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## Sending Home for Mom and Dad: The Extended Family Impulse in Mamluk Politics

With the exception of references to harem politics or marriage ties, scholars rarely spend much time discussing biological family in connection with the Mamluks, as the concept seems incompatible with the system of imported young slaves and the significance ascribed to surrogate familial relationships as the basis for political allegiance. Yet ideas about biological family may have mattered far more to individual mamluks than scholars currently acknowledge. An examination of the concept of biological family reveals two distinct types of biological relatives: first, biological offspring, particularly males, and second, the existing biological family every mamluk left behind in the old country.

The topic of male biological offspring has attracted plenty of scholarly attention, primarily because it is through sons that men attempt to establish dynasties. Scholars have investigated the importance of sultans' sons in Mamluk society, and their assessments of the relevance, or lack thereof, of the concept of dynasty in the Mamluk world can be divided into two general camps. The arguments made by one side of the discussion read as follows: scholars suggest that the desire of a sultan to form a dynasty by leaving his position to a biological son was inimical to the Mamluk system itself, with its hallmark one-generation aristocracy, its systematic political disenfranchisement of the children of mamluks (the *awlād al-nās*), and the ties of loyalty created among mamluks and their patrons or masters, which replaced biological ties. In this view, the Mamluk system was one in which the position of sultan passed primarily from mamluk to mamluk through factional maneuvering or struggle. Although the biological sons of sultans did inherit their father's positions, everyone, including the dying sultan and the son himself, knew that the son was functioning as a placeholder, since real power would then be assumed by one or even multiple commanders, either covertly, in which case the nominal sultan remained as a figurehead, or overtly, in which case the nominal sultan was deposed.<sup>1</sup>

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This article was first presented in Chicago, Illinois, at the International Conference on Mamluk Politics, April 13–15, 2007. I thank John Meloy for reading the paper for me there.

<sup>1</sup> Amalia Levanoni, "The Mamluk Conception of the Sultanate," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26 (1994): 373–74, 377–83, 385; idem, "The Sultan's *Laqab*—A Sign of a New Order in Mamluk Factionalism?" in *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, ed. Amalia Levanoni and Michael Winter (Leiden and Boston, 2004), 113; idem, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn (1310–1341)* (Leiden, 1995), 114–17; and also Robert Irwin, "Factions in Medieval Egypt," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1986): 232,



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DOI: [10.6082/M1JM27SZ](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1JM27SZ). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1JM27SZ>)

DOI of Vol. XV: [10.6082/M10G3H74](https://doi.org/10.6082/M10G3H74). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/JJT7-Q854> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.

By contrast, other scholars have suggested that the Mamluk sultans were serious in trying to establish dynasties and thus made real efforts to set up their biological sons to take over after them.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately for these nascent dynasties, however, the older, wiser, and more experienced mamluk colleagues of the dying sultan tended to thwart these attempts, which often relegated the son to the abovementioned position as placeholder. This latter assessment can be related to three major time periods: first, the initial fifty-odd years of the sultanate when the impulse to establish dynasties was particularly strong; second, the eighth/fourteenth century when the Qalāwūnid dynasty lasted for decades, although only a few Qalāwūnids held any real power; and third, the Circassian period beginning in the late eighth/fourteenth century and continuing throughout the ninth/fifteenth centuries, during which the impulse to form dynasties faded over time and ultimately died.<sup>3</sup>

Of these two schools of thought on what could be called the Dynastic Impulse, I myself follow the latter (i.e., the one arguing for a general interest in forming dynasties among Mamluk sultans). I base this choice on the evidence provided both by the specific actions of individual sultans such as Baybars (r. 658–76/1260–77), Qalāwūn (r. 678–89/1279–90), Khalīl (r. 689–93/1290–93), Sha‘bān (r. 764–78/1363–77), and Shaykh (r. 814–24/1412–21), among others, and on the ideas about dynasty they expressed to external rulers through diplomacy.<sup>4</sup> The primary

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237–38. For the suggestion that non-hereditary succession was the rule and Qalāwūnid dynasty was an anomaly, see: Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate 1250–1382* (Carbondale, 1986), 156–57, also 127, 132, 134, 144, 149; P. M. Holt, “Succession in the Early Mamluk Sultanate,” *Deutscher Orientalistentag 23* (Stuttgart, 1989), 146–47; idem, “The Structure of Government in the Mamluk Sultanate,” in *The Eastern Mediterranean Lands in the Period of the Crusades*, ed. P. M. Holt (Warminster, 1977), 46; idem, “Mamlūks,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 6:323–24; and idem, “The Position and Power of the Mamluk Sultan,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 38 (1975): 239–41.

<sup>2</sup> See David Ayalon, “From Ayyūbids to Mamlūks,” *Revue des Etudes islamiques* 49 (1981): 55–56, reprinted in his *Islam and the Abode of War* (London, 1994); also idem, “Mamlūk Military Aristocracy—A Non-Hereditary Nobility,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 10 (1987): 209, reprinted in *Abode of War*; also idem, “Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army—II,” *BSOAS* 15, nos. 2 and 3; 16, no. 1 (1953–54): 208, reprinted in his *Studies on the Mamluks of Egypt* (London, 1977); and idem, “The Circassians in the Mamluk Kingdom,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 69, no. 3 (1949): 145–46, reprinted in his *Studies on the Mamluks of Egypt*. Note that Ayalon believed the Mamluks gave up the hereditary principle for the sultanate by the Circassian period; see references in footnote 3 below. Also see Linda Northrup on Qalāwūn, *From Slave to Sultan: The Career of al-Mansur Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamluk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678–689 A. H./1279–1290 A. D.)* (Stuttgart, 1998), 243–49.

<sup>3</sup> David Ayalon, “The Circassians in the Mamluk Kingdom,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 69, no. 3 (1949): 139, note 32, 145–46, reprinted in his *Studies on the Mamluks of Egypt*; idem, “Non-Hereditary Nobility,” 209–10; Holt, “Position and Power,” 239–41.

<sup>4</sup> Anne F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (Cambridge, 2008), 12, 38, 39, 50, 56, 146, 147–48, 194, 200.



argument in favor of the existence of a Dynastic Impulse, I would contend, lies not in the lived reality of political power (whether a son managed to hold on as sultan), but in the intention of the dying monarch. Whether a designated successor succeeded or failed to retain power was ultimately less important than what the outgoing sultan was trying to achieve. I therefore consider the most significant aspect of this Dynastic Impulse to be the attempt by high-ranking mamluks to create a network of support based on a family conservatively defined by biology, not on a surrogate family of other mamluks. I hope soon to compose a longer study of the topic of the Dynastic Impulse and to explore these questions further there.

In addition there is a lesser-known phenomenon, closely related to the Dynastic Impulse, which supports my contention that biological relations mattered more to the Mamluks than scholars tend to acknowledge, but which is almost invariably passed over in favor of the topic of dynasty. This related topic is a mamluk's interest in reconnecting with those long-lost relatives he left behind when starting his career. I call this the Extended Family Impulse, and see it as evidence of a larger, general Mamluk interest in biological relations. The remainder of this article will suggest that the Extended Family Impulse appeared when, for personal and political gain, some mamluks attempted to reconnect with the biological families they had been forced to abandon. This phenomenon appeared most frequently as part of Mamluk success stories, in which certain commanders reached high political, military, and economic levels, and often had ambitions for the position of sultan. Then suddenly they sent home to the old country and brought their parents, siblings, cousins, nephews, nieces, and anyone else they could find to Cairo. Once the relatives arrived the Mamluk commanders found jobs for the men, usually somewhere in the military. The extent of the power these relatives held varied greatly: in some cases their careers were undistinguished, but in a few cases they attained considerable influence in Mamluk society and played important roles in major historical events.

This article will explore the Extended Family Impulse by looking at three case studies of successful men whose long-lost relatives joined them in Cairo at high points of their careers. First is the commander Salār (d. 710/1310), who was one of two men to control the sultanate throughout the second reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in the early 700s/1300s. The second is Yalbughā al-Yaḥyāwī (d. 748/1347), a great favorite of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad during the 730s/1330s, who held several governorates in Syria after Muḥammad's death, and rebelled twice against Muḥammad's sons, once successfully, once not. Third is the commander and then sultan Barqūq (d. 801/1399), whose implementation of the Extended Family Impulse was the most visible and successful of all three, and the most clearly connected to the concept of Dynastic Impulse, at least until the invader Temür (d. 807/1405) entered the picture and helped destroy Barqūq's forming Zāhirī dynasty. The article will present



each man's career in brief, discuss the timing of his relatives' arrival in Cairo and the careers they achieved, and outline the ultimate fate of each family. Thereafter I will draw some larger conclusions about these three cases, about the concept of the Extended Family Impulse, and about the Mamluk interest in biological relations in general.

### SALĀR

The first case was the commander Sayf al-Din Salār, who was either an Oirat or, less likely, a Turk, acquired as a mamluk for the commander and later sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn after the battle of Abulustayn in 675/1277.<sup>5</sup> Initially Salār worked for Qalāwūn's son and first heir, al-Ṣāliḥ 'Alī; then after 'Alī's death from illness in Sha'bān 687/September 1288, he ascended through the ranks of commanders during the reigns of al-Ashraf Khalīl (r. 689–93/1290–93) and al-Manṣūr Lājīn (r. 696–98/1296–99). Salār encouraged the overthrow of Lājīn in Rabī' II 698/January 1299, then rose to prominence along with another well-known commander, Baybars al-Jashnakīr. The two men led rival factions, which allowed them together to marshal broad support and control the sultanate throughout the second reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (second r. 698–708/1299–1309) with Salār as the vicegerent (*nā'ib*) and Baybars as the high steward (*ustādār*).<sup>6</sup> Then in 704/1304–5, Salār's daughter married the amir Mūsá, who was the only son of Salār's former Qalāwūnid master, al-Ṣāliḥ 'Alī. The lavish wedding included a grand public procession, in which all the important commanders participated.<sup>7</sup> This match, and the festivities that accompanied it, demonstrated how well Salār had done for himself politically, socially, and financially in Mamluk society.

A few years later in 708–9/1308–9, however, the situation changed when al-Nāṣir Muḥammad rebelled against his two jailers, withdrew to the desert stronghold of Karak, and reestablished himself from there with Syrian support. His success spelled doom for Baybars and Salār. First to fall was Baybars, who had become sultan in Muḥammad's absence, and who therefore fled when Muḥammad arrived outside Cairo. After reinstatement, Muḥammad had Baybars hunted down, brought back to Cairo, and strangled in his presence.<sup>8</sup> Salār lasted slightly longer. He cooperated with Muḥammad at first by letting him in to the citadel, and promptly stepped down as vicegerent. Later Muḥammad granted Salār's petition for a transfer to the

<sup>5</sup> P. M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (Harlow, Essex, 1986), 110; Irwin, *Mamluk Sultanate*, 70; also see Baybars al-Dawādār al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah*, ed. Donald S. Richards (Beirut, 1998), 155; and idem, *Kitāb al-Tuḥfah al-Mulūkīyah fī al-Dawlah al-Turkīyah*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ṣāliḥ Ḥamdān (Cairo, 1987), 84.

<sup>6</sup> Holt, *Age of the Crusades*, 110. For the factions see Irwin, *Mamluk Sultanate*, 92.

<sup>7</sup> Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 382; Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma'rifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn and Sa'īd 'Āshūr (Cairo, 1956–73), 2:9.

<sup>8</sup> See Holt, *Age of the Crusades*, 111–12; Irwin, *Mamluk Sultanate*, 85–86.



desert fort of Shawbak in late 709/spring 1310, but this return to the sultan's good graces proved to be temporary. A few months later in Rabī' I–II 710/August 1310 Muḥammad had Salār forced back to Cairo. There he was tortured to reveal the location of his wealth and imprisoned in the citadel, where he died of starvation in particularly horrible fashion.<sup>9</sup>

Salār's story is not instructive because of his political rise and fall, since this, although dramatic, was unremarkable. Rather, Salār's career is interesting in the way it illustrates the Extended Family Impulse. Although Salār began his career as a mamluk after the battle of Abulustayn, and although mamluks are assumed to lose all ties to family upon the commencement of their careers, Salār had biological brothers, whom he left behind in Anatolia when he went to Egypt to work for al-Šāliḥ 'Alī. During those many years in Egypt when Salār rose from a mamluk to a commander to the position of vicegerent, he had no contact with the relatives he had left behind.<sup>10</sup>

But he must either have wanted contact all along and been unable to establish it, or developed an interest in seeing his family again once he had achieved success, because eventually Salār felt confident enough to send messengers to Anatolia to find his family and invite them to Mamluk territory. The first contact took place during the reign of the Ilkhanid ruler Ghazan (r. 694–703/1295–1304), but it was not until after Ghazan's death in spring 703/1304 that Salār's relatives could make a surreptitious departure from Ilkhanid territory. Then in late fall 704/1304 two of Salār's brothers, Fakhr al-Dīn Dāwūd and Sayf al-Dīn Jabā, along with Salār's mother and about 200 other Mongol men and their families, arrived in Mamluk territory from Anatolia.<sup>11</sup> Salār also had at least one other brother, Samūk, who appears as a commander of unknown rank in the Mamluk forces, but there is no

<sup>9</sup> For a brief treatment see Holt, *Age of the Crusades*, 111–12; Irwin, *Mamluk Sultanate*, 86. For lengthier details see the events in 708–10 in Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab*, ed. Fahīm Muḥammad 'Alawī Shaltūt (Cairo, 1998), 32:138–41, 144–59, 163–64; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 403–7, 414–17, 420–29; and idem, *Tuḥfah*, 187–91, 193–213, 214–15; Ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmi' al-Ghurar*, ed. Hans Robert Roemer (Cairo, 1960), 9:167–204. For details of Salār's death see Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Šafadī, *A'yān al-'Aṣr wa-A'wān al-Naṣr*, ed. 'Alī Abū Zayd et al. (Beirut and Damascus, 1998), 2:490–91.

<sup>10</sup> See Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 385; and idem, *Tuḥfah*, 178.

<sup>11</sup> A Mamluk raid on Cilicia may also have facilitated their getaway. Irwin, *Mamluk Sultanate*, 101; also see al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 32:96; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 385; idem, *Tuḥfah*, 178; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 9:131; Author Z, *Tārīkh Salāḥīn al-Mamālik or Beiträge zur Geschichte der mamlukensultane*, ed. K. V. Zetterstéen (Leiden, 1919), 132; Faḍl Allāh al-Šuqā'ī, *Tālī Kitāb Wafāyāt al-A'yān*, ed. and tr. Jacqueline Sublet (Damascus, 1974), 89 (Arabic text) and 113 (French translation); Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-'Aynī, *'Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo, 1987–92), 4:348–49 (citing the lost portion of Yūsufī's *Nuzhat al-Nāzīr fī Tārīkh al-Malik al-Nāšīr*), also 4:377–78; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:5.



reference to his arrival in the sultanate. Did he arrive with Dāwūd, Jabā, and their mother, or did he enter the sultanate as a mamluk like Salār?<sup>12</sup> We do not know.

Salār was apparently overjoyed to see his siblings and mother, as he had not laid eyes on them since the battle of Abulustayn nearly thirty years earlier. He celebrated the occasion by having his brothers appointed *ṭablakhānah* commanders, or second-tier commanders rating their own military bands, and by building a house for his mother.<sup>13</sup> It is reasonable to assume that the family members enjoyed places of honor at the wedding of Salār's daughter to Amir Mūsá later that year, although the sources do not specify where they sat at the banquet or note the brothers' place in the grand public procession.<sup>14</sup>

After this initial flurry of excitement, the trajectory of the brothers' careers is difficult to discern, since the histories only occasionally refer to Dāwūd, Jabā, and Samūk. When they do, however, the brothers are always involved in Salār's endeavors. In 707/1307–8, for example, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was trying to rebel against Salār and Baybars. At one point many of the commanders loyal to Salār and Baybars were armed, mounted, and ready, waiting outside the citadel for signs of action. All three of Salār's brothers were among them, watching the door through which Muḥammad and his mamluks might come. After a number of hours some of Muḥammad's mamluks emerged to skirmish with the commanders, which caused Samūk to shoot an arrow that hit the frame of a citadel window in which Muḥammad was sitting (apparently to the great consternation of the sultan).<sup>15</sup> Next the populace appeared and began to berate the commanders, and the same brother, Samūk, had to be restrained from attacking in retaliation.<sup>16</sup> Ultimately the standoff was settled through negotiation, not violence, but the presence of all of Salār's brothers among the commanders at such a tense time shows their real connection to Salār's affairs.

Then in Jumādā II 709/November–December 1309, when al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was camped at Gaza with the Syrian forces preparing to march on Egypt, and important commanders were defecting to him from Cairo, Salār sent out a force to

<sup>12</sup> He appears only in brief text references, with no background given. See al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 32:127; al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd*, 4:427; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:34, 35, 60, 86.

<sup>13</sup> Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 385; idem, *Tuḥfah*, 178; al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd*, 4:348–49 and 4:377–78; see also al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 32:96, Author Z, *Beiträge*, 132 (in 705/1305–6, *sic*); for the house see al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd*, 4:348; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:5–6. For the ranks of commanders see Ayalon, “Army—II,” 467–71.

<sup>14</sup> Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Zubdah*, 382; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:9.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 32:127–128, mentioning the “brothers” (*ikhwah*) but only Samūk by name; al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd*, 4:427 (albeit in 1306–7/706, citing Ibn Kathīr and mentioning all three brothers by name); Ismāʿīl Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah fī al-Tārīkh*, ed. Maktab Taḥqīq al-Turāth (Beirut, 1993), 14:50, albeit without mentioning the brothers—clearly a different version from the one al-ʿAynī was citing; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:34–35.

<sup>16</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:34–35.



pursue the defectors. This was composed of some of the commanders with their men, as well as Salār's own force of five hundred mamluks. Of the two leaders Salār appointed to this detachment, one was his brother Samūk.<sup>17</sup> Although Samūk did not manage to apprehend the defectors, the fact that Samūk participated in a campaign as important as this on Salār's behalf suggests that neither Salār's brothers nor Salār himself saw their posts as nepotistic sinecures.

But the brothers' connections to Salār carried a price, since Salār's relatives also participated in his misfortune. When in 709/1310 the newly reinstated al-Nāṣir Muḥammad permitted Salār to go to Shawbak, the sultan also sent Salār's brother Jabā to Aleppo.<sup>18</sup> But shortly thereafter when Muḥammad had Salār arrested, he also had all three of Salār's brothers detained, along with others of Salār's companions.<sup>19</sup> Unlike Salār, however, some of these prisoners were fed while incarcerated, since at least two of the brothers, Dāwūd and Jabā, remained alive in prison until they were freed in 715/1315–16 (we do not know the fate of Samūk). Only Salār's mother appears to have suffered nearly as much as her son, as she herself died only a few days after he did; although since there is no evidence that she was imprisoned and starved as well, it seems more likely that she perished of grief.<sup>20</sup>

## YALBUGHĀ

The second case is Yalbughā al-Yahyāwī, who was one of the Khāṣṣakīyah commanders (i.e., in the personal retinue) for al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately the sources provide not a word about his origins—not the chronicles, not the biographical dictionaries, nothing. Rather he appears to have sprung, fully-formed, out of the pages of the histories in the late 730s/1330s. By this point he was very close to the sultan—in fact, one author claims that Yalbughā was one of if not the closest of Muḥammad's personal retinue to him.<sup>22</sup> Certainly signs of Muḥammad's favor towards Yalbughā were clear: in 738/1337–38 Muḥammad built a house and stable complex for Yalbughā below the citadel, even though it meant taking property away from other commanders.<sup>23</sup> On another occasion when Yalbughā fell seriously

<sup>17</sup> The other was one Qutuz al-Fāriqānī. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:60.

<sup>18</sup> He and other commanders were sent out via Damascus, then when they reached Aleppo the *ṭablakhānah* commanders were ordered to stay there for a full year, while the commanders of ten were recalled. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:76–77.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:86.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:88–8, 144.

<sup>21</sup> Al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, 5:585.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> See al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn al-Ṣāliḥī wa-Awlādihi*, ed. Barbara Schaefer (Wiesbaden, 1977), 25, saying only that the dispossessed was the commander Aydughmish and unnamed others; he also put the cost at forty million silver coins. Al-Maqrīzī says that Muḥammad built another house at the same time for the favored commander Altunbughā al-



ill and seemed near death, Muḥammad demonstrated his devotion by personally nursing him, refusing to leave the sickbed and neglecting other important duties until Yalbughā recovered.<sup>24</sup> Muḥammad celebrated Yalbughā's return to health by throwing a great party, paying off 30,000 silver coins worth of debt for debtors, freeing one lucky political prisoner, and giving Yalbughā lavish presents as a “welcome back” gesture.<sup>25</sup> Nor was this generosity towards Yalbughā unusual, since Muḥammad routinely showered him with quantities of gifts, cash, robes of honor, and horses.<sup>26</sup>

After Muḥammad's death Yalbughā remained in favor for several years. First he requested and received the governorate of Hama from the sultan al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā'īl (r. 743–46/1342–45) in 743/1342–43.<sup>27</sup> Thereafter he was promoted to governor of Aleppo in summer 744/1343, then governor of all Syria at Damascus in fall 746/1345.<sup>28</sup> Although his next move was to rebel in Damascus against Ismā'īl's successor, the sultan al-Kāmil Sha'ḥbān (r. 746–47/1345–46), this turned out to be a shrewd decision, since his feelings were widely shared, and ultimately the Egyptian commanders replaced Sha'ḥbān with al-Muẓaffar Ḥājjī (r. 747–48/1346–47) in autumn 747/1346.<sup>29</sup>

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Māridānī, and adds as dispossessed the commanders Qawsun and Tashtamur al-Sāqī. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:438–39.

<sup>24</sup> Information about the event is scanty, and the dating is tricky. In his biography for Yalbughā, al-Ṣafadī claims that Muḥammad refused to go see his own son Ibrāhīm—ill with smallpox—while Yalbughā was sick; even when Ibrāhīm died, Muḥammad skipped the funeral in order to stay with the commander. In his biography for Ibrāhīm, however, al-Ṣafadī does not mention Yalbughā at all, but rather simply claims that Muḥammad refused to visit his son or let his other children visit, which implies that the isolation was motivated by fear of disease. Al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, 5:591–92 (Yalbughā's biography) and 1:120 (Ibrāhīm's biography). Since Ibrāhīm died in 1337–38/738, this would place Yalbughā's illness in that same year. By contrast, al-Maqrīzī puts Yalbughā's illness in 1339–40/740, does not mention Ibrāhīm, and instead claims that Muḥammad failed to go to the Palace of Justice (Dār al-ʿAdl) while Yalbughā was sick. Al-Maqrīzī also credits Yalbughā with taking the opportunity of his illness to convince Muḥammad to dismiss the extortionist financial official al-Nashw, despite al-Nashw's great influence and position in Muḥammad's administration. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:477, 490. (For al-Nashw, dismissed in 1339/740, see Levanoni, *Turning Point*, 149–55.) Regardless, both authors manage to suggest that Yalbughā's health was of great importance to Muḥammad.

<sup>25</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:491.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, 5:585.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:586; al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh*, 240; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:627, 634.

<sup>28</sup> Al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, 5:586; al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh*, 257; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2: 627, 634 (Hama), 645–46 (Aleppo), 681–82 (Damascus).

<sup>29</sup> Al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, 5:586–87; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:696–97, 732–33; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah*, ed. Adnan Darwish (Damascus, 1977), 1:479; Ibn Duqmāq, *Al-Jawhar al-Thamīn fī Siyar al-Mulūk wa-al-Salāṭīn*, ed. Muḥammad Kamāl 'Izz al-Dīn 'Alī (Beirut, 1985), 185–86; see also Irwin, *Mamluk Sultanate*, 133–34.



Although Ḥājji confirmed Yalbughā as governor of Syria, some months later Yalbughā became uneasy about the sultan's pattern of arresting commanders.<sup>30</sup> He therefore rebelled again in early 748/spring 1347, but this time less successfully, since Ḥājji had indeed called for his arrest.<sup>31</sup> Yalbughā therefore fled north from Damascus with his entourage, hoping to reach the area around Tabriz in former Ilkhanid territory.<sup>32</sup> But his flight was a failure because the Bedouin of the region harassed him mercilessly, while the Syrian forces raced after him so closely that he was forced to abandon many of his supplies. After only a few days of this Yalbughā and his companions surrendered to the governor of Hama, who imprisoned some of them and sent Yalbughā and a few others to Cairo. Yalbughā did not make it to Egypt alive; he was intercepted and beheaded at Qāqūn in autumn 748/1347 by its governor, Manjak, who kept the body and forwarded only the head to the central authority.<sup>33</sup>

As in the case of Salār, it is not Yalbughā's political rise and fall that is of interest, but rather the way his actions during the successful portion of his career allowed him to exercise the Extended Family Impulse. Although the beginning of Yalbughā's story is obscure, certainly by the time Muḥammad's favor for him became apparent in the late 730s/1330s Yalbughā was in a position to find a place in Mamluk territory for the family he had left behind in his homeland, wherever it was. It is unclear who first contacted whom. Some historians say that Yalbughā sent for his father, mother, and two brothers, while others say that Yalbughā's family heard of his success and volunteered to emigrate.<sup>34</sup> Either way, Yalbughā's relatives eventually joined him in Cairo in a reunion that was joyous all around and financially fruitful for Yalbughā's kin. Muḥammad made Yalbughā's father, one Tabata or Tabuta, a *ṭablakhānah* commander in Cairo in Jumādā II 739/January 1339.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, 5:587–88.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 5:588; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:732–33.

<sup>32</sup> 'Umar Ibn al-Wardī, *Tārīkh Ibn al-Wardī*, ed. Muḥammad Mahdī al-Sayyid Ḥasan al-Khurāsānī (Najaf, 1969), 2:494, says unspecifically that Yalbughā fled to the Mongols, which could mean the Chobanids or the Jalayirids in the Ilkhanid heartland or even, perhaps, the Uyghur Eretna in Anatolia. Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāyah*, 14:257, specifies a route that headed towards the Caucasus, not Anatolia (from Damascus towards al-Qaryatayn in the Syrian desert), which narrows it to the Chobanids or the Jalayirids. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:733, specifies that a report of Yalbughā's intention places the Chobanids as his goal.

<sup>33</sup> Al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, 5:588–90.

<sup>34</sup> For the argument that Yalbughā brought his family see Ibn al-Wardī, *Tārīkh*, 2:495, Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Manhal al-Ṣāfi wa-al-Mustawfā ba'da al-Wāfi*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn and Sa'īd 'Āshūr (Cairo, 1984–), 6:358; for the suggestion that they volunteered to come see al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, 2:563; Aḥmad Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Al-Durar al-Kāminah fī Akhbār al-Mi'ah al-Thāminah* (Beirut: 1993), 2:213.

<sup>35</sup> Al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh*, 45.



Later, once Yalbughā was established as governor of Aleppo, Tabuta became a commander of one hundred—the highest rank—in Aleppo, while Yalbughā's two brothers, Asandamur and Qarakuz, each became *ṭablahkānah* commanders as well, as did an unidentified male relative and Yalbughā's oldest son, Amir Muḥammad, even though this last was only a child.<sup>36</sup> Thereafter the entire family accompanied Yalbughā to Damascus when he was transferred, where his father received a new position (it is unclear whether his brothers did as well, or just held their old ones in Aleppo in absentia).<sup>37</sup>

Like Salār's family, Yalbughā's relatives shared in his misfortune: they joined him in his flight from Mamluk territory and were arrested with him by the governor of Hama. Yalbughā's father was even put in chains like his son and sent towards Egypt. But also as in Salār's case, the relatives did not suffer as much as the recalcitrant commander. When Yalbughā and his father reached Qāqūn, therefore, they were separated, with Tabuta going on first to Cairo and then to a three-month stint in prison in Alexandria, while Yalbughā's journey ended with his death in Qāqūn itself.<sup>38</sup>

### BARQŪQ

The third and final case involves the best known man of all three: the commander and then sultan Barqūq, who ruled in two nearly-consecutive reigns at the end of the eighth/fourteenth century (r. 784–91/1382–89, 792–801/1390–99). Barqūq was a Circassian mamluk from a commander's household, not the sultan's household, but despite this handicap he managed to become the strongest person in the sultanate by 782/1380. In 784/1382 Barqūq had enough support to depose the reigning Qalāwūnid sultan, al-Ṣāliḥ Ḥājjī (r. 783–84/1381–84), and become sultan himself, with the regnal title of al-Zāhir. Barqūq weathered the storms of factional struggle within the sultanate until 791/1389, when he was forced out by rebel commanders coming from Syria with the support of Anatolian Turkmen. Although the rebels reached Cairo, captured Barqūq, and imprisoned him in Karak, Barqūq managed to reinstate himself as sultan by Ṣafar 792/February 1390. He deposed Ḥājjī again, and had his chief rival, a commander named Mīntash, hunted down and killed. Barqūq then took the precaution of replacing many powerful commanders in Egypt and Syria with his own men, and thus enjoyed a strong grip on the sultanate until his death in Shawwāl 801/June 1399.<sup>39</sup>

Even more clearly than Salār and Yalbughā, Barqūq displayed a distinct interest in biological family. Evidence of this is found in the lengths to which he went to

<sup>36</sup> Al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, 5:587, 591; 2:563.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, 2:563.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, 2:563–64.

<sup>39</sup> For an outline of Barqūq's rise to power see Holt, *Age of the Crusades*, 127–29.



establish his sons as his heirs and surround them with family, which suggests his invocation of the Dynastic Impulse.<sup>40</sup> In addition, in a clear case of the Extended Family Impulse, he exhibited an urge to reconnect with the biological family he had left behind when he entered the sultanate. This impulse appeared almost immediately after he took control in 782/1380, when he sent home to Circassia and summoned what appears to have been all of his surviving relatives to Cairo. They came in considerable numbers and were escorted by the same slave trader, Khwājā ‘Uthmān ibn Musāfir, who had originally brought Barqūq himself to Egypt.<sup>41</sup> The delegation included Barqūq’s elderly father, Anaş; at least two of Barqūq’s sisters, one older than the sultan and one younger; and several of Barqūq’s nephews, as well as assorted additional relatives whose precise relationships to Barqūq are unknown.<sup>42</sup>

The welcome that the delegation received was a public one, and it displayed a level of ceremony typically reserved for high-ranking members of the Mamluk administration, or for the most important foreign ambassadors. This set the tone for how Barqūq wanted the other Mamluk officers to view his family, and by extension himself. The focus of attention was Anaş, the patriarch, whom Barqūq met outside Cairo with an escort of all the Mamluk forces, dressed in their finest. After Barqūq greeted his father he conducted him to a tent that he had had set up, and seated Anaş in the highest place within it in the company of several important commanders. Since Barqūq at this point was still only a commander himself and not yet sultan, and perhaps in order to show respect to his father, he sat below Anaş as they all conversed (Anaş probably through a translator) and enjoyed a meal of fish, fruit, and sweets, which Barqūq had ordered for the occasion.<sup>43</sup> It is unclear where the rest of Barqūq’s relatives were during this—perhaps they also entered the tent, or perhaps they were seated nearby in suitable accommodations. Regardless, thereafter everyone rested for a few hours, then rode into the city in a grand procession through streets lighted with candles, in front of the assembled population, which had turned out to witness the spectacle. Thereafter Anaş (and the rest of the party) arrived at their lodgings, at which point the Qalāwūnid sultan Ḥājjī gave Anaş a position as commander of one hundred, the highest of the commander ranks.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 178–79. I hope to address this example more fully in my upcoming article on the Dynastic Impulse.

<sup>41</sup> Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 3:105; see also Ayalon, *L’Esclavage du Mamelouk* (Jerusalem, 1951), 2.

<sup>42</sup> Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 6:112; 3:105; 3:482.

<sup>43</sup> It is a mystery why Barqūq chose to serve his father fish, since this was not a part of Circassian cuisine. Perhaps he wanted the novelty? For Circassian food in general see Amjad Jaimoukha, *The Circassians: A Handbook* (New York, 2001), 190.

<sup>44</sup> Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 3:105–6.



Unfortunately for Barqūq, if he had intended his father to play any real political role in the sultanate, this hope was dashed by his father's death of old age within a year of his arrival—one historian mentions that Anaş did not live to see his son become sultan.<sup>45</sup> Barqūq's luck was better with his younger relatives, among them a nephew, Baybars, son of Barqūq's younger sister, and a nephew or great-nephew, Sūdūn, son or grandson of Barqūq's older sister.<sup>46</sup> Both boys were raised in the Royal Harem with Barqūq's sons until they were old enough for Barqūq to take their training in hand personally. Barqūq started Baybars as a commander of 10.<sup>47</sup> When Barqūq was ousted in 791/1389 Baybars was arrested for his loyalty to his uncle, but was then freed as Barqūq made his comeback.<sup>48</sup> Later, when Barqūq led the Mamluk armies to Syria to hold off the invader Temür in 796/1394, he not only took Baybars with him, but honored him by assigning him to the vanguard sent to Aleppo, which seemed to be where Temür was most likely to attack.<sup>49</sup> Before his death in 801/1399 Barqūq made Baybars lord of the audience (*amīr majlis*), and then secretary of state (*dawādār*), both of which were among the highest offices for commanders.<sup>50</sup> Barqūq also granted Sūdūn a series of (unspecified) military posts until he became a commander of one hundred in Egypt in Şafar 800/October 1397.<sup>51</sup>

Perhaps because of the excellent foundation their uncle had given them, neither man's career suffered after Barqūq's death. Their cousin Faraj took over immediately as sultan. But since he was too young at the time to assert himself, he was advised by a collection of commanders, one of whom was his cousin Baybars, who remained secretary of state (*dawādār*). During Faraj's early reign Sūdūn was promoted to master of the royal stables (*amīr akhūr*), but was removed from office on charges of rebellion and sent to prison in Alexandria for a few months. Upon his return to Cairo, however, he was reinstated and even promoted to senior secretary of state (*dawādār kabīr*), replacing his cousin Baybars, who had become chief military commander (*atābak*).<sup>52</sup> Shortly thereafter Sūdūn became governor of

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:106.

<sup>46</sup> See *ibid.*, 3:481 (for Baybars) and 6:112 (for Sūdūn). Al-Maqrīzī calls Sūdūn nephew, not great-nephew, in *Sulūk*, 3:889, 921, 1072. Muḥammad al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi' li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi'* (Cairo, [n.d.]), 3:21 (for Baybars), 3:284 (for Sūdūn, whom he calls a great-nephew).

<sup>47</sup> Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 3:482.

<sup>48</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:691, 695.

<sup>49</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:814; al-Jawharī 'Alī ibn Dāwūd al-Şayrafī, *Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa al-Abdān fī Tawārīkh al-Zamān*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1973), 1:388.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Şayrafī, *Nuzhah*, 1:460 (*amīr majlis*) and 1:461 (*dawādār*); Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 3:482; for the translation see Holt, "Structure," 56; for offices in the Circassian period see Ayalon, "Army—III," 68.

<sup>51</sup> Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 6:112; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:889.

<sup>52</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 3:999, 1012; al-Şayrafī, *Nuzhah*, 2:133; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 6:112–13.



Syria, another strong position and one normally limited to mamluks, not their relatives. He held this post until he was killed in Temür's invasion of Syria in Rajab 803/February–March 1401.<sup>53</sup> Thereafter only Baybars remained as a major player in Mamluk politics until 1405–6/808, when he found himself caught opposing his ousted cousin Faraj. When Faraj made his comeback Baybars fought him as a representative of the new sultan, Faraj's younger brother ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, but he did so only halfheartedly. Perhaps as a result Baybars was captured and sent to Alexandria, where he died.<sup>54</sup>

Those were the case studies; now, the conclusions. The first conclusion concerns the Mamluk system. As we know, this allowed for many possible personal relationships and their corresponding emotional connections, whether between or among mamluks, between patrons and clients, and among biologically unrelated members of the same household. Nevertheless this variety of relationships among unrelated members of the military elite did not always completely replace relations with biological families—at least, not in the minds of all mamluks. Instead, many manifested a desire to reunite with their biological families by sending back for them and then incorporating them into political networks in Egypt and Syria. The three case studies presented here represent particularly successful and visible examples of this Extended Family Impulse, but other important mamluks sought out their kin as well. Similarly, lower-ranking mamluks may well have had these impulses, but we do not know whether they were able to implement them.

A few examples should demonstrate the popularity of bringing family from home. One example from the 750s/1350s is the governor of Aleppo, Arghun al-Kāmilī, whose brothers and relatives had come from “home” and been appointed commanders (. . . *kāna li-arbaʿah min ikhwatihi al-qādimīn min al-bilād wa-aqāribihi arbaʿah imrāt*).<sup>55</sup> Another is the commander Ṭāz (d. 763/1362), lord of the audience (*amīr majlis*) and a major figure during the reigns of al-Muẓaffar Ḥājji and al-Nāṣir Ḥasan (r. 748–52/1347–51), whose father, Quṭghāj, and brother, Jarkas, came from the “lands of the Turks ([?] *bilād al-turk*) to Cairo in 752/1351–52. Quṭghāj then headed back home to bring the rest of the family to Egypt.<sup>56</sup> In the Circassian period, the commander and then sultan al-Zāhir Barsbāy (r. 825–41/1422–38)

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 6:113–15; see also Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*, 190.

<sup>54</sup> Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 3:482.

<sup>55</sup> Unfortunately we do not know any details about these positions. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:895.

<sup>56</sup> He died on the way and was buried in Maʿarrāh, where the governor of Aleppo built a tomb for him. Later Jarkas died and was interred in the same tomb; thereafter Ṭāz transferred both men's bodies to Cairo and constructed a new tomb for them there. The sources do not record whether the rest of the family ever arrived in Egypt. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:886–87. For Ṭāz see al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān*, 2:567–71. See also al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:892, for the betrothal of an unnamed brother of Ṭāz, and al-Ṣafadī, *Aʿyān*, for the troubles of yet another brother, Jartamur (?).



brought relatives to Cairo from Circassia, two of whom—his elder brother Yashbak and another relative named Jānim—became commanders of one hundred.<sup>57</sup>

Other mamluks clearly had family with them in Cairo, but we have no record of their arrival. One example from the 730s/1330s is the mamluk Almās (or Ulmās) the chamberlain (*ḥājib*), one of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s inner circle, who fell precipitously from favor and was executed in 734/1333, along with his brother, a commander of unknown rank named Qarā.<sup>58</sup> The death of their third brother, Mughultāy, who was known for building a mosque in Cairo, is unrecorded.<sup>59</sup> Apparently the family also included other relatives, but these were sent to Syria and “dispersed” (*ukhrija aqāribuhu ilā al-shām wa-furriqū*) at the time of Almās’s disgrace; thereafter only one, Sha‘bān, appears in the historical sources when he was freed from prison in 740/1339–40.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Baybughā Arūs (d. 754/1354), vicegerent during the first reign of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, made his brother Manjak (*akhuhu Manjak*) vizier and their careers intertwined significantly, but we do not know how or when Manjak came to Mamluk territory.<sup>61</sup>

Amalia Levanoni has collected numerous examples of the Extended Family Impulse among Circassian commanders.<sup>62</sup> She suggests that the Circassian cultural practice of the *ataliqate*, or the fostering of children with other families, may have contributed to this phenomenon among Circassian mamluks in particular.<sup>63</sup> As the case studies and examples here show, however, this impulse was not restricted to Circassians, since any successful mamluk could employ it, and many did. Despite the prevalent expression of the Extended Family Impulse, a word of warning is in order. Although it is usually clear in the sources when commanders brought relatives from home, discerning the status of commanders’ brothers inside the sultanate is a far more complicated matter. Most recently Jo Van Steenberghe has cautioned

<sup>57</sup> Levanoni, “Sultan’s *Laqab*,” 81, 104, and footnote 121, citing Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhiraḥ fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhiraḥ* (Cairo, 1963–72), 14:291, 15:165; see also Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 4:217–19; al-Sakhāwī, *Daw’*, 3:63–64.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Ṣafādī, *A’yān*, 1:616–18, with “Almās” (on 616); al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:363, 365, 366, 375; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 3:89–91, with “Ulmās” (on 91).

<sup>59</sup> Al-Shujā‘ī, *Tārīkh*, 116; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:545.

<sup>60</sup> Al-Ṣafādī, *A’yān*, 1:617; for the prison release see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:491.

<sup>61</sup> See al-Ṣafādī, *A’yān*, 2:87; 2:532–33; 5:440. In all of these, the two are not described as being like brothers (*mīthl*), but just as brothers.

<sup>62</sup> I reproduce here footnote 122 from Levanoni, “Sultan’s *Laqab*,” 104, which directs the reader to the following additional examples: Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Ḥawādith al-Duhūr fī Madā al-Ayyām wa-al-Shuhūr*, ed. Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn ‘Izz al-Dīn (Cairo, 1990), 2:476; Muḥammad Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’ al-Zuhūr fī Waqā’i’ al-Duhūr* (Cairo, 1982–84), 2:309, 319, 367, 369, 423, 430, 469; 3:104, 107, 110, 145, 153, 171, 175, 190, 213, 249, 276, 288, 298; al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzḥah*, 3:258; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 2:346, 5:15, 327; 6:164–65, 186; Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 8:396.

<sup>63</sup> Levanoni, “Sultan’s *Laqab*,” 108, note 143.



that the word “*akh*” or “brother” was sometimes used to denote not a biological relationship between two men who shared parents, but a fraternal-style relationship between two biologically unrelated mamluks. The historical sources designate this mamluk-style, non-biological brotherhood by using such phrases as “they were like (*mithlu*) brothers,” “he was like a brother to him,” “between them there was brotherhood,” etc.<sup>64</sup> By contrast, the designation of biological brotherhood seems to dispense with the “like brothers” phrasing. Nevertheless, a challenge for historians is discerning which type of “brother” is which when they encounter evidence of such relationships. Regardless, although mamluks did forge and maintain important relationships with other mamluks, some clearly refused to forget their original families. These reconnected with their kin as soon as they could, and they profited personally and even politically from the presence of biological relatives nearby.

The second conclusion is that for a relative, coming to join a mamluk promised at least a modest career. Rarely, however, were these careers glorious. One reason for the lack of significant career advancement was that the relatives’ link to their mamluk family member was a double-edged sword: although the connection brought jobs, family members were routinely punished along with their mamluk relative in times of disgrace. Nevertheless families usually suffered less for the crimes of individual commanders than the commanders themselves did, and even when commanders were executed for bad behavior, their families tended to be pardoned sooner or later. Thus whereas Salār and Yalbughā both died for their political machinations, Salār’s brothers were only imprisoned and later freed, while in Yalbughā’s case the family remained unmolested, other than the three months Yalbughā’s father spent in prison.

Another reason why male relatives of mamluk commanders did not advance to grand careers was their placement in the military hierarchy of the Mamluk Sultanate. As non-mamluks, they should only have received jobs in the auxiliary forces (*ḥalqah*). In the early years of the sultanate this was a significant part of the armies, and the corps included numerous immigrants, who were often politically and militarily important in those years. Nevertheless, the auxiliary forces overall were not as prestigious, well-compensated, or well-trained as the mamluk forces; furthermore, the auxiliaries deteriorated in quality and remuneration over time.<sup>65</sup>

Unfortunately the sources do not always specify where relatives of mamluks were positioned; thus, although we may assume that their posts were in the auxiliaries in the absence of evidence to the contrary, we cannot be completely sure. It seems likely that Salār’s relatives received positions in the auxiliaries, despite his

<sup>64</sup> Jo Van Steenberg, *Order out of Chaos: Patronage, Conflict and Mamluk Socio-Political Culture, 1341–1382* (Leiden and Boston, 2006), 86–88, and especially footnotes 139 and 141.

<sup>65</sup> David Ayalon, “Army—II,” 448–56; idem, “The Auxiliary Forces of the Mamluk Sultanate,” *Der Islam* 65 (1988), 19–20, reprinted in his *Abode of War*.



own high position, because the auxiliaries were at their most prestigious then. And certainly Salār's brothers played active roles in factional struggles and were heavily involved with their brother's fortune, whether this was from the auxiliaries or not. The positions that Yalbughā's relatives received in Egypt and Syria may also have been in the auxiliary forces, but the information is too scanty to tell one way or the other. By contrast, Barqūq's nephew Baybars and great-nephew Sūdūn were an exception, since their jobs—constable (*amīr akhūr*), lord of the audience (*amīr majlis*), secretary of state (*dawādār*), chief military officer (*atābak*), governor of Syria—were reserved for the Mamluk military elite, not members of the auxiliaries. Such important positions did not normally go to relatives, and the fact that Baybars and Sūdūn held them attests to the strength of Barqūq's patronage.

The final conclusion, perhaps more tentatively drawn, is that individual mamluks maintained connections to the world outside the sultanate, despite their immersion in the complexity of the Mamluk system. In Salār's case, admittedly, contact with that world was limited—he lived during a time of open hostility between the Sultanate and the Ilkhanate, where his family was located, which may explain why he had no news of them for over thirty years. When he did contact them in Ilkhanid Anatolia, therefore, he had to do so secretly. By contrast, Barqūq lived in a time of relative peace, and appears to have maintained a link to his homeland, since he sent for his relatives openly as soon as he was in a position to do so, using the slave merchant who had brought him to Egypt.<sup>66</sup>

But it was Yalbughā who boasted the most complex interactions with the world outside the sultanate, as reflected in his relationship to his biological family. Yalbughā appears to have kept a link to his relatives throughout his career, since news went back and forth between him and them even before they migrated to Cairo. But where was Yalbughā's family? The histories are silent, except for one late source, which mentions their origin in the land of the Mongols (*bilād al-tatar* or *al-tatār*).<sup>67</sup> I read this as Ilkhanid territory, not the Golden Horde, since this latter was usually designated as *bilād qifjāq*. Nor do I read it as more distant Mongol territories, since these were less frequently the source of mamluks. The personal names in the family were Turkish—Yalbughā, Asandamur, Qarakuz, Tabuta. The Ilkhanate was therefore a likely place of origin for Yalbughā, especially the northwestern Caucasus region, which contributed Circassians and other peoples to the slave trade. It is possible to imagine that if Yalbughā and his family came from the Ilkhanate, he may have enjoyed additional connections in Ilkhanid territory that the histories do not reveal.

<sup>66</sup> For the close relationship between a mamluk and his slave trader see David Ayalon, "Mamlūk: Military Slavery in Egypt and Syria," in his *Abode of War*, 10 (first full publication, abridged version in *EI2* 6, fasc. 103–4).

<sup>67</sup> Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Manhal*, 6:358.



But what would be the reason to imagine this? To answer, we must look more closely both at Yalbughā's career and at his other interactions with those outside the sultanate. From 744/1343 to 746/1345, Yalbughā was governor of Aleppo. This was an extremely important post for ambitious Mamluk commanders in the chaotic years after the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in 741/1341, since the position was conducive to fomenting Syrian rebellions against Egypt. Earlier, during the first decades of the Mamluk sultanate, Mamluk commanders wishing to rebel against the sultan had looked to the Ilkhanids for military support.<sup>68</sup> But once the Ilkhanate began to disintegrate after 736/1335, it lost control of Anatolia, which allowed the Mamluks to acquire a number of useful vassals there, among them the Dulqadirid Turkmen. In the later eighth/fourteenth century every Mamluk rebel in Syria started as governor of Aleppo, which allowed him to call on Anatolian vassals such as the Dulqadirids for military support against Cairo. Commanders could also flee to Anatolia for refuge if events turned sour.

Yalbughā rebelled twice against the Mamluk sultan: once against al-Kāmil Shaḥbān in 746–47/1346, and later against al-Muẓaffar Ḥājji in 748/1347. Unlike all other Mamluk rebels in this period, however, Yalbughā did not turn to the Dulqadirids for support, perhaps because he had badly damaged his relations with them while he was governor of Aleppo.<sup>69</sup> As a result, when his second rebellion went poorly and he was forced to flee, Yalbughā instead looked to the region from which his family may have come: former Ilkhanid territory. He turned in particular to the Chobanids, with whom he tried to take refuge in 748/1347.<sup>70</sup>

The Chobanids were a small dynasty of Mongols that emerged during the disintegration of the Ilkhanate. At the time of Yalbughā's flight from the sultanate, the Chobanids controlled the southern Caucasus and northwestern Iran, and maintained territorial interests in Anatolia.<sup>71</sup> In addition to their location in what may have been his own homeland, Yalbughā may also have fled to the Chobanids because he was already in contact with them. In late summer 744/1343, when Yalbughā was a governor in either Hama or Aleppo, an ambassador from the Chobanid ruler Ḥasan ibn Temürtash (d. 744/1343) traveled through Syria on his way to Cairo.<sup>72</sup> As a governor Yalbughā was responsible for hosting the ambassador both going to and

<sup>68</sup> Examples here include Sunqur al-Ashqar (against Qalāwūn); Qipchak and Baktimur al-Sāqī (against Lājīn); Qarasunqur (against al-Nāṣir Muḥammad).

<sup>69</sup> Anne F. Broadbridge, "Mamluk Ideological and Diplomatic Relations with Mongol and Turkic Rulers of the Near East and Central Asia (658–807/1260–1405)" (PhD. diss, University of Chicago, 2001), 199–203.

<sup>70</sup> See footnote 32 above.

<sup>71</sup> Charles Melville and Abbas Zaryab, "Chobanids," *Encyclopedia Iranica* 5:496–502.

<sup>72</sup> He was made governor of Aleppo in June–July 1343/Ṣafar 744 after the death of the previous governor, Altunbughā al-Māridānī. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:645–46.



coming from Egypt.<sup>73</sup> Since Mamluk protocol required him to interact with the ambassador, Yalbughā may have taken the opportunity to send a private message to Ḥasan.<sup>74</sup> His later attempt to flee with his family to the Chobanids suggests he believed in his chances of a good reception there.

Regardless of his destination, Yalbughā's situation suggests that he in particular, and individual mamluks in general, had more connections to the outside world than is usually acknowledged. These connections may have involved not only the extended families of mamluk commanders, but slave merchants, as in Barqūq's case, secret messengers, as in Salār's case, or perhaps formal ambassadors, as in Yalbughā's case. This indicates that scholars must look outside the sultanate even when investigating internal Mamluk politics. At times it is difficult to discern the outlines of these relationships, which makes the task harder. But since these connections did at times factor in to Mamluk political decisions, it is necessary to try.

To conclude: One previously understudied element in Mamluk politics is the category of biological relations that includes not a mamluk's offspring, but rather the biological family he left behind in the old country. I have called the interest that mamluks showed in reconnecting with their long-lost relatives the Extended Family Impulse, and I see it as a related, but relatively ignored subcategory within the general idea of what I have termed the Dynastic Impulse. I have suggested that some mamluks reconnected with their existing biological families for both personal and political gain. We see this phenomenon play out most frequently as part of Mamluk success stories, when commanders reached high political, military, and economic levels, then sent home to bring their families to Cairo. Once the relatives arrived, the Mamluk commanders found jobs for the men, who might attain considerable influence in Mamluk society, or, more often, remain undistinguished. Overall this suggests that while the Mamluk military system was inimical to the appeal of biological family, actual mamluks themselves were not, and in some cases they went to considerable lengths to surround themselves with their kin.

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<sup>73</sup> Ambassadors from Ilkhanid or post-Ilkhanid territory usually entered the Mamluk Sultanate from the northeast, passing through Aleppo and the smaller cities to Damascus, from which they headed on to Cairo. For the ambassador see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:648.

<sup>74</sup> Since Ḥasan died in 1343/744, his brother and successor, Malik Ashraf (r. 1343–57/744–58), would have received this.

