. It seems reasonable that masters were inclined to change names of mamluks if they were especially favored by them. Al-Malaṭī reports on a mamluk by the name of Ināl al-Zaynī (d. 1473–74) who was a favored slave of his master *(khaṣīṣ).* He was a Rūmī but was given by his master a name for Circassians *(Rūmī al-jins wa-sammāhu ustādhuhu ʿalá ism al-Ǧarākisah).* See al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 625. Ināl al-Isḥāqī al-Ẓāhirī (d. 1481) was a mamluk of Jaqmaq already from the days when he was an amir and one of the first mamluks bought by him *(qudamāʾ).* Al-Malaṭī says that he was a Rūmī but his name was only rarely given to Rūmīs and was usually given to Circassians *(Rūmī al-jins wa-ismuhu min nawādir asmāʾ al-Arwām… yusammá bi-hi al-Ǧarākisah fī al-ʿādah).* See al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 626. From this we learn that at least during the Circassian period the name **Ināl** was given normally to Circassians. One may speculate that being one of the first slaves of Jaqmaq and probably his favored slave, Jaqmaq wanted to improve his career prospect by giving him a name that was usually given to Circassians, the dominant ethnic group at that time. It seems that during the days of al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq European/Anatolian mamluks started to fill senior positions in greater numbers. See Yosef, "Cross-Boundary Hatred," 195. Ibn Taghrībirdī, in what is probably the only refernce to the practice of giving slaves names that do not fit their origin by a Mamluk historian other than al-Malaṭī, says that **Alṭunbughā** al-Marqabī al-Muʾayyadī Shaykh (d. 1440) "was a Circassian but given a name of Turco-Mongols" *(Ǧarkasī al-jins lākinnahu summiya bi-ism al-Atrāk).* See Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-dalīl al-shāfī ʿalá al-manhal al-ṣāfī,* ed. Fahīm Muḥammad Shaltūt (Cairo, 1998–2005), 1:152–53. Alṭunbughā al-Marqabī is known to have faithfully served his master Shaykh already when the latter was still amir and through all his struggles and tribulations *(min qudamāʾ mamālīk al-Muʾayyad Shaykh ishtarāhu lammā kāna min jumlat umarāʾ al-ʿishrīnāt… wa-dāma bi-khidmatihi fī ayyām tilka al-miḥan wa-al-fitan).* See Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-manhal al-ṣāfī wa-al-mustawfá baʿda al-wāfī,* ed. Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo, 1984–2006), 3:78–79. Now, it is known that al-Muʾayyad Shaykh inclined towards Turco-Mongol slaves, and during his reign many amirs were Turco-Mongols. See David Ayalon, "The Circassians in the Mamlūk Kingdom," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 69 (1949): 142. It is therefore reasonable that in this case

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Table A surveys slaves named Shāhīn about whose origin we have information. It makes it clear that the name was normally only given to European/Anatolian slaves.

Table A: Slaves Named Shāhīn on Whose Origin There is Information[40]	
Name (Year of Death)	**Origin**
1. Shāhīn al-Ṭawāshī Zimām Dār Nāʾib al-Shaʾm (d. 1400)	Eunuch[41]
2. Shāhīn Dast al-Ashrafī al-Jamdār (d. 1404–5)	Eunuch[42]
3. Shāhīn al-Ḥasanī al-Ṭawāshī (d. 1412–13)	Eunuch[43]
4. Shāhīn al-Manṣūrī Shaykh al-Khuddām (died after 1420)	Eunuch[44]
5. Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī (d. 1430)	Tatar (exception)
6. Shāhīn al-Rūmī al-Ẓāhirī Jaqmaq al-Ṭawāshī (d. 1468–69)	Eunuch/al-Rūmī[45]
7. Shāhīn al-Rūmī al-Mizzī	al-Rūmī[46]
8. Shāhīn al-Rūmī al-Nūrī	al-Rūmī[47]
9. Shāhīn al-Jamālī (d. 1514)	Rūmī[48]
a. Shāhīn al-Jalālī (mentioned in 1381)	Eunuch[49]

Shaykh wanted to dissociate a Circassian mamluk from his original ethnic group and connect him to the Turco-Mongols which he favored.

[40] The table first mentions persons who have biographical entries in Mamluk sources (numbers) and then persons who are only mentioned in Mamluk sources (letters). This is true also for the following tables.

[41] Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh,* 4:126.

[42] Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Al-ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ* (Beirut, 1992), 3:294; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-sulūk,* 3:442.

[43] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 3:294.

[44] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-tuḥfah al-laṭīfah fī tārīkh al-Madīnah al-Sharīfah* (Beirut, 1993), 1:440.

[45] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 3:294.

[46] Ibid., 3:295.

[47] Ibid., 3:294.

[48] Ibid., 3:293–94; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr,* 4:420.

[49] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-sulūk,* 3:442.

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b. Shāhīn al-Uljāʾī *nāʾib muqaddam al-mamālīk* (mentioned in 1400)	Eunuch[50]
c. Shāhīn al-Rūmī (appointed *nāʾib qalʿat al-Ǧabal* in 1412)	al-Rūmī[51]
d. Shāhīn al-Bahlawān (died after 1424–25)	Rūmī/not a eunuch[52]
e. Shāhīn al-Sāqī al-Ṭawāshī (mentioned in 1438)	Eunuch[53]

As can be seen from the table, except for Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī (number 5) all slaves named Shāhīn on whose origin we have information are defined as Rūmīs[54] or are known to have been eunuchs. Now, Circassians and Turco-Mongols are generally not known to have been eunuchs during the Mamluk Sultanate, and most of the eunuchs were Rūmīs or Ḥabashīs (Abyssinians),[55] so the eunuchs named Shāhīn were in all likelihood also Rūmīs. Therefore, it becomes clear that the name Shāhīn was normally given to European/Anatolian slaves. Shāhīn al-Tarjumān thus could well have been of Spanish origin. Note that according to Tafur, the grand interpreter whom he met ca. 1437 was about 90 years old and was brought as a child to Egypt, which indicates that he was brought to Egypt around the 1350s, exactly when European/Anatolian mamluks started arriving in the sultanate in greater numbers and exactly when names given exclusively to European/Anatolian slaves, such as Shāhīn, started to be used.

After establishing that Shāhīn al-Tarjumān was in all likelihood the interpreter of Jewish Spanish origin active during the reign of al-Ashraf Barsbāy, it remains to be seen if he can be further identified in Mamluk sources. Mamluk sources provide a short biographical entry for a person by the name of Mūsá ibn Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī who functioned as chief of the military police *(naqīb al-jaysh)* for about a year starting from 1484–85. Mūsá ibn Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī was known as "Ibn al-Tarjumān" ("the son of the dragoman"), because this was the position of his father.[56] There are no other persons named Shāhīn that were known as "al-Tarjumān" during the Mamluk Sultanate except for the interpreter active during the reign of al-Ashraf Barsbāy, so in all likelihood Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī was the

[50] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-nujūm,* 12:214. In that year al-Maqrīzī twice mentions Shāhīn al-Ḥalabī who was *nāʾib muqaddam al-mamālīk*. See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-sulūk,* 4:1016. Shāhīn al-Ḥalabī became *muqaddam al-mamālīk* in 1401. See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-sulūk,* 4:1055.

[51] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-nujūm,* 13:156.

[52] Al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 304.

[53] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-sulūk,* 4:1071.

[54] Note that it is possible that some of these "Rūmīs" were in fact Western Europeans. See n. 33, above.

[55] Ayalon, "The Eunuchs," 272–73.

[56] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 10:182.

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interpreter of Jewish Spanish origin active during the reign of al-Ashraf Barsbāy. Moreover, although the name Mūsá was used by Muslims during the Mamluk period, it was possibly the most common name among Jews,[57] which tempts one to speculate that Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī the dragoman named his son Mūsá due to his Jewish origins.

As far as I know, only two persons by the name of Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī are mentioned in Mamluk sources. Al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497) provides two short biographical entries for persons by this name:

> (1) "Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī. He was the governor of Jerusalem and the inkwell holder *(dawādār)* of the sultan in Damascus. He died on 19 Dhū al-Qaʿdah 837/27 June 1434. Ibn al-Labbūdī mentioned him."
>
> (2) "Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī. He was the chamberlain of Damascus. He was also the head of the Syrian pilgrimage caravan. He was also the governor of the citadel in Damascus. He died there in Shawwāl 844/February–March 1441. He was also mentioned by Ibn al-Labbūdī."[58]

The two amirs by the name of Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī who have biographical entries in al-Sakhāwī were apparently only afforded biographical entries previously by Ibn al-Labbūdī (d. 1490).[59] In addition, there is not much detail about either of them; both are said to have been active in Syria and to have died at about the same time, and both were presumably amirs of forty.[60] All this tempts one to think that perhaps the two were actually the same person. Moreover, al-Malaṭī (d. 1514), the only historian except for al-Sakhāwī (and apparently Ibn al-Labbūdī) who provides a biographical entry for a person with this name, refers only to Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī, the grand chamberlain of Damascus, who died in 1441.[61] On the

[57] Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshá fī ṣināʿat al-inshāʾ* (Beirut, 1987), 5:402.

[58] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 3:295.

[59] Probably in his history book. On Ibn al-Labbūdī and his history book, see ibid., 3:293–94; Aḥmad ibn Khalīl Ibn al-Labbūdī, *Al-nujūm al-zawāhir fī maʿrifat al-awākhir,* ed. Maʾmūn al-Ṣāgharjī and Muḥammad Adīb al-Jādir (Damascus, 1994), 14.

[60] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshá,* 7:184–86 (*nāʾib qalʿat Dimashq* and *nāʾib al-Quds* were supposed to be amirs of forty).

[61] Al-Malaṭī, *Nayl al-amal,* 5:135. Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī mentions a biographical entry for Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī Duwaydār Shaykh (d. 1410). See Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr bi-abnāʾ al-ʿumr fī al-tārīkh,* ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1969), 2:470. However, as far as I know, no other historian refers to Shāhīn the Dawādār (or Duwaydār) of al-Muʾayyad Shaykh with the *nisbah* "al-Shujāʿī." Moreover, in the biographical entry of Shāhīn the Dawādār of al-Muʾayyad Shaykh, al-Sakhāwī says that he is quoting his master Ibn Ḥajar but does not include the *nisbah* "al-Shujāʿī" as part

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other hand, Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī, the governor of Jerusalem, is said to have filled this position between ca. 1427 and ca. 1429–30,[62] at a time when Shāhīn al-Tarjumān is known to have functioned as a dragoman in Cairo. Moreover, he is said to have died in 1434, which is before Pero Tafur met Shāhīn al-Tarjumān in Cairo. Therefore, I will assume that the information given by al-Sakhāwī (based on Ibn al-Labbūdī) is exact, that there were two persons named Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī, and that of the two only the one who was the governor of the citadel in Damascus and died in 1441 could have been Shāhīn al-Tarjumān.

Al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442) mentions the amir Shāhīn the chamberlain in Damascus at the head of the army of Damascus in 1417.[63] Later in that year, al-Maqrīzī and al-Malaṭī report that Shāhīn the chamberlain in Damascus was appointed governor of the citadel in Damascus.[64] Al-Maqrīzī says that he stopped being the governor of the citadel in Damascus in May 1418 but does not say whether he received a new appointment.[65] After that, this individual is not mentioned in the sources again. All of this actually fits the information we have on Shāhīn al-Tarjumān, the interpreter of Jewish Spanish origin. As mentioned, Shāhīn al-Tarjumān is first mentioned as chief dragoman of the sultan in Venetian documents starting in January 1419 (normally under the name Sain), only a few months after Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī disappears from Mamluk narrative sources. This is a striking coincidence that strongly suggests that the two are in fact the same person. If, as it seems, Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī was indeed Shāhīn al-Tarjumān, then he had a military career until he was about 70 years old, a relatively advanced age. After that, he became the interpreter of al-Ashraf Barsbāy and disappeared from Mamluk history books. It is no wonder that he died in 1441, shortly after Tafur visited Egypt, as he was about 90 years old at that time. It is also no wonder that Mamluk sources give little information about him since this is typical for slaves of European—and especially Western European—origin. That Mamluk sources stopped mentioning him when he became a dragoman is not surprising because such activities related to the European past of mamluks are routinely ignored by Mamluk historians.[66] Moreover, as we will see below in the "Excursus on Slaves of European

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of his name. He says that Ibn Ḥajar attributed him the *nisbah* "al-Shujāʿī," but he thinks that it was a mistake *(taḥarruf)*. See al-Sakhāwī, *Al-ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ*, 3:294. Ibn Ḥajar (and following him al-Sakhāwī) says that Shāhīn the Dawādār was brave *(shujāʿ)*, which is perhaps the source for the wrong attribution of the *nisbah* "al-Shujāʿī" to him.

[62] Mujīr al-Dīn al-ʿUlaymī, *Al-uns al-jalīl bi-tārīkh al-Quds wa-al-Khalīl*, ed. ʿAdnān Yūnus ʿAbd al-Majīd Abū Tabbānah (Amman, 1999), 2:274.

[63] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-sulūk*, 4:398.

[64] Ibid., 4:425; al-Malaṭī, *Nayl al-amal*, 3:333.

[65] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-sulūk*, 4:442.

[66] And see at nn. 16–18 above.

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Origin Functioning as Dragomans during the Circassian Period," we know the identity of the grand dragomans in the Mamluk court in 1411–12,[67] so we know that Shāhīn al-Tarjumān could not have been appointed grand dragoman before about 1412, which fits the information we have that Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī had a military career until 1418, and makes it quite reasonable that at some point around 1418 Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī replaced the previous grand dragomans. To conclude, it is very likely that Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī was a slave of Jewish origin, who, in contrast to Taghrī Birdī, had a military career before he became a dragoman, and therefore was a mamluk in the full sense of the word. The fact that Mūsá, the son of the dragoman Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī, had a military career *(naqīb al-jaysh),* suggests that he grew up in a household where military service was not unknown, so whether the identification of the Shāhīn al-Shujāʿī who died in 1441 as the father of Mūsá is accepted or not, it remains relatively reasonable that Mūsá's father, Shāhīn al-Tarjumān the dragoman of Jewish origin, had a military career.

An Excursus on Slaves of European Origin Functioning as Dragomans during the Circassian Period

Shāhīn al-Tarjumān was one among several persons who were apparently slaves[68] that are explicitly mentioned as dragomans *(tarājimah*, sing. *tarjumān)* in Mamluk

[67] See below at nn. 78–83.

[68] In some cases the sources give information indicating that they were slaves (see below); however, in most cases it is assumed that they were probably slaves because they have names that were normally given to slaves (mostly Turkish names, but on rare occasions also Persian and even Arab names). See also n. 8, above. Most recently, Robert Irwin noted that although during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries most European renegades serving the Muslims entered into service after being captured and enslaved, at least some chose to travel voluntarily to the Islamic lands and converted there in order to further their careers. Irwin suggested that this was perhaps also the situation during the fifteenth century and noted that "one gets the impression that quite a few Europeans had entered into service as mamluks not after being captured and enslaved, but after voluntarily embracing the status of renegade"; see Irwin, "How Circassian," 109–13 (esp. 112). Still, it should be remembered that even during the sixteenth century most of the European renegades were captives and slaves. See Graf, *The Sultan's Renegades,* 73, 77. Moreover, while during the Ottoman period military slaves were given Muslim names, and thus it is not possible to tell a slave from a simple convert just by their names, during the Mamluk Sultanate slaves normally received Turkish names and simple converts seem to have taken Arab-Muslim names. For example, during the Mamluk period we know of several European converts who were not slaves that served as dragomans or envoys and had Arab-Muslim names. See Moukarzel, "The Translators," 146. I know of only one explicit case of Europeans who apparently were not slaves and converted to Islam in what seems to be a voluntary manner but still received Turkish names normally given to slaves. In 1327 two envoys that arrived in Cairo from Constantinople decided to convert to Islam. One of them became amir and the other a simple soldier. They received the names **Aq Sunqur** (this person became known as Aq Sunqur al-Rūmī) and

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sources, who engaged (or at least seem to have been engaged) in interpretation or translation of European languages during the Circassian period (and on rare occasions also in the late Turkish period).[69] As we will see, most of these slaves seem to have been of European origin. It is no wonder that these slaves appear only in the Circassian or late Turkish periods, because at that time, as mentioned, an increase in the number of slaves originating in Europe can be detected. Some of these dragoman slaves seem to also have had military careers. The phenomenon of dragoman slaves functioning as interpreters and translators of European languages in the Mamluk Sultanate has so far received relatively little attention.[70]

Bahādur. Both were names given at that time to non-Turks in general, i.e., to Circassian or European/Anatolian slaves (see Appendix). See al-Maqrīzī, *Al-sulūk,* 2:282–83; Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab,* ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn et al. (Beirut, 2004), 33:173; and see also Moukarzel, "The Translators," 144, n. 3. This, however, seems to be a very unusual case. After referring to this case, al-Nuwayrī adds "and God knows best," suggesting that he found this incident very peculiar. It is also possible that the two were at least officially sold into slavery. Until proven otherwise, it seems reasonable to assume that Christian Europeans that received Turkish names normally given to slaves were probably indeed slaves, at least formally. It should be mentioned that in rare cases descendants of European/Anatolian slaves received Turkish names normally given to European/Anatolian slaves, but in such cases the name of the father is known.

[69]To be clear: as far as I know, before the late Turkish period only two persons who are explicitly mentioned as dragomans in Mamluk sources were possibly slaves (based on their names, at least). The first is Irghidlaq al-Tarjumān, who was in charge of translating letters into the Mongol language sometime during the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (1310–41); see Moukarzel, "The Translators," 142–43. The second is Aybak al-Kabakī al-Tarjumān, who translated the 1290 treaty between Genoa and the sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (r. 1279–90) from Latin into Arabic; see Samīr Maḥmūd al-Durūbī, "Ḥarakat al-tarjamah wa-al-taʿrīb fī dīwān al-inshāʾ al-mamlūkī (al-bawāʿith wa-al-lughāt wa-al-mutarjamāt)," *Majallat Majmaʿ al-Lughah al-ʿArabīyah al-Urdunī* 26, no. 62 (2002): 51; idem, *Muqaddimah fī dirāsat al-tarjamah,* 63; Moukarzel, "The Translators," 143.

[70]Mayer has briefly referred to this phenomenon but did not elaborate or give examples. See Mayer, "Motsaʾam ha-Notsri," 218. Lewis mentioned that "[l]ittle is known about the dragomans employed by the Mamluk sultans of Egypt…though what evidence exists indicates that these were, for the most part, renegades from Europe," and then gave Taghrī Birdī as an example. Regarding the Ottoman period, Lewis mentioned that interpreters were many times "renegades"; see Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery,* 78–79. Based on that, Adrian Gully has suggested that "[i]t is not inconceivable, therefore, that much interpreting work in an earlier period had been carried out by Mamluks themselves or those of similar status described by Lewis," but did not adduce concrete evidence for that. See Adrian Gully, *The Culture of Letter-Writing in Pre-Modern Islamic Society* (Edinburgh, 2008), 89. Among the categories of translators *(aṣnāf al-tarājimah)* during the Mamluk Sultanate surveyed by al-Durūbī, he mentions Mamluk amirs *(umarāʾ al-mamālīk).* See al-Durūbī, "Aṣnāf al-tarājimah," 19–24; idem, *Muqaddimah fī dirāsat al-tarjamah,* 82–87. Under this category al-Durūbī mentions four amirs who were, according to him, interpreters or translators *(tarājimah)* of European languages: Aqṭāy al-Mustaʿrib al-Ṣāliḥī (d. 1273), Iyāz al-Ṣāliḥī (d. 1288), Taghrī Birdī al-Tarjumān (d. after 1513), and Yūnus al-Tarjumān (d. after 1514). See idem,

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The first of these dragomans who seems, judging by to his name, to have been a slave is Balabān al-Tarjumān, mentioned in 1380 as having been killed by a Frank *(Faranjī)* who stabbed him during a *maẓālim* session concerning ownership of property held in front of Barakah al-Jūbānī (d. 1380), the most senior amir in Egypt at that time.[71] He was probably in charge of translating from some Western European language, and it is possible that he was the grand dragoman at the Mamluk court at that time.[72] The fact that he was in charge of translating from a

"Aṣnāf al-tarājimah," 20–21, 23; idem, *Muqaddimah fī dirāsat al-tarjamah,* 83, 86–87; and see also Moukarzel, "The Translators," 141, 151–52. In fact, Aqṭāy al-Mustaʿrib al-Ṣāliḥī and Iyāz al-Ṣāliḥī acted as envoys and are not mentioned explicitly as dragomans. Their engagement in interpretation or translation can only be inferred. Al-Durūbī does not refer to the origin of the Mamluk amirs who acted as translators or interpreters. While the origin of Aqṭāy is not known, it is interesting to mention that Iyāz al-Ṣāliḥī is said to have been Georgian or Rūmī. See al-Birzālī, *Al-muqtafī,* 2:135; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-al-aʿlām,* ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī (Beirut, 1989–2004), 51:298. On Yūnus al-Tarjumān, see nn. 113–14, below. Al-Durūbī mentions also the category of translators or interpreters who were captives *(asrá).* Under this category he mentions Taghrī Birdī al-Tarjumān (again) and Balabān al-Janawī (d. after ca. 1339). See al-Durūbī, "Aṣnāf al-tarājimah," 28–30; idem, *Muqaddimah fī dirāsat al-tarjamah,* 92–94; and see also Moukarzel, "The Translators," 146. Again, Balabān al-Janawī is not mentioned explicitly as a dragoman and his engagement in interpretation or translation can only be inferred. In addition, it should be mentioned that while it is very reasonable that he was a captive, as far as I know the sources do not mention this fact explicitly. On Balabān al-Janawī see also n. 73, below. Most recently, Pierre Moukarzel noted that it seems that "during the fourteenth century, the persons in the Mamluk administration who spoke and wrote European languages were rare," and therefore during that period local Christians and Jews, and European traders or converts/"renegades," played a major role in translation at the court of the Mamluk sultans. See Moukarzel, "The Translators," 145–47. According to Moukarzel, the fact that there were not many persons in the Mamluk administration who spoke and wrote European languages eventually led during the fifteenth century to an increasing reliance by the Mamluk administration on European "renegades" in translation activities. See Moukarzel, "The Translators," 149. It is not clear if Moukarzel uses the word "renegades" in reference to converts in general or specifically to slaves. In another place he mentions that the majority of the translators were "European converts," and he does not seem to refer to slaves. See idem, "The European Embassies," 702; and see also idem, "The Translators," 146. Notwithstanding this, few of the examples he gives for translators during the fifteenth century were apparently slaves. See idem, "The Translators," 149–53. While the fact that there were not many persons in the Mamluk administration who spoke and wrote European languages explains why Europeans many times functioned as translators, it cannot explain by itself why specifically during the Circassian period an increase in the number of "renegades" acting as translators can be observed. As I argue, it is the increasing presence of European/Anatolian slaves within the territories of the Mamluk Sultanate starting from the late Turkish period that allowed an increasing reliance on slaves as translators of European languages.

[71] Al-Malaṭī, *Nayl al-amal,* 2:164; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-sulūk,* 3:379.

[72] However, he may have also been a commercial dragoman. On them see Bauden, "The Role of Interpreters," 33–63.

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European language suggests that he was European himself. This is also suggested by the fact that, starting in the Circassian period, the name **Balabān** seems to have been given exclusively to European/Anatolian slaves (see Table B, below).[73] Except for the incident leading to his death, Balabān al-Tarjumān is not mentioned in Mamluk sources, so we have no details about him and it is not possible to know if he had a military career.[74]

[73]For a detailed discussion of the name Balabān, see Yosef, "Ethnic Groups," 1:68–69, 108, 2:39–42. It appears that already starting from the 1320s the name Balabān was given mainly to European/Anatolian mamluks, but until the Circassian period it was also given on some occasions to Caucasian (Circassian) mamluks (i.e., starting from the 1320s and until the Circassian period it was given to non-Turks in general and not only to Europeans/Anatolians). During that period, Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī mentions a manumitted slave (*ʿatīq*) of the amir Bahādur al-Muʿizzī whose name was Balabān the Genoese and whose original name in Genoa was Domenichino Doria. See Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *Kitāb masālik al-abṣār wa-mamālik al-amṣār,* ed. ʿAbd Allāh ibn Yaḥyá al-Sarīḥī et al. (Abu Dhabi, 2001–4), 3:322; and see Irwin, "The Image of the Byzantine," 227–28. Al-ʿUmarī says that he met him when he was in prison, that is, ca. 1339. See Kamal S. Salibi, "Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī," in *EI2,* 3:758–59. Al-ʿUmarī also mentions ʿAlī ibn Balabān al-Jalabī as an informant about Europe alongside Balabān the Genoese and another mamluk of European origin, so it is quite likely that Balabān al-Jalabī was another mamluk of European origin. See al-ʿUmarī, *Masālik al-abṣār,* 3:404. At that period, however, the sources also mention Balabān al-Jarkasī, who according to his *nisbah* was probably a Circassian. See Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 2:96.

[74]If Balabān al-Tarjumān was the chief interpreter it is possible that he was of Florentine origin. According to European travelers visiting Cairo in 1384 the grand interpreter of the sultan at that time was a Venetian Christian renegade who replaced in that position his father-in-law, a Florentine Christian renegade, after the latter had died. The travelers, however, do not mention explicitly that the two grand interpreters were slaves, and it is possible that they were simply converts. See Leonardo di Niccoló Frescobaldi, "Pilgrimage of Lionardo di Niccoló Frescobaldi to the Holy Land," trans. Theophilus Bellorini, Eugene Hoade, and Bellarmino Bagatti, in *Visit to the Holy Places of Egypt, Sinai, Palestine and Syria in 1384* (Jerusalem, 1948), 45, 53; Giorgio Gucci, "Pilgrimage of Giorgio Gucci to the Holy Places," trans. Theophilus Bellorini, Eugene Hoade, and Bellarmino Bagatti, in ibid., 106; Simone Sigoli, "Pilgrimage of Simone Sigoli to the Holy Land," trans. Theophilus Bellorini, Eugene Hoade, and Bellarmino Bagatti, in ibid., 166. According to Moukarzel, "[t]he post of the chief interpreter which was mentioned for the first time during the first half of the fourteenth century, during the reign of the sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad disappeared later. It was created again in the beginning of the fifteenth century." See Moukarzel, "The Translators," 149. The information we have actually suggests that the post appears already in 1384 and probably even earlier. It would seem that it is possible that there was more continuity to this post than Moukarzel would allow.

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Table B: Slaves Named Balabān during the Circassian Period on Whose Origin There is Information	
Name (Year of Death)	**Origin**
1. Balabān al-Khushqadamī (d. 1491)	Rūmī[75]
2. Balabān al-Damurdāshī (died after 1490–91)	Rūmī/Turkmen?[76]
a. Balabān Nā'ib Darandah (died after 1435)	Rūmī[77]

The next dragomans who, at least according to their names, were slaves are Shams al-Dīn Sunqur and Sayf al-Dīn Sūdūn, who are mentioned by al-Qalqashandī (d. 1418) as the translators *(al-tarājimah/al-tarjumānayni)* of letters sent from Venice and Cyprus to the Mamluk Sultanate in 1411 during the reign of al-Nāṣir Faraj (1399–1412), in all likelihood in their capacity as grand dragomans in the chancery *(al-tarājimah bi-al-abwāb al-sharīfah).*[78] According to Bosworth, the two were obviously Turks,[79] but the fact that their names are Turkish does not at all mean that they were Turks. As I have shown elsewhere, the name **Sunqur** was given exclusively to European/Anatolian slaves during the Circassian period (and see Table C below).[80] The name **Sūdūn**, however, was given exclusively to Circassian slaves starting from the late Turkish period.[81]

As for Sunqur, several notarial deeds of Giacomo della Torre from June–August 1412 mention Sunqur the grand dragoman of the sultan *(magnus trucimanus soldani),* who was originally a Genoese called Johannes Saiben who converted to Islam. The documents do not refer explicitly to his status and simply mention that he was a Muslim that had once been a Christian.[82] He is also mentioned (as Zanon

[75] Al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 708.

[76] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 3:19, 4:12.

[77] Al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 43; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-nujūm,* 15:61.

[78] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshá,* 8:126–28; and see also Bosworth, "Tardjumān," 326; al-Durūbī, "Ḥarakat al-Tarjamah," 49–50, 52; idem, *Muqaddimah fī dirāsat al-tarjamah,* 61, 64; see Moukarzel, "The Translators," 151. There is evidence that it was possible for two persons to jointly hold the position of grand dragoman. See Tafur, *Travels,* 96.

[79] Bosworth, "Tardjumān," 326.

[80] Yosef, "The Names of the *Mamlūk*s."

[81] Ibid.

[82] Francisco Javier Apellániz Ruiz de Galarreta, "Banquiers, diplomates et pouvoir sultanien: une affaire d'épices sous les Mamelouks circassiens," *Annales islamologiques* 38, no. 2 (2004): 297, n. 40. Document no. 5 mentions "sarazenus nomine Sonchor olim christianus vocatus a batismo Johannes Saiben januensis et magnus trucimanus soldani." I did not have access to the document itself and received the information from Francisco Javier Apellániz. I would like to thank him for kindly giving me this information.

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Saimben) in the translation into Latin of a treaty concluded with Venice in 1422 as the scribe alongside Sain (our friend Shāhīn al-Tarjumān), the great interpreter of the sultan.[83]

Table C: Slaves Named Sunqur during the Circassian Period on Whose Origin There is Information	
Name (Year of Death)	**Origin**
1. Sunqur al-Rūmī (d. 1415)	al-Rūmī[84]
2. Sunqur al-Rūmī al-Ḥanafī (d. 1479)	al-Rūmī[85]
3. Sunqur al-Zaynī al-Jamālī (d. 1497)	Rūmī[86]
4. Sunqur (the father of Aḥmad al-Ṭarābulsī who was a young man ca. 1485)[87]	Rūmī
a. Sunqur al-Rūmī al-Ṭawāshī al-Jamdār (mentioned in 1450 as an envoy to Bilād al-Rūm)	al-Rūmī/ Eunuch[88]

The next dragoman who, according to his name, was a slave is Shāhīn al-Tarjumān.[89] After him, the next one mentioned in Mamluk sources is Fāris, "the dragoman of the Franks" in the island of Cyprus *(tarjumān al-Faranj bi-jazīrat* [*bi-jizyat* in the text] *Qubruṣ),* who is reported to have returned to Egypt in 1451 after a long stay in Cyprus, where he was sent as an envoy. He brought with him 100 prisoners.[90] It seems that this Fāris was at that time, or became after

[83] Moukarzel, "The European Embassies," 702, n. 61; and see also idem, "The Translators," 151. So, it would seem that after Shāhīn al-Tarjumān replaced Sunqur as the grand dragoman, Sunqur continued to function as a scribe. See above n. 67.

[84] Al-Malaṭī, *Nayl al-amal,* 3:283; al-Maqrīzī, *Al-sulūk,* 4:308; and see also ibid., 4:71.

[85] Al-Malaṭī, *Nayl al-amal,* 7:230.

[86] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-tuḥfah al-laṭīfah,* 1:429–30; idem, *Al-ḍaw' al-lāmiʿ,* 3:273.

[87] Al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 306.

[88] Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith al-duhūr fī madá al-ayyām wa-al-shuhūr,* ed. Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn ʿIzz al-Dīn (Beirut, 1990), 1:284; and see Ayalon, "The Eunuchs," 277. Ayalon mentioned the name Sunqur as one of the names given to eunuchs (and non-eunuchs) but did not refer to its "ethnic destination."

[89] According to Tafur, during his visit in Egypt ca. 1437 the Mamluk sultan appointed the Italian Nicolò de' Conti (d. 1469) to the position of grand dragoman together with the grand dragoman Shāhīn al-Tarjumān (just to make clear, Tafur of course refers to the latter as Saym). See Tafur, *Travels,* 96.

[90] Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar al-Biqāʿī, *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr li-asrār ahl al-ʿaṣr tārīkh al-Biqāʿī,* ed. Muḥammad Sālim bin Shadīd al-ʿAwfī (Riyadh, 1992–93), 1:128. We know of Fāris al-Turkmānī

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his return, the (grand?) dragoman of the Mamluk sultan, because a document by a Venetian notary from 1455 mentions a "drogman du sultan" by the name of "Feres" in Cairo in 1454.[91] As can be seen from Table D, below, from the late Turkish period (circa the 1350s) the name **Fāris** was normally given exclusively to European/Anatolian mamluks.[92] It is tempting to see a link between Fāris "the dragoman of the Franks" in Cyprus and a "Feres Mamaluco" who is mentioned in European sources and who was granted fiefs when he arrived in Cyprus in 1465 as an ambassador of the Mamluk sultan,[93] and to see a further link between both of these and Fāris al-Muḥammadī al-Fayrūzī, who is said to have been a Frankish Cypriot (item 4 in Table D),[94] but there is no clear evidence for that last link. Still, the link between Fāris the dragoman and "Feres Mamaluco" is reasonable because dragomans functioned as envoys many times and because the two are specifically related to Cyprus.

(perhaps a deformation of Fāris al-Tarjumān) who was sent by al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq as an envoy to Cyprus in August 1450. See Coureas, "Envoys between Lusignan Cyprus and Mamluk Egypt," 729; idem, "The Manumission of Hospitaller Slaves on Fifteenth-Century Rhodes and Cyprus," in *The Military Orders,* vol. 6.1, *Culture and Conflict in the Mediterranean World,* ed. Jochen Schenk and Mike Carr (London and New York, 2017), 109.

[91] A summary of the document is given online in "Notaires Vénitiens au Moyen Orient (1360–1520)" at http://notaires-venitiens.com/notaries/documents/view/202 (accessed 29 August 2018).

[92] For a detailed discussion see Yosef, "Ethnic Groups," 1:96, 99, 2:136–37. Ayalon mentioned Fāris as a name given to eunuchs and non-eunuchs alike, although it was an Arab name. He did not refer, however, to the "ethnic destination" of the name. See Ayalon, "The Eunuchs," 276–79.

[93] Benjamin Arbel, "Venetian Cyprus and the Muslim Levant, 1473–1570," in *Cyprus and the Crusades/Kypros kai oi Staurophories,* ed. Nicholas Coureas and Jonathan Riley-Smith (Nicosia, 1995), 174; and see also Nicholas Coureas, "Mamluks in the Cypriot Chronicle of George Boustronios and Their Place within a Wider Context," in *Continuity and Change in the Realms of Islam: Studies in Honour of Professor Urbain Vermeulen,* ed. Kristof D'hulster and Jo van Steenbergen (Leuven, 2008), 146.

[94] Fāris al-Muḥammadī al-Fayrūzī is said to have fathered a son in Egypt ca. 1436–37 so he was present in the sultanate when Mamluk sources refer to Fāris the dragoman. Fāris al-Muḥammadī al-Fayrūzī was probably captured in one of the Mamluk military campaigns against the island of Cyprus in the late 1420s.

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Table D: Slaves Named Fāris Starting from the Late Turkish Period on Whose Origin there is Information	
Name (Year of Death)	**Origin**
1. Fāris al-Quṭlūqujā'ī al-Ẓāhirī (d. 1399)	Rūmī[95]
2. Fāris al-Khāzindār al-Rūmī al-Ṭawāshī (d. 1421–22)	al-Rūmī/ Eunuch[96]
3. Fāris al-Ashrafī al-Rūmī al-Ṭawāshī (d. after 1450–51)	al-Rūmī/ Eunuch[97]
4. Fāris al-Muḥammadī al-Fayrūzī (d. after ca. 1495)	Frankish Cypriot[98]

Another dragoman whose name indicates he was a slave is Tanibak al-Tarjumān, who is said to have been returning to Cairo from Cyprus in 1461 with the annual tribute from the Cypriot king when he was caught by the supporters of the sister of the king.[99] At about the same time, Mamluk sources mention Jānibak al-Tarjumān who was sent to Cyprus in 1464, and European sources mention Jānī Beg the dragoman, who arrived in Venice as ambassador in 1465 and 1466.[100] Anselmo Adorno, who visited Egypt in 1470–71, mentions that the grand dragoman in Cairo at that time was named Zam Beg.[101] It is very likely that Tanibak al-Tarjumān and Jānibak/Jānī Beg/Zam Beg the grand dragoman were in fact the same person. In any case, at least during the Circassian period the name **Janibak** was normally given only to Circassians and not to European/Anatolian

[95] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-manhal al-ṣāfī,* 8:373; al-Sakhāwī, *Al-ḍaw' al-lāmiʿ,* 6:164.

[96] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-ḍaw' al-lāmiʿ,* 6:163.

[97] Ibid.

[98] Al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 540; al-Sakhāwī, *Al-ḍaw' al-lāmiʿ,* 6:163.

[99] Al-Malaṭī, *Nayl al-amal,* 6:98–99; idem, *Al-rawḍ al-bāsim,* 2:32–33.

[100] Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Extracts from Abû 'l-Maḥâsin ibn Taghrî Birdî's Chronicle Entitled Ḥawâdith ad-Duhûr fî Madâ 'l-Ayyâm wash-Shuhûr,* ed. William Popper (Berkeley, 1930–42), 3:455; Bauden, "The Role of Interpreters," 33; Von der Hoch, "Muslim Embassies," 168; Moukarzel, "The Translators," 152.

[101] Anselmo Adorno, *Itinéraire d'Anselme Adorno en Terre Sainte, 1470–1471,* ed. Jacques Heers and Georgette de Groer (Paris, 1978), 209. At that time there was another dragoman in the court by the name of Cam Beg. Joos van Ghistele who visited Egypt in 1482–83 mentions a dragoman by the name of Jennibeey in Alexandria. See Joos van Ghistele, *Le voyage en Égypte de Joos van Ghistele 1482–1483,* trans. Renée Bauwens-Préaux (Cairo, 1976), 178. Arnold von Harff, who visited Egypt towards the end of the fifteenth century, mentions that the dragoman in Alexandria was a mamluk. See Von Harff, *The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff,* 93.

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mamluks.[102] The same holds true regarding the name **Tanibak/Tānibak/Tānī Bak** (see Table E, below).[103]

[102] Ibn Taghrībirdī mentions that "only Circassians are called Jānibak in our days." See Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-manhal al-ṣāfī,* 4:235; and see Yosef, "The Names of the *Mamlūk*s." Moukarzel noted that Ibn Ṭūlūn mentions Jānibak al-Faranjī in 1502 and suggested that he and Jānī Beg the dragoman were the same person and therefore Jānī Beg was probably a "European renegade." See Moukarzel, "The Translators," 152; and see Behrens-Abouseif, "Mamluk Artistic Relations," 367 (Ibn al-Ḥimṣī mentions him as Jānam al-Faranjī); and see Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān fī ḥawādith al-zamān,* ed. Khalīl al-Manṣūr (Beirut, 1998), 223 (Jānibak of Frankish origin *[al-Faranjī al-Aṣl]* died in 1504); and see Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-taʿlīq: Yawmīyāt Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Ṭawq 834–915 H/1430–1509 M: Mudhakkirāt kutibat bi-Dimashq fī awākhir al-ʿahd al-mamlūkī 885–908 H/1480–1502 M,* ed. Jaʿfar al-Muhājir (Damascus, 2000–7), 4:1547 (Jānibak seems to have been the brother of Tamurbughā al-Tarjumān the dragoman of Frankish origin. See on the latter below in this section at nn. 116–24). However, Zam Beg the dragoman mentioned by Anselme Adorno is known to have been in connections with Rafaele Adorno, the doge of Genoa, already between 1444 and 1447. See Adorno, *Itinéraire,* 208, n. 1. It seems, thus, that Jānī Beg/Zam Beg the dragoman and Jānibak al-Faranjī could not have been the same person. In any case, all this should remind us that on rare occasions Europeans/Anatolians could receive names that were normally given only to Circassians.

[103] Al-Malaṭī offers a Circassian etymology for the name. Even if linguistically not correct it strongly suggests that the name was given in his days to Circassians. See al-Malaṭī, *Al-rawḍ al-bāsim,* 1:233. And see n. 81, above, for another dragoman who at least according to his name (Sūdūn) was a Circassian slave. If indeed some interpreters were Circassian slaves it raises the question where did they learn European languages. According to Lewis, the Muslim world was reluctant to study non-Muslim languages (Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery,* 77; Gully, *The Culture of Letter-Writing,* 89–90; Moukarzel, "The Translators," 149). One of the possibilities is that they were captives or slaves in Christian lands where they acquired knowledge of European languages but then returned or came to Egypt. For example, Yashbak the Circassian was on a boat that had been intercepted by Franks while sailing to Egypt. The Franks took Yashbak to Cyprus where he served them for a while and learned acrobatic games. Later on he went to Egypt (Yehoshua Frenkel, "Some Notes Concerning the Trade and Education of Slave-Soldiers during the Mamluk Era," in *Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Eastern Mediterranean [c. 1000–1500 CE],* ed. Reuven Amitai and Christoph Cluse [Turnhout, 2017], 196). Asandamur al-Sharābī, who was a Turco-Mongol (Tatar) from the Golden Horde, became a captive *(usira)* in the Crimea and spent about 20 years among Europeans of many nations *(tadāwalathu aydī al-Faranj ʿalá ikhtilāf aṣnāfihā).* He is said to have seen most of Europe *(ghālib bilād al-Faranj).* Eventually, however, he arrived in Egypt. See al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 559. Interestingly, **Asandamur** was a name that, starting from some point during al-Ẓāhir Barqūqʿs reign, was given only to Europeans/Anatolians. After the reign of al-Ẓāhir Barqūq the sources mention Asandamur al-Jaqmaqī (d. 1460), who was a Rūmī, and Asandamur al-Sayfī (d. after ca. 1485), who was a Cypriot (al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 558–59). It would seem that after spending 20 years in Europe, Asandamur al-Sharābī was perceived as a European when arriving in Egypt. Another possibility is that they were in Christian lands during military campaigns and stayed there for a long time before returning to Egypt. For Circassian mamluks or amirs staying in Cyprus after a military campaign, see Arbel, "Venetian Cyprus," 174–77. Still, the possibility that they learned European languages in the territories of the Mamluk Sultanate cannot be excluded.

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Table E: Slaves Named Tanibak during the Circassian Period on Whose Origin There is Information[104]	
Name (Year of Death)	**Origin**
1. Tanibak al-Jarkasī Shādd al-Sharābkhānah (d. 1416)	al-Jarkasī[105]
2. Tanibak al-Jaqmaqī (d. 1441)	Circassian[106]
3. Tanibak al-Burdbakī al-Ẓāhirī (d. 1458)	Circassian[107]
4. Tanibak al-Iyāsī al-Ashrafī Barsbāy (d. 1486)	Circassian[108]
5. Tanibak al-Jamālī al-Ẓāhirī (d. 1503)	Circassian[109]
6. Tanibak al-Muḥammadī al-Ashrafī Ināl (d. after ca. 1485)	Brother of Jānibak and Jānam = Circassian[110]

Taghrī Birdī is the next dragoman with a name that indicates he was a slave. He is first mentioned by European travelers as dragoman in 1481. He was deposed from his position as grand dragoman in 1511 and imprisoned on the charge of treason.[111] He is last mentioned by European and Mamluk sources upon his release from prison in 1513.[112] According to Ibn Iyās, after the imprisonment of Taghrī Birdī the post of grand dragoman remained vacant until a mamluk by the name of Yūnus was appointed to the post in 1514. Before that, Yūnus was a *zaradkāsh,* that is, the person in charge of the sultan's armory, which is a military position. Later he was appointed deputy to Taghrī Birdī and finally grand dragoman.[113] This is a clear example of a mamluk who first filled military positions and then became a dragoman. European visitors to Cairo in 1512 report meeting the sultan's dragoman, a renegade Veronese by the name of Yūnus formerly employed

[104] For a detailed discussion see Yosef, "Ethnic Groups," 1:75, 100, 113–14, 2:147–48.

[105] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 3:26.

[106] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-manhal al-ṣāfī,* 4:22.

[107] Al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 278, 801–3.

[108] Ibid., 297, 799–800.

[109] Ibid., 804–5; Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān wa-wafayāt al-shuyūkh wa-al-aqrān,* ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī (Sidon and Beirut, 1999), 2:169.

[110] Al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 811–12. It was already mentioned that at least during the Circassian period the name **Jānibak** was given exclusively to Circassians (see n. 102, above). The name **Jānam** first appears in the Circassian period and was also given exclusively to Circassians (Yosef, "Ethnic Groups," 1:112–13, 2:149–50).

[111] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr,* 4:210; Behrens-Abouseif, "Mamluk Artistic Relations," 367.

[112] Wansbrough, "A Mamluk Ambassador," 505.

[113] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr,* 4:361–62.

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in the sultan's armory.[114] This is clearly the same Yūnus on whom Ibn Iyās reports, who was perhaps then formally only the deputy of the grand dragoman but was *de facto* grand dragoman.

Another two dragomans, who at least according to their names were slaves, are mentioned in Mamluk sources in the late Mamluk period; however, in contrast to those above, who filled the post of dragoman in Cairo, they are mentioned as having occupied the post of dragoman in the court of the governor of Damascus. The first dragoman mentioned in Damascus is Fāris, who is mentioned by Ibn Ṭūlūn only upon his death in 1517: "On Saturday the 28th died the amir Fāris, who was a *mihmandār* [in charge of hosting visitors] and later a dragoman in the court of the governor [of Damascus]. He was not a bad person."[115] As mentioned, starting from the late Turkish period the name **Fāris** was given exclusively to European/Anatolian mamluks (see Table D above).

The second is the amir Tamurbughā al-Tarjumān al-Qijmāsī, who was the manumitted slave (*ʿatīq*) of the amir Qijmās and is first mentioned in 1490 when he was appointed secretary of the army in Damascus *(nāẓir jaysh Dimashq).*[116] In 1496 he was appointed to the military post of grand chamberlain *(ḥājib kabīr)* in Damascus.[117] Ibn Iyās reports in 1497 that "in Dhū al-Ḥijjah news about the death of Tamurbughā al-Tarjumān arrived from Damascus. He was not a bad person."[118] As far as I know no other historian provides a biographical entry for him. He is referred to with the *nisbah* "al-Faranjī" ("the Frank"), and is said to have been originally a Frank *(aṣluhu Faranjī),* so he must have been of Western European origin.[119] The name **Tamurbughā** seems to have been given exclusively to European/Anatolian mamluks during the Circassian period. Except for Tamurbughā

[114] Wolff, *How Many Miles to Babylon?* 153; and see also Moukarzel, "The Translators," 152–53.

[115] Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān,* 366. On the *mihmandār*s and their engagement in interpretation, see al-Durūbī, "Aṣnāf al-tarājimah," 19.

[116] Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān,* 101, 104, 110; and see ʿAlī ibn Yūsuf ibn ʿAlī ibn Aḥmad al-Buṣrawī, *Tārīkh al-Buṣrawī,* ed. Akram Ḥasan al-ʿUlabī (Damascus, 1988), 141. He is also referred to as the mamluk of Qijmās (see Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān,* 138–40).

[117] Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān,* 140.

[118] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr,* 4:369.

[119] Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān,* 138–39, 142; and see on him also Behrens-Abouseif, "Mamluk Artistic Relations," 365; Moukarzel, "The Translators," 149. Francisco Javier Apellániz discussed in detail the good relationship that Tamurbughā al-Tarjumān had with the Venetians in Syria. He noted that the Venetians wanted him to be in charge of them because he was a Frank like them *(kāna Faranjī mithlahum),* and Tamurbughā seems to have acted in line with the interests of the Venetians. Still, as noted by Apellániz, his exact origin is unknown (Francisco Javier Apellániz Ruiz de Galarreta, *Pouvoir et finance en Mediterranee pre-moderne: le deuxieme Etat mamelouk et le commerce des épices [1382–1517]* [Madrid, 2009], 200–1; and see also Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān,* 101).

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al-Tarjumān, the only other slave by the name Tamurbughā during this period on whose origin we have information is the sultan al-Ẓāhir Tamurbughā (d. 1475), who is said to have been Albanian.[120]

Interestingly, Ibn Ṭūlūn refers to Tamurbughā al-Tarjumān as a convert to Islam the few first times he mentions him *(al-Aslamī/al-mutasharrif bi-al-Islām).*[121] The reason for this is not entirely clear. Other mamluks who functioned as dragomans must also have converted to Islam, as mamluks in general normally (supposedly) did. Perhaps the emphasis on the conversion is something peculiar to Ibn Ṭūlūn, but there is also an alternative explanation. Ibn Ṭūlūn reports in 1497 on a Christian from the neighborhood of the Christians *(ḥārat al-Naṣārá)* who was the neighbor of Tamurbughā the grand chamberlain.[122] So it seems that Tamurbughā the Frankish dragoman lived among Christians and perhaps did not at first convert to Islam. This may be the reason it was important to emphasize that he was a convert to Islam when he was first mentioned in the sources as receiving appointments. It is even possible that he converted to Islam only when receiving an appointment became a possibility. Perhaps we have here a rare glimpse at the fact that some slaves did not automatically convert to Islam but kept their original religions. It is quite possible that European slaves of Christian origin, and more specifically Western European slaves, were more inclined to do so.[123] Such slaves

[120] Normally he is said to have been a "Rūmī." See for example al-Sakhāwī, *Al-ḍaw' al-lāmiʿ*, 3:40–41. Sometimes, however, his specific ethnic origin (i.e., Albanian origin) is mentioned. See Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-nujūm,* 16:376 *(Rūmī al-jins min qabīlat Arnaʾūṭ);* al-Malaṭī, *Al-rawḍ al-bāsim,* 3:305 *(Rūmī al-jins Arnaʾūṭī al-ʿashīrah);* and see also idem, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 782. Interestingly the name Tamurbughā seems also to have been given during the Circassian period to a grandson of a mamluk of "Rūmī" origin (idem, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 44). For a detailed discussion of the name Tamurbughā, see Yosef, "Ethnic Groups," 1:74–76, 107, 2:74–75.

[121] Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān,* 101, 104, 112, 121, 126.

[122] Ibid., 142.

[123] Ayalon mentioned that throughout the history of the struggle between Islamdom and the Byzantine Empire, the monotheistic background of Byzantine prisoners of war greatly diminished the chances of their conversion to Islam, which contributed to the establishment of an institution of ransoming and exchanging prisoners (David Ayalon, "Aspects of the Mamlūk Phenomenon, Part I: The Importance of the Mamlūk Institution," *Der Islam* 53 [1976]: 198). According to Ayalon, in order to facilitate conversion of mamluks to Islam, the Mamluks generally refrained from purchasing slaves from "civilized Christian countries of long-established Christianity" where antagonism to Islam existed. See idem, "The Mamlūks of the Seljuks: Islam's Military Might at the Crossroads," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 6, no. 3 (1996): 328, 325; idem, "The Mamlūk Novice: On His Youthfulness and on His Original Religion," *Revue des études islamiques* 54 (1986): 4–6. On ransoming of Christian captives, see also Frédéric Bauden, "L'Achat d'esclaves et la rédemption des captifs à Alexandrie d'après deux documents arabes d'époque mamelouke conservés aux Archives de l'État à Venise (ASVe)," *Regards croisés sur le Moyen Âge arabe: Mélanges à la mémoire de Louis Pouzet sj (1928–2002),* ed. Anne-Marie Eddé and Emma Gannagé (Beirut, 2005), 314–15. On Frankish prisoners of war who remained Christians and were not incorporated into

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would not have been incorporated into the military establishment, or, alternatively, would have remained rank-and-file mamluks until converted. It is clear that even after conversion Tamurbughā kept his connections with his former co-religionists. This could potentially have also happened with Jewish slaves. Haym (Shāhīn al-Tarjumān), the interpreter of Jewish origin, is said to have converted to Islam only after his father's death, which suggests that his father, who seems to have been enslaved with him, did not convert to Islam before he died.[124] Taking into consideration the fact that Jews or Jewish converts of European origin are known to have functioned as dragomans during the fifteenth century,[125] one may legitimately wonder if some of the slave dragomans of European origin, whose original religion is generally not mentioned in the sources, were also of Jewish origin.

Jewish Mamluks of Circassian Origin

Other mamluks referred to as Jews in Mamluk sources seem to have been of Circassian origin according to the names given to them. Al-Sakhāwī mentions a person by the name of Ibn Jānibak al-Yahūdī ("the Jew").[126] Al-Sakhāwī provides no information on him so his father, Jānibak al-Yahūdī, cannot be identified.[127] Notwithstanding this, it is clear that Jānibak al-Yahūdī belongs to the fifteenth century, and, as has already been mentioned, at least during the Circassian period the name **Jānibak** was given to Circassian slaves.[128]

Ibn Iyās provides a short biographical entry for the amir Uzbak al-Sharīfī (d. 1511): "in that month died a person who was amir of forty *(ṭablkhānah)* by the name of Uzbak al-Sharīfī. He was known as Uzbak the Jew *(al-Yahūdī).* He was not a good person *(ghayr mashkūr al-sīrah).*"[129] Before that, Ibn Iyās mentions his name twice in 1502 in lists of amirs of ten or of forty, so he seems to have had a military career.[130] As far as I know, no other historian refers to Uzbak al-Sharīfī.

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the Mamluk establishment, see Julien Loiseau, "Frankish Captives in Mamlūk Cairo," *Al-Masāq* 23, no. 1 (2011): 37–52.

[124] Tafur, *Travels,* 72; Ashtor, *Toldot ha-Yehudim,* 2:91.

[125] See nn. 6–7, above.

[126] Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 11:219; and see also ibid., 11:239.

[127] Ibn Taghrībirdī mentions a person known as Ibn Jānibak *(yuʿrafu bi-Ibn Ǯānibak)* that became a *dawādār thālith* in Damascus in 1452 and is said to have served al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq for a long time. Ibn Taghrībirdī mentions that he had no respected genealogy nor merit *(lā yuʿrafu la-hu nasab wa-la ḥasab),* in what is probably a derogatory remark connected to his Jewish origins. Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-nujūm,* 15:440.

[128] See n. 102, above.

[129] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr,* 4:237.

[130] Ibid., 4:31, 33.

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Still, from the name it may be inferred that he was of Circassian origin. Again it is al-Malaṭī who provides general information about the "ethnic destination" of the name **Uzbak** during the Circassian period. Uzbak al-Ashrafī Ināl (d. 1484) was one of the favored mamluks *(khawāṣṣ)* of his master al-Ashraf Ināl (1453–61) and was expelled from Egypt upon his master's death.[131] According to al-Malaṭī, Uzbak "was a Rūmī but his name is not a name that is [normally] given to Rūmīs but rather one of the names [normally] given to Circassians" *(Rūmī al-jins wa-ismuhu bi-khilāf ism al-Arwām fa-innahu min asāmī al-Ǧarākisah).*[132] It becomes clear then that at least during the Circassian period the name Uzbak was normally given only to Circassians, which is corroborated by a survey of slaves named Uzbak during the Circassian period on whose origin there is information (see Table F below).[133] Being a favored mamluk of al-Ashraf Ināl, during whose reign several mamluks of European/Anatolian origin (more specifically of Cypriot origin) were promoted to senior positions,[134] it is quite possible that Uzbak al-Ashrafī Ināl was given a name of Circassians, the dominant ethnic group at that time, in order to facilitate his promotion.[135]

Table F: Slaves Named Uzbak during the Circassian Period (or Late Turkish Period) on Whose Origin There is Information

Name (Year of Death)	Origin
1. Uzbak al-Ibrāhīmī al-Ẓāhirī [Khāṣṣ Khurjī] (d. 1404)[136]	Apparently Circassian[137]
2. Uzbak al-Ashrafī Ināl (d. 1484)	Rūmī (exception)
3. Uzbak min Ṭuṭukh al-Ashrafī al-Ẓāhirī (d. 1498)	Circassian[138]
a. Uzbak (a *jundī* mentioned in 1380 as one of the relatives of the Circassian sultan al-Ẓāhir Barqūq)[139]	

[131] Al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 517.

[132] Ibid., 518.

[133] It is possible that it was given to Circassians already during the late Turkish period. For a detailed discussion of the name Uzbak, see Yosef, "Ethnic Groups," 1:72, 99, 123–25, 2:22–23.

[134] Behrens-Abouseif, "Mamluk Artistic Relations," 366.

[135] And see n. 39, above.

[136] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-manhal al-ṣāfī,* 2:341.

[137] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-sulūk,* 3:1174–77.

[138] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-manhal al-ṣāfī,* 2:346.

[139] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-nujūm,* 11:168.

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The reference to Uzbak al-Sharīfī as a Jew did not go unnoticed. Ayalon mentioned it but noted that "[i]t is quite doubtful, however, that he had been a Jew. It is more likely that he got that *'nisbah'* because of his not too good record."[140] Left unexplained is why exactly Uzbak al-Sharīfī was the only amir labeled as a Jew from among dozens and perhaps hundreds of amirs whose records were considered by Mamluk historians as "not too good."

The tendency to dismiss as slander or derogatory an assertion of a connection between a mamluk and the Jewish religion is not restricted to the case of Uzbak al-Sharīfī. Ashtor relates that in the absence of the sultan al-Ashraf Qāytbāy (1468–96) from Cairo there was a conspiracy to depose him, and when the conspiracy was discovered the *dawādār* Yashbak min Mahdī (d. 1480) ordered that the conspirator have the Jewish yellow turban put on his head before he was led through the streets of Cairo in order to humiliate him. Ashtor refers to this incident in the context of a discussion of usages of the word "Jew" as a pejorative in a derogatory and humiliating manner and as evidence for negative attitudes towards Jews during the Mamluk Sultanate.[141] Clearly he excluded the possibility that there was an actual link between the conspirator and the Jewish religion. In this instance, Ashtor relied on Ibn Iyās, who related that in 1477 the conspirator, Burdbak Jibis, who was *amīr ākhūr,* was led on a donkey while wearing the yellow turban of the Jews in order to humiliate him and then expelled from Cairo, but does not mention that Burdbak was actually accused of being a Jew.[142] Al-Malaṭī, however, who provides a long biographical entry for Burdbak al-Sayfī Sūdūn min ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, known as Jibis, who died in 1484 at the age of about 70 years, mentions that Yashbak min Mahdī accused him of becoming a Jew *(ṣāra Yahūdī)* before putting on his head the yellow turban and leading him through the streets of Cairo.[143] Again, one may wonder why it is that among dozens of mamluks or amirs who conspired against Mamluk sultans it was only Burdbak Jibis that was accused of being a Jew.

Burdbak seems to have been a Circassian, as the name was normally given to Circassians during the Circassian period (see Table G below). As can be seen from the table, five of the Burdbaks on whose origin there is information were Circassians (numbers 1, 3, 4, 6, and 7), and one seems to have been a Circassian (number 5). One was a Georgian (number 8); however, as already mentioned, during the Circassian period Caucasian people seem to have received names normally given to Circassians. There is evidence that during that period Alans *(Āṣ),* Abkhazians *(Abāẓā/Abāzā/Abazā),* and *Akhūkh* (Ubykh?) received names given to

[140] Ayalon, "Names," 223.

[141] Ashtor, *Toldot ha-Yehudim,* 2:63–65.

[142] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr,* 3:136–37.

[143] Al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 656.

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Circassians.[144] While there is not much information about Georgians during the Circassian period, it seems reasonable to assume that they also received names given to Circassians at that period.[145] One of the Burdbaks was a Frankish Cypriot (number 2), which is a rare case of a mamluk receiving a name that would not normally have been given to persons of his origin. Al-Malaṭī does not provide

[144]During the Circassian period there is evidence for Alans receiving the names **Dawlāt Bāy**, **Shādbak**, and **Qānibāy** that were given to Circassians. See Yosef, "Ethnic Groups," 1:130–31; and see also idem, "The Names of the *Mamlūk*s." In fact, according to al-ʿAynī (d. 1451), the Alans were one of the Circassian peoples *(qabāʾil).* See Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-ʿAynī, *Al-sayf al-muhannad fī sīrat al-Malik al-Muʾayyad Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī,* ed. Fahīm Muḥammad Shaltūt (Cairo, 1967), 26. There is evidence for Abkhazians receiving the names **Ināl**, **Nawrūz**, **Kasbāy**, **Jān Bulāṭ**, **Shādbak**, **Qānṣuwah**, and **Khāyirbak** that were given to Circassians. See Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-manhal al-ṣāfī,* 4:249; idem, *Al-nujūm,* 16:385; al-Malaṭī, *Al-rawḍ al-bāsim,* 3:464, 332; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr,* 5:483; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mutʿat al-adhhān min al-tamattuʿ bi-al-iqrān bayna tarājim al-shuyūkh wa-al-aqrān,* ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl al-Shaybānī al-Mawṣilī (Beirut, 1999), 1:373–74. In fact, the Abkhazians are explicitly referred to as a kind of Circassians by Mamluk historians *(al-ṭāʾifah min jins al-Ǧarākisah al-lādhīna yuqālu la-hum al-Abāzā).* See al-Malaṭī, *Al-rawḍ al-bāsim,* 3:332; and see also al-ʿAynī, *Al-sayf al-muhannad,* 26 (the *Abāzā* are one of the tribes *[buṭūn]* of the Circassians). Nawrūz al-Muḥammadī al-Ashrafī is said to have been known as "Abazā" which is "a kind of Circassian" *(wa-huwa nawʿ min al-Ǧarkas)* (al-Malaṭī, *Al-rawḍ al-bāsim,* 3:464) and Khāyirbak min Malbāy is said to have been "a Circassian [of the] Abkhazian [branch]" *(Ǧarkasī al-jins Abāẓā),* and is said not to have been born in the land of the Circassians *(bilād Ǧarkas)* but rather close to the land of the Georgians *(bilād al-Kurj)* (Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr,* 5:483). As for Akhūkh, they received the names **Nawrūz** and **Shādbak** that were given to Circassians (see al-Sakhāwī, *Al-ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 3:289; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr,* 3:395). Qānṣuwah al-Ghawrī is said to have known seven languages. The first five mentioned are Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Kurdish, and Armenian. The sixth language mentioned is Circassian, and the seventh is Abkhazian-Akhūkh-Alan *(Awaza Akhūkh Ās).* See Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī, "Kitāb Nafāʾis al-Majālis al-Sulṭānīyah fī Ḥaqāʾiq al-Asrār al-Qurʾānīyah," in *Majālis al-Sulṭān al-Ghawrī: Ṣafaḥāt min tārīkh Miṣr fī al-qarn al-ʿāshir al-hijrī,* ed. ʿAbd al-Wahhāb ʿAzzām (Cairo, 2010), 165. So, clearly Abkhazian-Akhūkh-Alan were considered at that time linguistically related and the closest to the Circassian language. Today, Abkhaz-Abaza is considered to be linguistically the closest to Circassian dialects (Karbadian and Adyghe), and to the recently extinct Ubykh. See Viacheslav A. Chirikba, "Abaza personal names," *Iran and the Caucasus* 17, no. 4 (2013): 391. The Circassians and the genetically and linguistically closely related Abkhaz-Abazas and the Ubykh made up the indigenous northwestern Caucasian peoples. See H. J. A. J. Smeets, "Ubykh," *EI2,* 10:766; Amjad M. Jaimoukha, *The Circassians: A Handbook* (Richmond, 2001), 19, 26. On the relatedness between Circassians, Abkhaz-Abaza, and Ubykh, see also A. Bennigsen and H. Carrère d'Encausse, "Beskesek-Abaza," *EI2,* 1:1190; Ch. Quelquejay, "Čerkes," *EI2,* 2:21–22; Amjad M. Jaimoukha, "Circassians, Modern," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 3rd ed., http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_24624 (accessed 29 August 2018). It seems quite reasonable then that *Akhūkh* is the Arab rendering of Ubykh.

[145]There is one case during the Circassian period of a Georgian mamluk that was mistakenly thought by some people to be a Circassian. See al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 577. This also suggetsts a perceived proximity between the two groups.

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in this case a comment regarding the exception nor an explanation for it; however, it seems to resemble other rare cases in which a favored mamluk of European/Anatolian origin received a name normally given to Circassians in order to facilitate his promotion, a phenomenon that seems to be attested during the reigns of al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq and al-Ashraf Ināl, who promoted many mamluks of European/Anatolian origin.[146] Burdbak al-Qubrusī al-Ashrafī is said to have been raised from a young age in Ināl's harem *(ḥarīm)* and he was later married to one of Ināl's daughters, so he was clearly a favored mamluk that was groomed from a young age.[147]

In any case, according to al-Malaṭī, "Jibis," the nickname of Burdbak the conspirator who is said to have been a Jew, is a Circassian word *(lafẓah Ǯarkasīyah),*[148] which leaves almost no doubt that Burdbak Jibis was a Circassian. Burdbak Jibis was clearly a military slave. He was originally a mamluk of al-Ashraf Barsbāy and it is explicitly stated that he stayed in the barracks. During the days of al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq he became a *khāṣṣakī* and *amīr ākhūr* (probably *thālith*—a junior position in the royal stables filled by simple soldiers).[149] He seems to have been governor of Gaza during the reign of al-Ẓāhir Khushqadam.[150]

Table G: Slaves Named Burdbak on Whose Origin There is Information	
Name (Year of Death)	**Origin**
1. Burdbak al-Jakamī al-ʿAjamī (d. 1451)	Circassian[151]
2. Burdbak al-Qubrusī al-Ashrafī [Faranj] (d. 1464)	Frankish Cypriot (exception)[152]
3. Burdbak al-Ẓāhirī Jaqmaq [al-Mashṭūb] (d. 1470)	Circassian[153]
4. Burdbak al-Muḥammadī al-Ashrafī (d. 1483)	Circassian[154]

[146] See nn. 39, 131–35, above.

[147] Al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 662; Behrens-Abouseif, "Mamluk Artistic Relations," 366.

[148] Al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 654–55.

[149] Ibid., 655.

[150] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-nujūm,* 16:259.

[151] He was a relative of ʿAlī Bāy min Ṭarābāy al-ʿAjamī (d. 1453) who was a Circassian. See Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith al-duhūr,* ed. ʿIzz al-Dīn, 2:476. On Burdbak al-Jakamī, see al-Sakhāwī, *Al-ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ,* 3:7.

[152] Al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 662.

[153] ʿAlī ibn Dāʾūd al-Ṣayrafī, *Inbāʾ al-haṣr bi-abnāʾ al-ʿaṣr,* ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1970), 302–3.

[154] He was the relative of the Circassian sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy. See al-Sakhāwī, *Al-ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ*, 3:7; al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 667–68.

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5. Burdbak min Bakhshāyish al-Ashrafī Ināl (d. 1476–77)	The slave dealer who brought him to Egypt was Circassian[155]
6. Burdbak al-Sayfī Jarbāsh Kurt (d. 1480)	Circassian[156]
7. Burdbak al-Muḥammadī al-Ashrafī *(al-khāzindār)* (d. after 1501)	Circassian[157]
8. Burdbak al-Kurjī al-Ashrafī al-Khāṣṣakī (d. after ca. 1485)	Georgian[158]

So it seems that most of the mamluks that are said to have been Jews were Circassians. This is in all likelihood not a coincidence. Jewish settlement in the Caucasus may date as far back as the third century. After the Muslim invasion of the Caucasus in the seventh century there is evidence for immigration of Jews to the region, which continued until the thirteenth century but apparently became slower starting in the eleventh century. In 1254 the monk Wilhelm Rubruquis, a Flemish traveler, noted the existence of "a great number of Jews" throughout the eastern Caucasus.[159] The Mamluk historian Ibn Taghrībirdī reports that in 1452 "a Jew from among the merchants of Circassia" (*Yahūdī min tujjār al-Jārkas* [!]) was present in Cairo.[160] Ottoman records on the population in Kaffa in 1545 refer

[155] Al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 650, 647.

[156] He was a relative of the Circassian sultan al-Ashraf Qāytbāy. See ibid., 650–52; idem, *Nayl al-amal,* 7:268.

[157] Some said that he came from the same town as the Circassian sultan al-Ashraf Qāytbāy. See al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 665–67; and see also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr,* 4:7 (he is last mentioned in 1501).

[158] Al-Malaṭī, *Al-majmaʿ al-mufannan,* 665.

[159] Mordkhai Neishtat and Michael Zand, "Mountain Jews," *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* 2nd ed., 14:580; and see also Dan D. Y. Shapira, "Caucasus (Mountain Jews)," *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World,* ed. Norman A. Stillman, http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy1.athensams.net/entries/encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world/caucasus-mountain-jews-COM_0005160?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world&s.q=mountain+jews (accessed 29 August 2018).

[160] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith al-duhūr,* ed. ʿIzz al-Dīn, 2:366; and see also Neishtat and Zand, "Mountain Jews," 14:580. The Circassian sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy (d. 1438) is said to have been sold by his father and eventually to have become the slave of a Jew. See Ashtor, *Toldot ha-Yehudim,* 2:70. According to one report this Jew brought Barsbāy to Egypt *(jalabahu ilá Miṣr)* (al-Maqrīzī, *Al-sulūk,* 4:1065). According to another report, however, it seems that after he was bought by the Jew he was captured *(subiya)* and brought to Egypt *(juliba).* See idem, *Durar al-ʿuqūd al-farīdah fī tarājim al-aʿyān al-mufīdah,* ed. Maḥmūd al-Jalīlī (Beirut, 2002), 1:465–66. According to the first

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to three households of "Circassian Jews."[161] Isolated Jewish settlements could be found throughout the Caucasus until the twentieth century.[162]

As has been mentioned, there is evidence that starting in the 1350s there was an increase in the number of Circassian and European/Anatolian slaves present in the territories of the Mamluk Sultanate.[163] Until that time the so-called Golden Horde was the Mamluk Sultanate's main source for slaves. The decline of the Golden Horde and the Islamization of its Turco-Mongol inhabitants forced the Mamluk Sultanate to search for alternative sources for slaves. Consequently, the Caucasus gradually became the main source for slaves, and Europe/Anatolia became a secondary source.[164] Starting in the reign of al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (1382–99), and more specifically in his second reign (1390–1399), the Circassians were favored and gradually became the majority in the territories of the Mamluk Sultanate.[165] Al-Qalqashandī, who completed his *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshá* in 1412, wrote that in his days the Circassians had become the majority of the army and there were only a few Turco-Mongols in the army.[166] After a short recovery of the Turco-Mongols during the reign of al-Muʾayyad Shaykh (1412–21), the ethnic transformation became complete.[167] There is not a single biographical entry for a Turco-Mongol mamluk

report it seems that the Jew was a slave merchant, but it is not entirely clear if he was a Circassian; according to the second report it seems that the Jew was a Circassian, but not necessarily a slave merchant. Al-Maqrīzī hints that Barsbāy absorbed the bad qualities of his Jewish master *(talaqqana akhlāqahu wa-taṭabbaʿa bi-ṭibāʿihi)* (idem, *Al-sulūk,* 4:1065). Interestingly, Ashtor, who was well aware of al-Maqrīzī's comment, seems to have accepted the report about the Jewish master of Barsbāy as trustworthy despite its negative tone (Ashtor, *Toldot ha-Yehudim,* 2:70). As mentioned, in another case where a connection between a mamluk and the Jewish religion was reported in Mamluk sources in a negative tone, Ashtor excluded the possibility that the mamluk was in fact a Jew (see n. 141, above). It suggests that Ashtor simply excluded the possibility of the existence of Jewish mamluks and accepted the report on Barsbāy only because he himself (a mamluk) was not said to have been a Jew.

[161] Dan D. Y. Shapira, "Krymchaks," *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World,* http://referenceworks.brillonline.com.proxy1.athensams.net/entries/encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world/krymchaks-SIM_000265?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world&s.q=Krymchaks (accessed 29 August 2018).

[162] Jane Hathaway, "Jews among the Grandees of Ottoman Egypt," in *Jews, Christians and Muslims in Medieval and Early Modern Times: A Festschrift in Honor of Mark R. Cohen,* ed. Arnold E. Franklin et al. (Leiden, 2014), 164.

[163] See n. 37, above.

[164] Yosef, "Cross-Boundary Hatred," 187–89.

[165] See for example al-Maqrīzī, *Al-sulūk,* 3:943; Walter J. Fischel, "Ascensus Barcoch: A Latin Biography of the Mamlūk Sultan Barqūq of Egypt (d. 1399) Written by B. de Mignanelli," *Arabica* 6 (1959): 162; Ayalon, "The Circassians," 139–40.

[166] Ayalon, "The Circassians," 140.

[167] Ibid., 142.

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who arrived in the sultanate after the days of al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq (1438–53). European/Anatolian mamluks (Rūmīs) enjoyed al-Nāṣir Faraj's favor (1399–1412).[168] It seems that European/Anatolian mamluks started playing a more prominent role during the reign of al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq (1438–53), at a time when hardly any Turco-Mongols were arriving anymore.

In short, Mamluk historians started referring to mamluks as Jews only when mamluks started arriving from the Caucasus (Circassians) and Europe, where Jewish communities are known to have existed. During the Turkish period of the sultanate (1250–1382), when most mamluks were Turks, Mongols, or Turco-Mongols, no mamluk is said to have been a Jew. Moreover, even in the fifteenth century apparently only Circassian or European mamluks are said to have been Jews, and no Turco-Mongol mamluk is said to have been a Jew although some were still arriving. Importantly, when describing the Mamluk army in Cairo, Frescobaldi, who visited Egypt in 1384, says: "[t]heir soldiers are Turks, Tatars, Arabs, and some Saracens of Syria [i.e., Turkmens], and a few renegades such as Jews and Christians of every generation."[169] Frescobaldi was writing before the second reign of al-Ẓāhir Barqūq, at a time when Circassian and European/Anatolian mamluks were already present in greater numbers but still had not become the most conspicuous element in the army.[170] At that time, most of the army was still comprised of Turco-Mongols ("Turks" and "Tatars") and the mainly auxiliary forces of the Bedouins ("Arabs") and Turkmens. The Jewish and Christian "renegades" (i.e., slaves who converted to Islam) that Frescobaldi is referring to were in all likelihood Circassians and Europeans/Anatolians, and they are differentiated from the Turco-Mongols, among whom there were apparently no Jews or Christians. Frescobaldi's report makes it relatively clear that by the late fourteenth century few mamluks were originally Jews and that these mamluks most likely originated in the Caucasus and Europe.

The fact that sometimes when Mamluk historians of the Circassian period refer to a mamluk as a Jew they also add negative and derogatory remarks does not necessarily mean that these mamluks were not actually Jews and that the reference to them as Jews was mere slander. Though negative attitudes towards Jews also existed during the Turkish period of the sultanate,[171] and in fact the persecu-

[168] Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-sulūk,* 3:1174.

[169] Frescobaldi, "Pilgrimage," 48.

[170] For European travelers' reports from the fifteenth century mentioning Circassians and Europeans among the soldiers of the Mamluk Sultanate, see for example Ulrich Haarmann, "The Mamluk System of Rule in the Eyes of Western Travelers," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 5 (2001): 6–16.

[171] See for example Ashtor, *Toldot ha-Yehudim,* 1:336–47, 279–80; and see also Yehoshua Frenkel, "Conversion Stories from the Mamlūk Period," in *Muslim-Jewish Relations in the Middle Islamic Period: Jews in the Ayyubid and Mamluk Sultanates (1171–1517),* ed. Stephan Conermann (Göttin-

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tion of Jews was more severe during that period than it was during the Circassian period,[172] there is no evidence that Mamluk historians in that period referred to mamluks as Jews in order to slander them. All this suggests that at least some of the mamluks said to have been Jews were actually Jews. It is less likely that bad-behaving mamluks were said to have been of Jewish origin simply to slander them, and rather more likely that the (true) Jewish origin of bad-behaving mamluks was highlighted in order to make more general statements about the bad character of the Jews. The story about the Jewish conspirator Burdbak Jibis can also be seen as a "cautionary tale" against following and trusting Jews.[173] In any case, it is relatively clear that the phenomenon of European and Circassian mamluks of Jewish origin was not unknown during the Circassian period.

Two Mamluk Sultans of Jewish Origin? The Circassian al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq (d. 1453) and the Albanian al-Ẓāhir Khushqadam (d. 1467)

As mentioned above, Ibn Taghrībirdī reports that in 1452 "a Jew from among the merchants of Circassia" was present in Cairo.[174] This report did not go unnoticed and was used by modern scholars as evidence for contacts between the Jews of the

gen, 2017), 78–82; Amir Mazor, "Jewish Court Physicians in the Mamluk Sultanate during the First Half of the Eighth/Fourteenth Century," *Medieval Encounters* 20 (2014): 42; Luke Yarbrough, "'A Rather Small Genre': Arabic Works Against Non-Muslim State Officials," *Der Islam* 93, no. 1 (2016): 141, 146.

[172] Ashtor, *Toldot ha-Yehudim,* 1:288, 303–23, 2:62–64, 87; Mazor, "Jewish Court Physicians," 38–41; Yarbrough, "'A Rather Small Genre,'" 139. Whether this led to a "decline" in the position of Jews is not relevant to the matter at hand, on that see Nathan Hofer, "The Ideology of Decline and the Jews of Ayyubid and Mamluk Syria," in *Muslim-Jewish Relations in the Middle Islamic Period,* 95–120; Mazor, "Jewish Court Physicians," 38.

[173] As noted by Jane Hathaway in the context of her discussion of Jewish mamluks among the Ottoman grandees, Muslim historians of the medieval and early modern eras deployed the experiences of individual non-Muslims in their narratives as examples of inappropriate behavior, and some accounts on the behavior of grandees of Jewish origin may be construed as a "cautionary tale against allowing a converted Jew to amass such a degree of military force." See Hathaway, "Jews among the Grandees," 162–63. On negative perception of Jews during the Ottoman period, see Michael Nizri, "Reflection on the Traits and Images Associated with Jews in Seventeenth Century Ottoman Sources," *Hamsa: Journal of Judaic and Islamic Studies* 4 (2017–18); Hakan T. Karateke, "An Ottoman Anti-Judaism," in *Disliking Others: Loathing, Hostility, and Distrust in Premodern Ottoman Lands,* ed. Hakan T. Karateke, H. Erdem Çipa, and Helga Anetshofer (Boston, 2018); idem, "Evliyā Çelebī's Perception of Jews," in *Disliking Others;* Bilha Moor, "The Jew, the Orthodox Christian, and the European in Ottoman Eyes, ca. 1550–1700," in *Disliking Others.*

[174] See n. 160, above.

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Caucasus and Jewish communities in the Mediterranean.[175] It was also used by Yossef Rapoport in his discussion of the relations between royal justice *(siyāsah)* and religious law *(sharīʿah)* under the Mamluks.[176] According to Ibn Taghrībirdī, a Muslim brought suit before a Maliki qadi against the Jewish Circassian merchant and asked for a court order that would require the Jew to seek justice only through shariʿah courts. The qadi issued the order, but the Jew refused to accept it so the qadi had him beaten and imprisoned. The Jew complained to the sultan, al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq, who had the qadi brought before him and told him that royal justice runs the same course as religious law so the Jew could seek justice with the sultan. Then, al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq ordered the qadi imprisoned. Rapoport found in this report evidence for the authority of military courts in matters of commercial transactions and evidence for royal protection for foreign merchants.[177]

The historian al-Biqāʿī (d. 1480), however, offers a totally different and somewhat surprising explanation for al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq's actions. He reports on the incident with the "Circassian Jew" *(Yahūdī Sharkasī)* in a more detailed manner than Ibn Taghrībirdī. Whereas in Ibn Taghrībirdī's report the fact that the foreign merchant was a Jew seems marginal and there is no particularly negative tone in the report, al-Biqāʿī refers to the Jew's objection to the qadi's order as "stubbornness/disobedience to God" *(ʿinād)*, one of the negative qualities traditionally attributed to the Jews. According to al-Biqāʿī, al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq not only imprisoned the qadi but also ordered the beating and imprisonment of the Muslim who brought suit against the Circassian Jew. Then al-Biqāʿī comments that "the whole incident verifies the claim *(muṣaḥḥiḥah li-mā kāna yuqālu)* that this sultan was a Jew in Circassia, and that he remained a Jew *(kāna Yahūdī fī bilād al-Sharkas wa-annahu bāqin ʿalá dīnihim)* because he used to hurt the Christians but did not harm the Jews."[178] Al-Biqāʿī adds a report from Amīn al-Dīn Yaḥyá al-Aqṣarāʾī (d. 1475), a well-known religious scholar, also suggesting that al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq was lenient towards the Jews.[179] He concludes by mentioning that in general al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq the tyrant *(jabbār)* used to humiliate religious scholars. This made al-Biqāʿī think that what one of the smart and religious soldiers had told him was true, namely, that most of the military men remained committed to their original religion *(anna ghālibahum ʿalá adyānihim al-lātī kānū ʿalayhā)*. The only way to check if they were true Muslims is to examine their behavior towards the Muslim religious

[175] Neishtat and Zand, "Mountain Jews," 14:580.

[176] Yossef Rapoport, "Royal Justice and Religious Law: *Siyāsah* and Shariʿah under the Mamluks," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 16 (2012): 87.

[177] Ibid. And see also Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith al-duhūr*, ed. ʿIzz al-Dīn, 2:366.

[178] Al-Biqāʿī, *Iẓhār al-ʿaṣr*, 1:219.

[179] Ibid., 1:219–20.

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scholars. Those who do not respect Muslim religious scholars must still respect the religious scholars of their original religion.[180]

How should we treat the information given by al-Biqāʿī regarding the Jewish origins of al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq? There is of course no real evidence that al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq, who is normally depicted as a strict Muslim who consulted religious scholars, favored the Jews in comparison to the Christians, and in his days Jews and Christians were both persecuted.[181] In addition, as already mentioned, the fact that the merchant was a Jew seems to be incidental and, as Rapoport noted, al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq's actions should be understood as royal intervention in matters of commercial transactions and as protection for foreign merchants in general. Moreover, as Li Guo demonstrated, "al-Biqāʿī's sentiment against Jaqmaq is extraordinarily personal. And so is his character assassination, so to speak, of the latter in his *Chronicle*."[182] The roots of al-Biqāʿī's hostility towards al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq are easy to detect. Al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq dismissed al-Biqāʿī from several positions which he held, imprisoned him, and then exiled him to India in 1453.[183] In order to damage the image of Jaqmaq, al-Biqāʿī used scandalizing anecdotes and critical comments. One example given by Guo is al-Biqāʿī's account of al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq's marriage in 1451. While other historians report briefly on this marriage, al-Biqāʿī's story is lengthy and sensational. The bride is said to have been a minor originally engaged to Jaqmaq's son, and the dirty, old, impotent Jaqmaq could not perform intercourse with her on the wedding night.[184] Al-Biqāʿī says that Jaqmaq was "the problem of the era" and that all the chaos and turmoil of his reign were his fault. Jaqmaq is said to have been "sly and sophisticated, extremely tough, having the innate property of… evil, tyranny, malice, and jealousy," but he deceitfully knew how to hide his true nature.[185] To all this now should be added that he was in fact a Jew pretending to be a good Muslim.

The personal hostility of al-Biqāʿī towards Jaqmaq argues against accepting his report regarding Jaqmaq's Jewish origins as historically true and suggests that we are dealing here with personal slander. Still, given what we have established regarding Jewish mamluks of Circassian origin (see above), the possibility that Jaqmaq was in fact originally a Jew should not be totally excluded. Guo noted that

[180] Ibid., 1:220.

[181] Ashtor, *Toldot ha-Yehudim,* 2:72–75; and see also Mark R. Cohen, "Jews in the Mamlūk Environment: The Crisis of 1442 (A Geniza Study)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 47 (1984): 429–30.

[182] Li Guo, "Al-Biqāʿī's Chronicle: A Fifteenth Century Learned Man's Reflection on His Time and World," in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt (c. 950–1800),* ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden, 2001), 140.

[183] Ibid., 123, 140.

[184] Ibid., 140–41.

[185] Ibid., 143–44.

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al-Biqāʿī's criticism and fierce attacks against al-Ẓāhir Jaqmaq makes one wonder "since when did Mamluk historians begin to feel comfortable expressing their critical opinions on living rulers? And how far could they go?"[186] According to Guo, "it is unlikely that al-Biqāʿī would fabricate any of the stories in his writing," but he certainly had the liberty to comment on them and manipulate them.[187] Could al-Biqāʿī allow himself to manipulatively invent a Jewish origin for Jaqmaq because of his (true) support of a Jewish merchant? Or was his manipulation restricted to putting emphasis on Jaqmaq's (true) Jewish origin, normally ignored by historians and deemed irrelevant, as a manipulative and irrelevant explanation for his support of a Jewish merchant? As much as we would have liked to conclude that a Mamluk sultan of Jewish origin was found, it is advisable to curb our enthusiasm in this particular case. Still, our hopes to find a Mamluk sultan of Jewish origin do not end here.

In the biographical entry of Sultan al-Ẓāhir Khushqadam (d. 1468) the historian al-Malaṭī writes that he was "a Rūmī of the Albanian people" *(Rūmī al-jins Arnaʾūṭī al-qabīlah).*[188] Towards the end of the biographical entry, which is generally not particularly negative in tone, al-Malaṭī says that in his later days al-Ẓāhir Khushqadam became violent and his behavior bad. He concludes that Khushqadam was deceitful *(kathīr al-makr wa-al-ḥiyal)* and that while he perhaps hid it he was evil from the inside *(aswad al-bāṭin).* Directly afterwards, al-Malaṭī adds that a trustworthy person told him that Khushqadam was not a Christian Albanian but rather a Jewish Albanian *(kāna min Yahūd al-Arnaʾūṭ lā min Naṣārāhā)* and the fact that he was redheaded *(al-ṣufrah al-lātī kānat taʿlūhu)* is one of the best proofs that it was true; however, God knows best.[189] While at first sight this might appear as personal slander against al-Ẓāhir Khushqadam it may well be a general statement about the treachery of Jews deduced from the behavior of one particular Jew. Al-Malaṭī does not seem to have had anything personal against al-Ẓāhir Khushqadam. In fact, in the biographical entries of Khushqadam and that of al-Malaṭī's father Khalīl ibn Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī (d. 1468), al-Malaṭī emphasizes that the

[186] Ibid., 147.

[187] Ibid., 147–48.

[188] Al-Malaṭī, *Al-rawḍ al-bāsim,* 3:445.

[189] Ibid., 3:447. Other historians also refer to the red hair of al-Ẓāhir Khushqadam; see Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-nujūm,* 16:307 *("taʿlūhu ṣufrah dhahabīyah ḥasanah");* Ibn Taghrībirdī also mentions that his beard was blondish. Red hair is indeed much more common among Ashkenazi Jews than in the general population. In Medieval and Renaissance Europe red hair symbolized the fires of hell and its demons. Red hair was associated with Jews and Judas and connected to their treachery and demonic qualities. See for example Leonid Livak, *The Jewish Persona in the European Imagination: A Case of Russian Literature* (Stanford, 2010), 89–90. It is not clear at all if al-Malaṭī mentions Khushqadam's red hair in a negative manner. Ibn Taghrībirdī mentions that his red hair was beautiful and does not seem to use this description in a negative manner.

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two were close friends and companions *(ṣuḥbah baynahumā akīdah),*[190] and that Khushqadam used to respect his father *(yuʿaẓẓimuhu)*[191] and made him a close associate *(qarrabahu wa-ikhtaṣṣa bi-hi).*[192] In addition, someone who would have wanted to personally slander Khushqadam by saying that he was a Jew would have been less likely to add "but God knows best" to the report. Moreover, there was no particular reason for al-Malaṭī to claim that Khushqadam was specifically a Jew from Albania and not a Christian, because his opinion of Christians, like the opinion of other Muslim writers, was similarly negative, and they were also considered treacherous. For example, al-Malaṭī relates that he had a slave from Sardinia *(min ʿulūj Sardīnyah)* who converted to Islam and was manumitted by him. Al-Malaṭī says that he treated the slave kindly and trusted him, and the slave acted as if he was his obedient servant. At some point, however, he ran away with al-Malaṭī's property, renounced Islam *(irtadda),* and returned to Sardinia.[193] Later on al-Malaṭī found out that "this dog my slave in fact remained a Christian all the time keeping his infidel belief to himself and pretending that he was a Muslim" *(hādhā al-kalb mamlūkī kāna bāqiyan ʿalá dīn al-Naṣrānīyah mubṭin al-kufr muẓhir al-Islām).*[194] All this suggests that it is quite possible that al-Ẓāhir Khushqadam was actually of Jewish origin.

Jewish settlement existed in Albania perhaps as early as the late Second Temple period. Closer to the period of the Mamluk Sultanate, Benjamin of Tudela, who visited the area around 1169 or 1170, found Jews in the region. Some Hungarian Jews migrated to Albania in the wake of the Black Death in the fourteenth century. Toward the end of the century, they were joined by Jews expelled from France, and Romaniots from Salonica. In the late fifteenth century and afterward, Spanish and Italian exiles settled in Albania, many of them in seaports, and consequently the number of Jews in Albania increased.[195] Albania came under direct Ottoman rule between 1415 and 1417,[196]but Albanians already started fleeing from the Ottoman advance in the Balkans in the 1380s, and some sold themselves into

[190] Al-Malaṭī, *Al-rawḍ al-bāsim,* 3:445.

[191] Ibid., 4:129.

[192] Ibid., 4:127.

[193] Ibid., 2:229–30.

[194] Ibid., 2:294. And see also Yosef, "Cross-Boundary Hatred," 199.

[195] Yitzchak Kerem, "Albania," *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World,* http://referenceworks.brill-lonline.com.proxy1.athensams.net/entries/encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world/albania-COM_0001160?s.num=0&s.f.s2_parent=s.f.book.encyclopedia-of-jews-in-the-islamic-world&s.q=albania) (accessed 2 September 2018); and see also Simon Marcus, "Albania," *Encyclopaedia Judaica,* 2nd ed., 1:584.

[196] Kerem, "Albania."

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slavery.[197] From the second half of the fourteenth century, Albanians could have been enslaved in battles or border raids, could have sold themselves into slavery, or could have been captured in the course of Adriatic piracy.[198] From that period on, then, Albanian slaves could have reached the Mamluk Sultanate through the slave-trade or as gifts from the Ottomans.[199] Some of these slaves may well have been Jews and al-Ẓāhir Khushqadam may well have been one of them.

Concluding Remarks

Mamluk sources mention a few slaves that are said to have been Jews, and most of them seem to have had military careers (i.e., they were mamluks in the full sense of the word). Most of the time, references to mamluks as Jews by Mamluk historians are accompanied by a negative evaluation of their personalities or actions. Some of these references to mamluks as Jews have been noticed by Mamlukists, but they tend to dismiss them as slander. They claim that these mamluks were known as or said to have been Jews only because of their bad record, and do not consider the possibility that these mamluks were actually (or at least had been) Jews. It is not explained why mamluks are only rarely said to have been Jews despite the fact that dozens or even hundreds of mamluks are described negatively in Mamluk sources. The fact that when Mamluk historians refer to a mamluk as a Jew they also add negative and derogatory remarks does not necessarily mean that these mamluks were not actually Jews and that the reference was mere slander. While it cannot be denied that the word "Jew" could be, and was, used as a pejorative, it should be noted that during the Turkish period of the sultanate, when most of the mamluks were Turks, Mongols, or Turco-Mongols, there are no reports on mamluks that are said to have been Jews. We start hearing such reports only during the Circassian period, when most mamluks originated from the Caucasus and Europe, where Jewish communities are known to have existed.

[197] William D. Phillips Jr., *Slavery in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia* (Philadelphia, 2013), 60.

[198] Nur Sobers-Khan, *Slaves Without Shackles: Forced Labour and Manumission in the Galata Court Registers, 1560–1572* (Berlin, 2014), 95–96. On piracy in the Mediterranean in the second half of the fourteenth century, see Benjamin Arbel, "Slave Trade and Slave Labor in Frankish Cyprus (1191–1571)," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 14 (1993): 156.

[199] On European/Anatolian slaves given as gifts to Mamluk sultans by the Ottomans, see Behrens-Abouseif, *Practicing Diplomacy in the Mamluk Sultanate,* 85–93. Only two Albanian mamluks are mentioned in Mamluk sources. The sultan al-Ẓāhir Tamurbughā is said to have been brought by a slave dealer to Syria (he was bought by the governor of Tripoli) ca. 1421, that is, shortly after Albania came under direct Ottoman rule. He must have arrived in Syria from the slave markets of Anatolia (al-Malaṭī, *Al-rawḍ al-bāsim,* 3:304–5; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-nujūm,* 16:376–77). Al-Ẓāhir Khushqadam was brought to Cairo by a Muslim slave dealer in 1412–13 or 1413–14, that is, shortly before Albania came under direct Ottoman rule; see al-Malaṭī, *Al-rawḍ al-bāsim,* 2:80, 3:445.

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It is also only then that European travelers visiting Egypt report that some of the soldiers of the sultanate were Jews. Moreover, during the Circassian period, the mamluks that are said to have been Jews seem to have been European (Spanish and Albanian) or Circassian mamluks but not Turco-Mongols. All this suggests that at least some of these mamluks were actually Jews, and that in any case the phenomenon of European and Circassian mamluks of Jewish origin was not unknown at that time.

Jane Hathaway has recently discussed the phenomenon of Jews or "Jewish mamluks" among the military grandees of Ottoman Egypt who "seem to have comprised a tiny Jewish parallel to the hundreds of Christian converts from well outside Egypt who every year joined the military-administrative elite of Egypt." Several such figures may be found between the early eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. As Hathaway noted· "[w]hile converted Jews may occasionally have joined the households of Egypt's governors and leading grandees during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it is difficult to find any trace of them in the available sources."[200] Hathaway has connected the phenomenon to demographic transformations of the eighteenth century, i.e., mainly the influx of Georgian mamluks (captured in slave raids) into Ottoman territory starting from the seventeenth century displacing the recruits from the Balkans and Anatolia (*devşirme*),[201] but also the influx of Great Russians (Rus) captured in the Ottoman-Russian wars of the eighteenth century,[202] and Western European mercenaries who by the end of the eighteenth century started being recruited into Ottoman households.[203] While most of the slaves or recruits from these locations were Christians, the "occasional Jewish recruit" or "occasional Jew" captured and sold as mamluks were incorporated into the households like the far larger population of Christian recruits or slaves. As we have seen, a similar phenomenon may be detected during the Mamluk Sultanate. The appearance of Jewish mamluks in the sources is clearly connected to a demographic transformation starting circa the 1350s, i.e., the replacement of Turco-Mongol slaves from the Golden Horde by slaves originating mainly from the Caucasus (Circassians) but also from Europe. Also in the case of the Mamluk Sultanate, the "occasional Jewish *mamlūk*" could have been recruited alongside the much larger population of Christian mamluks originating in the Caucasus and Europe. Hathaway noted that the careers of all converted Jews were very much products of the "demographic transformation of the eighteenth century." Therefore, she concluded that "[w]hat we may call the 'Jewish *mamlūk*' phenomenon was *not* one that had existed from time

[200] Hathaway, "Jews among the Grandees," 155–56.

[201] Ibid., 166–67, 156, 159, 164.

[202] Ibid., 157.

[203] Ibid., 166.

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immemorial."[204] The phenomenon perhaps did not exist from time immemorial, but there is evidence that it already existed in the late fourteenth century.

[204]Ibid., 167.

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Appendix: "Ethnic Destinations" of Some Names Given to Mamluks during the Mamluk Sultanate

A. Names given during the Turkish period to "non-Turks," i.e., to Caucasians (practically all referred to as Circassians) and Europeans/Anatolians (Armenians are also attested but it is not entirely clear if they are considered to be Caucasians or Rūmīs):

Starting in the days of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn:

1. **Aqūsh** [apparently stopped being used during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's reign]
2. **Baybars** [only Circassians are attested; however, until the 1350s there is no conclusive evidence for names given exclusively to Caucasians. Stopped being used in the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad but reappeared as a name exclusively for Caucasians during the Circassian period]
3. **Lājīn** [became a name exclusively for Europeans/Anatolians during the Circassian period]
4. **Sunqur** [became a name exclusively for Europeans/Anatolians during the Circassian period]

Starting (probably) in the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (roughly the 1320s):

1. **Aq Sunqur** [only Europeans/Anatolians are attested; however, until the 1350s there is no conclusive evidence for names given exclusively to Europeans/Anatolians. Became a name exclusively for Europeans/Anatolians during the Circassian period]
2. **Bahādur** [became a name exclusively for Europeans/Anatolians during the Circassian period]
3. **Balabān** [became a name exclusively for Europeans/Anatolians during the Circassian period]
4. **Iyās/Iyāz** [became a name exclusively for Europeans/Anatolians during the Circassian period]
5. **Ṭurunṭāy** [its "ethnic destination" during the Circassian period cannot be determined conclusively, but it is reasonable that it became a name exclusively for Europeans/Anatolians like all other names in this category]

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B. Names given exclusively to Caucasians (mainly Circassians but on some occasions during the Circassian period also to other Caucasian peoples such as Alans, Abkhazians, Akhūkh [Ubykh?], and apparently also Georgians):

Starting in about the 1350s:

1. **Barqūq**
2. **Ināl**
3. **Sūdūn**

Starting in the Circassian period:

1. **Abū Yazīd**
2. **ʿAlībāy/ʿAlī Bāy**
3. **Arikmās** [possibly starting as early as the 1350s]
4. **Aytamush**
5. **Azdamur**
6. **Barsbāy**
7. **Baybars**
8. **Burdbak**
9. **Dawlāt Bāy**
10. **Jakam**
11. **Jānam**
12. **Jān Bulāṭ**
13. **Janibak/Jānibak/Jānī Bak** [possibly as early as the 1350s]
14. **Jurbāsh**
15. **Kasbāy**
16. **Khayrbak**
17. **Kurtbāy**
18. **Mughulbāy**
19. **Nawrūz**
20. **Qānam**
21. **Qanibak/Qānibak/Qānī Bak/Qanibāy/Qānibāy/Qānī Bāy**
22. **Qānṣuwah**
23. **Qashtam/Qashtamur**
24. **Qāytbāy**
25. [probably] **Qibjaq**
26. **Shādbak/Shādhbak**
27. **Sībāy**
28. **Tanam**
29. **Tanibak/Tānibak/Tānī Bak**
30. **Ṭarabāy**

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31. **Ṭawkh**
32. **Ṭūmān Bāy**
33. **Uzbak** [possibly as early as the 1350s]
34. **Yalbāy**
35. **Yashbak**

C. Names given exclusively to Europeans/Anatolians:

Starting in about the 1350s:

1. **Fāris**
2. **Muqbil**
3. **Shāhīn**
4. **Taghrī Birdī**
5. **Taghrī Birmish**
6. **Tamurtāsh**

Starting in the Circassian period:

1. **Aqbughā**
2. **Aq Sunqur**
3. **Asandamur**
4. **Balabān**
5. **Iyās/Iyāz**
6. **Khushkaldī**
7. **Khushqadam**
8. **Lājīn**
9. **Qarājā** [possibly as early as the 1350s]
10. **Sunqur**
11. **Tamurbughā**
12. **Ṭūghān**

D. Names given exclusively to Turco-Mongols (but on some occasions during the Turkish period also given to Alans and Russians considered to be "Tatars"):

Starting (probably) in the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (roughly the 1320s):

1. **Alṭunbughā**
2. **Aqbughā** [became a name exclusively for Europeans/Anatolians during the Circassian period]

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3. **Aranbughā**
4. **Arghūn/Arghūn Shāh** [became a name exclusively for Europeans/Anatolians during the Circassian period]
5. **Asanbughā**
6. **Asandamur** [in all likelihood became a name exclusively for Europeans/Anatolians during the Circassian period]
7. **Baybughā**
8. **Kamishbughā** [possibly became a name exclusively for Caucasians during the Circassian period]
9. [probably] **Manjak**
10. **Qarābughā**
11. **Tamurbughā** [became a name exclusively for Europeans/Anatolians during the Circassian period]
12. **Ṭashtamur**
13. **Ṭaybughā/Ṭashbughā**
14. **Ṭāz**
15. **Ṭughaytamur**
16. **Tulaktamur**
17. **Yalbughā**

Starting from about the 1350s:

1. **Julbān** [perhaps only starting in the Circassian period]
2. **Kuzul**
3. **Ṣunjuq**
4. **Tumāntamur**
5. **Tamurbāy** [seems to have changed its "ethnic destination" during the Circassian period, but it is not entirely clear to which ethnic group it was given then]

Starting in the Circassian period:

1. **Aqbirdī** [became a name for Caucasians, apparently during the reign of al-Ashraf Ināl (this is a most unique case)]
2. **Qujqār**
3. **Qujuq**

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