



23. The Mamluks in the Near East, to 1291 (Map by the University of Wisconsin Cartographic Laboratory)

XXII

THE MAMLUK SULTANS

TO 1293

The immediate aftermath of victory over the crusade of Louis IX in 1250 was the establishment in Egypt of a Mamluk sultanate, which blossomed out into an empire on the lines of its Aiyūbid predecessor in the Near East. It included Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, with a sovereignty less permanent and less well defined over certain regions and fortress towns in the upper Euphrates valley, southeastern Anatolia, Hejaz, the northern Sudan, and Cyrenaica. Mamluk Egypt, the first power to break the spell of Mongol invincibility in a pitched battle, then took the lead in the expulsion of the crusaders from the Holy Land. Moreover, this Mamluk sultanate proved to be of considerable importance in Arabic learning and culture in the later Middle Ages, in part because of the transfer of the political center of gravity and the seat of the 'Abbāsid caliphate from Baghdad to Cairo. It also had an active share in international trade from the thirteenth century down to the days when the Cape of Good Hope was rounded two hundred years later.

The word *mamlūk* is the passive participle of the verb "to own" in Arabic, meaning a person (or chattel) owned through deed of sale, barter, capture in war, or presentation as a gift or tribute from a provincial governor or subject community. All mamluks

First among contemporary sources for Mamluk history is Ibn-Wāṣil's chronicle entitled *Mufarrij al-kurūb fī akhbār Banī Aiyūb*, here cited from MS, though volume I was edited by Jamāl-ad-Dīn ash-Shaiyāl and published at Alexandria in 1953, and further volumes are expected. Equally important is *Zubdat al-fikrah fī ta'rīkh al-hijrah*, by Baybars ad-Dawādār, still in MS. Besides Abū-Shāmah's well known *Kitāb ar-rauḍatain* (RHC, Or., IV-V), a sequel entitled *Dhail ar-rauḍatain* was recently published in Cairo, without date. A study of Mamluk history must also rely on al-Maqrizī's *Kitāb as-sulūk li-ma'rifat durwal al-mulūk* (edited by the author of this chapter, Cairo, 1956-date), and on *An-nujūm az-zāhirah* by Abū-l-Maḥāsin Ibn-Taghrī-Birdī, edited in 11 volumes by the staff of the National Library in Cairo (1929-1950), portions edited (1909-1936) and translated (1954-1957) by W. Popper at Berkeley.

Modern works in European languages include G. Wiet, *L'Égypte musulmane . . .*, in *Précis de l'histoire d'Égypte*, vol. II (1932), ch. VII: "Les Sultans mamlouks" (pp. 237-285); A. N. Poliak, *Feudalism in the Middle East* (London, 1939); and P. K. Hitti, *History of Syria* (2nd ed., London, 1957). As all three of these have full bibliographies, this footnote is intended merely as an introduction guiding the reader to them.

thus were slaves, but not all slaves were called mamluks. The term was applied only to white slaves, not to negroes: at first especially to Turks from Central Asia, but later embracing slaves from western Asia, as well as from many parts of Europe, including the lands of the Baltic Sea.¹ These mamluks had been numerous and powerful since the great days of the 'Abbāsid caliphate in Baghdad, when they formed a large part of the army. Their variety increased with every opening up of a new geographical area through raid, conquest, or trade; but whatever their origin, they all proudly called themselves "Turks".² The Turkish mamluk exercised great influence on Moslem polity in the Middle Ages, and his manner of life was the subject of discussion among contemporary Arabic writers from the ninth century onward.³ Ibn-Ḥassūl, who died in 1058, described the Turkish mamluk as a haughty creature "who would not allow himself to be treated as less than equal to his master in food, drink, dress, or riding equipment. He would never deign to perform menial service, such as sweeping and cleaning a dwelling, or attending to horses and cattle, as others in bonded slavery would be expected to do. As soon as he was made free, he would not be satisfied with anything less than leadership of an army, appointment to a court office, [or] command of a regiment . . ."⁴

We have abundant evidence of the remarkable degree of care with which these mamluks were brought up and trained to become the main soldiery of independent provincial dynasties throughout the Moslem world, some of which were themselves of mamluk origin. The Selchūkid empire, whose rulers were not mamluks, relied extensively on this type of soldiery; in his "Treatise on Government" (*Siyāsat-Nāmeḥ*) the illustrious vizir Niẓām-al-Mulk (d. 1092) gives a detailed account of the probation of a mamluk, from the moment he came into his master's possession until the time he was considered free and horseworthy, after which he could rise to any eminence in the military or political scale.⁵

The Aiyūbid dynasty relied on mamluk officers and troopers for at least half of its army. Saladin himself was surrounded by select companies of these mamluks, splendidly equipped and thoroughly trained in the art of war. The system was continued, and intensified,

¹ Wiet, *Les Sultans mamlouks*, p. 241.

² On these Turkish elements in Islam, see volume I of the present work, chapter V, pp. 136-139.

³ Al-Jāḥiz, *Majmū'at rasā'il* . . . (Cairo, 1934), pp. 2-53.

⁴ Ibn-Ḥassūl, *Risālah fī tafḍīl al-Atrāk* . . . (ed. 'Abbās al-Azzawī, *Türkiye Belleten*, no. 14-15 [1940]), p. 42.

⁵ Niẓām-al-Mulk, *Siyāsat-Nāmeḥ* (tr. C. Schéfer, Paris, 1893), pp. 130-141.

under his successors. Each mamluk company was designated by the honorific of its owner, as for example the Asadīyah, belonging to Asad-ad-Dīn Shīrkūh, Saladin's uncle and predecessor in the government of Egypt, and the Ṣalāḥīyah, belonging to Ṣalāḥ-ad-Dīn (Saladin) himself. These mamluk companies had a considerable share in Saladin's wars before and after the battle of Hattin, and the roll of their dead and their casualties in his many campaigns bears impressive witness to Saladin's dependence on mamluk soldiery, besides other troops of free status, mostly Kurds.⁶ More concrete evidence of the influence and weight of these mamluks in Saladin's empire is to be found in the lists of monuments and pious endowments that bore their names, in Cairo, Damascus, and elsewhere.⁷

Fragmentization of the Aiyūbid empire after Saladin's death (1193), and the ensuing wars among Aiyūbid princes in Egypt, Syria, and the Jazira, served to augment the numbers and powers of mamluks everywhere, until often they became kingmakers in those countries.⁸ For instance, it was due to the 'Ādiliyah, mamluks of sultan al-'Ādil Saif-ad-Dīn, who for a time had almost re-integrated his brother's empire, that his own son and successor al-Kāmil nearly lost his throne.⁹ A little later, it was the Kāmili mamluks who, together with some black slaves, enabled al-Kāmil's son aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Aiyūb (1240-1249) to depose and succeed his younger brother al-'Ādil II, in spite of the opposition of the free Kurdish soldiers in the army.¹⁰

Aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Aiyūb, the last effective sultan of the Aiyūbid dynasty in Egypt, developed the system of employing mamluks for his army and bodyguard to the highest pitch of efficiency. As an aspirant to the sultanate he had had early bitter experience of the jealousies of his kinsmen, and feared them still, now that he had become master in Egypt and in much of Syria, including Damascus. He had no love for the free Kurds of the army, nor had he much trust in the Kāmiliyah and other mamluk groups, to whom he partly owed his good fortune. He was therefore determined to surround himself with mamluk troops of his own creation; he imported them from various markets, but wherever they were

⁶ Ibn-Waṣīl, *Mufarrij al-kurūb* (Bibl. Nat. MS., used in a photographic copy), I, folios 70, 78, 89, 90-91, 96, 101-102, 126, 130-131.

⁷ Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-mawā'iz wa-l-i'tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-l-āthār* (Būlāq, A.H. 1324-1326), II, 38, 41, 80, 83, 87-88, 367.

⁸ On these wars, see above, chapter XX.

⁹ Al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk* (ed. Ziada), I, 222-223.

¹⁰ Ibn-Waṣīl, *op. cit.*, folio 37; al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, 294-296. See also above, chapter XX, p. 707.

bought the great majority were Turks, and a Turkish dialect was their common language. He then built himself a castle on the island of Roda, overlooking the Nile (Baḥr an-Nīl), and had those who proved to be the most hardened and reliable of these new mamluks stationed there as his bodyguard. They were known as al-Baḥriyah aṣ-Ṣālihiyah, signifying, however, not their relation to the barracks overlooking the river, as is reiterated by almost all secondary authorities, but apparently their importation from across the sea (*baḥr*).¹¹ This meaning of *baḥriyah*, reminiscent of the crusaders' "outremer", is confirmed by its application to the crusaders themselves by Arabic authors,¹² as well as to mamluks in other places and at other periods,¹³ and its survival in modern Arabic usage.

From the number of madrasahs (schools), public baths, water fountains, mosques, caravanserais, and other buildings bearing the names of leading Ṣāliḥī mamluks (Baḥriyah and others) we can be sure that these men wielded considerable wealth and power in Cairo in the middle of the thirteenth century.¹⁴ But the Baḥriyah especially became the terror and scourge of older mamluk groups as well as of the people of Cairo, giving a foretaste of one of the bad features of mamluk rule in Egypt and Syria in years to come. Apparently aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Aiyūb built the castle on the island of Roda in a deliberate effort to get them away from the streets of Cairo.¹⁵

These Baḥrī mamluks acquitted themselves well in the victory over the crusaders at Mansurah (February 1250), a victory all the more remarkable in that Egypt had lost its sultan in November of the previous year.¹⁶ Pending the arrival of the son and heir to the throne, Tūrān-Shāh, from his governorship near Mosul, the conduct of operations and civil affairs of the realm were in the hands of a singularly capable woman, Shajar-ad-Durr (Spray of Pearls). She had been a *mamlūkah* (fem. of *mamlūk*) in the harem first of the caliph and then of sultan aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Aiyūb, bearing him a son, Khalīl, who had died in infancy; but she had become the sultan's favorite wife in his aging years. When he died, she had concealed his death, giving out that he was seriously ill. Regular meals were brought

¹¹ Their sole duty was to guard the person of the sultan; see M. Ziada, "New Notes on Mamluk History [in Arabic]," *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Egypt*, IV, 1 (1936), 72.

¹² Abū-Shāmah, *Dhail ar-rauḍatain*, pp. 10-11, 52, 151; Ibn-Wāṣil, *op. cit.*, I, folio 150.

¹³ See al-Khazrajī, *History of the Rasūlids of Yemen* (Arabic text, ed. G. Shaikh M. 'Asal, London, 1906-1913), part 2, pp. 5, 11, 13.

¹⁴ Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-khiṭaṭ*, II, 43-44, 46, 82, 83, 116, 290, 420; Ibn-Duqmāq, *Kitāb al-intiṣār* . . . (Būlāq, A.H. 1309), IV, 44.

¹⁵ Abū-l-Maḥāsin, *An-nujūm*, VI, 319; Ibn-Iyās, *Badā'ī'* . . . (Būlāq, A.H. 1311), I, 83.

¹⁶ For this crusade, see above, chapter XIV, pp. 494-504.

in to where he was supposed to lie, and the necessary orders of state duly appeared, bearing his forged signature. It was under these adverse conditions that, during the crusaders' attack on Mansurah, the commander-in-chief of the forces of Egypt, Fakhr-ad-Dīn, was taken by surprise and slain beside his bath. His loss, however, was something of a blessing to the Baḥrī mamluks, if not for the morale of the forces as a whole, for he had been plotting to acquire the sultanate for himself.¹⁷

Significantly enough the new commander-in-chief was the leader of the Baḥrī mamluks, Ak-Tai, who had been secretly dispatched post-haste after the sultan's death to bring Tūrān-Shāh back with all speed, but who was nevertheless appointed to the high command *in absentia*.¹⁸ Ak-Tai also had designs on the sultanate, but was biding his time, as was the Kurdish vizir Ibn-Abī-'Alī al-Hudhbānī, the sultan's deputy in Cairo.¹⁹ There were other men of ability and potential ambition, such as the young mamluk leader Baybars, to whom most of the credit for the victory over the crusaders was due, although Ak-Tai, now returned from northern Iraq, had skillfully arranged the order of the day.²⁰

A few days later Tūrān-Shāh arrived, and Shajar-ad-Durr relinquished to him the reins of power, which she had manipulated so well, with the aid of her mamluk associates. News of the old sultan's death was then made public. In the decisive victory of Fāriskūr, in which Louis was captured and his army destroyed, it was Baybars who so distinguished himself that the eye-witness historian Ibn-Wāṣil called him and the other Baḥrīyah the Templars of Islam.²¹

With the crusading peril overcome, the victors turned to settle what seem to have been old accounts among them. Sultan Tūrān-Shāh, who had been disliked and distrusted by his own father, could not have had much love either for his stepmother Shajar-ad-Durr or for her friends the Baḥrīyah. In his two-months' reign, he made himself generally hated, first by accusing Shajar-ad-Durr of concealing his father's treasure, and then by breaking his word to Ak-Tai, to whom he had promised a certain governorship. He made matters worse by appointing many of his own recently arrived mamluks to posts that by custom belonged to older and more

¹⁷ Abū-l-Maḥāsin, *An-nujūm*, VI, 332-333, 358, 363; al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, 345.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 345, 358.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 343; Ibn-Wāṣil, *op. cit.*, II, folios 343, 361-362.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, II, folio 367.

²¹ *Ibid.*, II, folio 370. On this victory, see above, chapter XIV, pp. 501-504, and chapter XX, pp. 711-712.

deserving men. Plots and counterplots culminated in the murder of Tūrān-Shāh at Fāriskūr in the opening days of May 1250, at the hands of the mamluk generals and with the collusion of his step-mother, whom he had so badly rewarded for her loyalty to him at a very critical moment in the history of Egypt.²² He died unmourned, except by those who felt that events were marching a little too quickly for their own private purposes, and by a party of Kurdish officers and soldiery, the Qaimariyah, who thought that the Turkish mamluks had overstepped the mark.²³

The murder of Tūrān-Shāh, which ended Aiyūbid rule in Egypt, left a void that had to be filled quickly by the men who had created it. The Aiyūbid princes in Syria had been casting covetous eyes on Egypt for many years; moreover, the mamluks feared a possible crusade to avenge the failure and secure the release of king Louis. It was obviously in the interest of the Baḥrīyah to choose a successor to Tūrān-Shāh while they controlled the situation. Their choice fell on Shajar-ad-Durr herself, mainly as a stop-gap and a counter against the inevitable claims of Aiyūbid princes to the throne of Egypt, and also perhaps as a means to put an end to the dreams of such men as al-Hudhbānī and Ak-Tai, who seemed to entertain the hope of ruling Egypt singlehanded on autocratic lines. It was therefore not quite in her own right that she became *sulṭānah* of Egypt, but rather as the widow of aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Aiyūb, and the mother (*umm*) of his son who had died in infancy. She was styled not merely "sulṭānah Shajar-ad-Durr", but also "Umm-Khalīl aṣ-Ṣāliḥīyah", in order to assert the legitimacy of her succession, and to thwart in advance any Aiyūbid claims of illegality. The mamluks offered the post of commander-in-chief, the most important appointment in the realm, to al-Hudhbānī, who declined it out of pique.²⁴ Ak-Tai, who had actually held the post under Tūrān-Shāh, was passed over, perhaps in fear of his ambitions and ability. It was next offered to a hitherto unknown mamluk emir, Aybeg the Turkoman, who readily accepted.

Such was the birth of the Mamluk dynasty (May 1250). Though the sultanah was of Armenian or Turkish origin, the new dynasty could not be but a continuation of the Aiyūbids in political background and outlook: the mamluks themselves were the creation of

²² Many contemporary accounts of the killing of Tūrān-Shāh have been collected in Abū-l-Maḥāsīn, *An-nujūm*, VI, 328, 370-372; see also Ibn-Wāṣil, *op. cit.*, II, folios 370-371; al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, 358-359; Abū-Shāmah, *Dhail ar-rauḍatain*, p. 185.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 185; al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, p. 366.

²⁴ Ibn-Wāṣil, *op. cit.*, II, folio 373.

their late masters, and their experience in government and administration was limited to the established order in Egypt and Syria.

Shajar-ad-Durr's first act of government was the peaceful liquidation of the crusade, by confirming the terms of ransom which had been settled between Tūrān-Shāh and Louis. Half of the stipulated sum was scraped together in Damietta by Louis's queen, and the French king was allowed to sail away to Acre with the remnant of his army, only a few days after the setting up of the new dynasty.²⁵ Shajar-ad-Durr then went out of her way to shower favors and appointments with suitable fiefs on the Baḥrī mamluks, to whom she owed her exalted position.

Disgruntled murmurs began to be heard in many quarters in Cairo regarding the installation of a woman on the throne, but the first serious note of disapproval came from Damascus, where the Kurdish Qaimariyah refused to take the oath of allegiance. They called upon an-Nāṣir Yūsuf of Aleppo to chastise the daring upstarts of Cairo, and to recover Egypt for its rightful heirs. An-Nāṣir marched on Damascus, which opened its gates to him, and all the Baḥrī mamluks stationed there were arrested. Thus an-Nāṣir became lord of the two principal cities of Syria, but reprisals against the Qaimariyah took place in Cairo.

Meanwhile the 'Abbāsid caliph at Baghdad, al-Musta'ṣim, still the titular head of the Moslem world, did not relish the idea that the new ruler of Egypt should be a woman who had once been in his own harem;²⁶ there was also some learned opinion against the setting up of any woman on the throne of a Moslem country.²⁷ It was finally agreed that Shajar-ad-Durr should marry the commander-in-chief, Aybeg, and abdicate the throne in his favor; both ceremonies took place in July 1250, and the eighty days of sole rule of Shajar-ad-Durr came to a peaceful end. This arrangement, however, was not to the satisfaction of the Baḥrīyah and their leader Ak-Tai, who acknowledged Aybeg as sultan only for reasons of expediency, having sized him up as a mediocrity who could easily be removed at a more convenient time. Al-Hudhbānī was first among the emirs to hold the state parasol in the coronation procession, in token of his support and assent. He served Aybeg well

²⁵ See above, chapter XIV, pp. 504-505.

²⁶ She had been a gift from al-Musta'ṣim to aṣ-Ṣāliḥ Aiyūb, who had on at least one occasion sent her to brighten the exile of a relative, an-Nāṣir Dā'ūd; now the caliph inquired whether among the emirs of Egypt there was not at least one man fit to rule them, offering to send one if they could not agree on one; Hitti, *History of Syria*, p. 629, and *Encyclopaedia of Islām*, IV, 249.

²⁷ Ibn-Wāṣil, *op. cit.*, II, folios 373, 376; al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, 368-369; as-Suyūṭī, *Husn al-muḥāḍarah* . . . (Cairo, A.H. 1327), II, 34.

until he fell out of favor and died a disappointed man later in the reign.²⁸ But whether it was due to a sudden awakening of the Bahriyah to their mistake, or to an ominous increase in Aiyūbid opposition, it was decided within a few days of Aybeg's elevation that some Aiyūbid prince should be set up as joint ruler. An Aiyūbid child of less than ten years, named al-Ashraf Mūsā, was duly chosen, and official proclamations were issued under the two names, though power remained ostensibly in the hands of Aybeg, with the masterful Shajar-ad-Durr unwilling to relinquish any part of her real control.²⁹

This arrangement, however, could hardly be expected to placate Aiyūbid legitimists, who were already on the march towards Egypt, headed by an-Nāṣir of Aleppo and Damascus. Besides, a handful of mamluks in Cairo itself now proclaimed as sultan another young Aiyūbid prince of Kerak, al-Mughith 'Umar (September 1250). Aybeg, who had been taken for an easy-going person, at once proved his true mettle by declaring Egypt to be an appanage of the 'Abbāsid caliphate in Baghdad, from which he held the reins of power as viceroy. He then forestalled the possibility of any Aiyūbid approaches to Louis IX in Acre by the friendly gesture of releasing a number of French prisoners still in Egypt. Still taking no chances, Aybeg ordered the razing of old Damietta and its fortifications (October 1250), in case of a breach of faith on the part of Louis, or any other crusaders.³⁰ Meanwhile preparations were being completed for the dispatch of an expedition to repel the Aiyūbid invaders, whose vanguard was put to flight by Ak-Tai in the vicinity of the frontier town of Gaza. A battle was fought shortly afterwards (February 1251) near aṣ-Ṣālihiyah, within Egyptian territory, where the invading forces were routed; many Aiyūbid princes were captured, but an-Nāṣir managed to escape. None too content with this result, Aybeg sent Ak-Tai to ferret out the nests of Aiyūbid resistance in Palestine, so that no future invasion should reach the Egyptian frontiers so easily.

By this time, the Mongol danger had begun to loom large in western Asia, threatening the very existence of the caliphate in Baghdad.³¹ The caliph deemed it vital that Moslem dynasts should sink their differences before the advancing peril, and unite in an effort to repel it when it came. Much to the advantage of the

²⁸ Al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, 373, 376-377, 381, 386.

²⁹ Ibn-Wāṣil, *op. cit.*, II, folio 376; al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, 368-369; Abū-l-Maḥāsin, *An-nujūm*, VII, 5-6. Mūsā was either the son or the grandson of al-Kāmil's son al-Mas'ūd, who had briefly governed Yemen.

³⁰ Al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, 372.

³¹ See above, chapter XXI, p. 717.

nascent Mamluk state in Egypt, a treaty was concluded (April 1253) between Aybeg and an-Nāṣir, by which the former would hold Egypt and a slice of Palestine at the banks of the Jordan, including Jerusalem as well as the coastline, while the latter, together with other Aiyūbid princes in Syria and Palestine, would be left undisturbed in their several principalities.

Aybeg's reliance on the Baḥrīyah for the whole campaign against the Aiyūbids had increased their power unduly, making them unmanageable and disdainful of everybody except Ak-Tai. So long as the Aiyūbid threat remained, Aybeg had had to behave warily towards them; but no sooner was the treaty concluded than he began to move fast. He removed the child Mūsâ, and appointed his own mamluk Kutuz to the post of deputy sultan, much to the indignation of the Baḥrīyah. Extraordinary taxes which Baḥrī emirs had levied on certain districts precipitated a revolt headed by an Arab chief named Ṭālib, whose slogan was that mamluks (slaves) should not rule over free men. Aybeg had to call upon Ak-Tai for the suppression of this dangerous movement, which had mustered great numbers of beduins; Ak-Tai crushed it near Bilbais with a force smaller but better armed and disciplined (June 1253).

From this new success Ak-Tai emerged as a personal rival to the sultan. He began to arrogate to himself powers belonging only to the head of the state, and to ride in pomp and circumstance from his dwelling in Cairo to the sultan's palace in the citadel. With his connivance the Baḥrīyah, who called him *al-malik al-jawād* (the generous king), indulged in atrocious acts of violence. Next, Ak-Tai was betrothed to a princess of the Aiyūbid house of Hamah; he demanded that Aybeg allow him and his bride to reside in the citadel, on the ground of her royal descent.³² Aybeg now felt he had no choice but to get rid of Ak-Tai before it was too late; he summoned him on official business to the citadel, where he had him trapped and murdered, and his head thrown to his escort standing below the walls (September 1254).

Many of the Baḥrīyah, appalled at the news of this sudden blow, fled the country; some of those who stayed behind were arrested and their property was confiscated. For the moment Aybeg saved his throne, but only by scattering the Baḥrīyah among the courts of his Aiyūbid enemies in Syria. There they lived as political refugees, trying to incite an-Nāṣir of Aleppo (and others) to make another bid for Egypt, and raiding Palestine like robber barons, hovering all the time on the Egyptian border. Aybeg spent the best part of

³² Al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, 388–390; Abū-l-Maḥāsīn, *An-nujūm*, VII, 10–12, 30.

three years (1254-1257) in frontier camps to guard against their movements, but also sought external support; he resorted to the old device of declaring himself viceroy of the caliph, sending an embassy to Baghdad for the traditional robes of honor and other insignia of investiture. He also renewed an old truce with the crusaders,³³ and proposed an alliance with Lu'lu', the powerful atabeg of Mosul, whose daughter he proposed to marry, if only to break away from the domination of Shajar-ad-Durr and her open sympathies with the exiled Baḥrīyah. The news of this last move on the part of Aybeg produced an irretrievable rupture; Shajar-ad-Durr felt herself a woman wronged, and Aybeg stayed away from her. Yet he allowed himself to be lured to a meeting of reconciliation, where he was savagely murdered in his bath (April 1257). She announced that he had died a natural death, but the truth soon leaked out, and she met an equally brutal end three days later.

Young 'Alī, Aybeg's son, of course had no "right" to the succession in a military oligarchy of mamluks, despite the fond wishes of his father, but he suited the devious stratagems of the leading emirs. They accepted the youngster as successor, not in real earnest, but as a substitute to be quietly removed as soon as they decided which of them should mount the throne. This feature of mock primogeniture was meticulously repeated time and again after the demise of almost every sultan, with the same purpose in view. After his deposition each of these shadow successors would live in retirement somewhere in Egypt, or in exile abroad. That some sons of sultans were able to remain on the throne for a time was due more to the inability of the emirs to agree among themselves than to any staying qualities inherent in these sons. Yet all outward ceremonials of a new reign were observed on each such occasion. 'Alī ibn-Aybeg, a lad of fifteen years, was raised to his father's throne; the senior member of his father's own mamluks, Kutuz, was retained in the post of deputy sultan. But the destruction of Baghdad by the Mongols played into the hands of Kutuz, who convinced the council of state in Cairo that the Mongol threat made it urgently necessary to have a strong man at the helm, not a helpless playboy of no worth or experience. 'Alī was deposed, and Kutuz was proclaimed sultan (November 12, 1259).

After Hulagu destroyed Aleppo (January 1260), he had to return to Karakorum to take part in the choice of a successor to the supreme khanate. The command of the Mongol army in Syria

³³ See al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, 393; and above, chapter XVI, pp. 567-568.

was left to Kitbogha, a Nestorian Christian Mongol. Meanwhile such Aiyūbid forces as an-Nāṣir was reputed to have gathered near Damascus, to oppose the Mongol advance, dwindled rather quickly. Men like Baybars and other Baḥrī mamluk exiles left an-Nāṣir's court in disgust, offering their services to Kutuz, who welcomed them back to Cairo. Damascus soon surrendered to Kitbogha without resistance (March 1260), and was spared some of the usual Mongol indignities. Kutuz realized his danger to the full, and anticipated further Mongol progress southward by marching from Egypt to Palestine at the head of a considerable army, but not before he had ordered the public execution of the Mongol envoys in Cairo. His vanguard under Baybars, now fully restored to his old position in the Mamluk army, drove advance Mongol troops out of Gaza, where Kutuz himself then arrived to prepare the main advance northward along the Palestinian coast. Kitbogha offered alliance and protection to the crusader barons at Acre if they would refuse passage to the Mamluks, but Kutuz secured the Christians' neutrality, and was thereby able to surprise the Mongols in Galilee.

Aided by this initial advantage, the Mamluks defeated the Mongols in a pitched battle (September 1260), at 'Ain Jālūt, not far from Nazareth.³⁴ The bravery of Kutuz, and of his general Baybars, won the day; Kitbogha was slain. For the first time in history the Mongols had been indisputably beaten in a decisive encounter; their spell was broken at last, and Damascus rose and cast off their heavy yoke. But Kutuz did not rest satisfied until the Mongols, completely crushed and crestfallen, were driven out of Syria beyond the Euphrates. He then restored, where possible, all the Aiyūbid princes and other officials to their former places as governors under his command. In this way he extended the suzerainty of the Mamluk sultanate over Syria and Palestine, except for the small principality of Kerak. Far more important was the universal prestige which Kutuz gained for the Mamluks by this victory, for 'Ain Jālūt had warded off the Mongol danger not only from Egypt but from European Christendom as well, though there were some Christian princes who clung to the idea of an alliance with the Mongols. Yet the reward meted out to Kutuz was murder; on his triumphant return to Egypt he was treacherously stabbed to death (October 1260) by Baybars, who immediately afterwards rode into Cairo and usurped the Mamluk throne.³⁵

³⁴ See above, chapter XXI, p. 718.

³⁵ Baybars ad-Dawādār, *Zubdat al-fikrah*, X, folios 32-33.

Within a single decade, and in spite of three regicides, the Mamluks had proved themselves a power capable of withstanding both internal and external threats of disruption. Granting that they had inherited a ready-made and well developed governmental machine, based on military principles which suited the purposes of an oligarchy, the variety of problems which they had so successfully tackled had none the less been a real test of their strength and ability to govern. Sultan Baybars, whose ascent to the throne meant the return of the Bahriyah,³⁶ was to give further proof of these qualities in his crowded reign of seventeen years (1260-1277).³⁷ His achievements merit his recognition as founder of the Mamluk state, and he indeed was the organizer of its military and administrative machinery on imperial lines.

Kutuz had no son to be used as a foil against the coup d'état which Baybars had so swiftly accomplished; but the governor of Damascus, 'Alam-ad-Dīn, whom Kutuz had reinstated in the Syrian capital, refused to recognize what had taken place in Cairo, proclaiming himself sultan and calling upon Aiyūbid princes and Mamluk governors of Syrian provinces to acknowledge him. His summons met with little or no response, and Baybars forthwith sent against him an expedition which brought him to Cairo in chains (January 1261), installing in Damascus as governor al-Bunduqdār, the one-time master of Baybars.³⁸ Meanwhile in Cairo a nascent beduin insurrection was quickly stifled; the rebels were surrounded; and their Shi'ite leader al-Kūrānī was hanged with many of his associates.

Baybars repeatedly demonstrated quickness of action, resolution, courage, shrewdness, prescience, and determination. He seemed to be able to accomplish many things almost at the same time, and to be always on the move directing affairs of state in his travels in Egypt and Syria. In these opening months of his reign he badly needed to put his house in order, so that he might deal with a problem created by the extinction of the 'Abbāsid caliphate in Baghdad; various dynasts were now contemplating its revival in their own countries, and for their own advantage. An-Nāṣir of Aleppo and Damascus may have toyed with the idea of attracting a refugee 'Abbāsid to his court to bolster up his own waning fortunes by acknowledging him as caliph, but the march of events overwhelmed

³⁶ Al-Maqrizī, *As-sulūk*, I, 437.

³⁷ On Baybars see Muḥyi-ad-Dīn, *Strat al-malik az-Zāhir* (ed. and tr. S. F. Sadeque, Dacca, 1956).

³⁸ 'Alam-ad-Dīn was later restored to favor and appointed governor of Aleppo by Baybars.

the Aiyūbid prince. Baybars promptly put the same idea into effect; he proclaimed an 'Abbāsīd refugee caliph with the honorific al-Mustanşir (1261), and supplied him with armed forces in a vain effort to regain Baghdad.³⁹ Al-Mustanşir's death did not discourage Baybars, who in 1262 set up another 'Abbāsīd, less closely related to the murdered al-Musta'şim, as the caliph al-Ḥākīm in Cairo in 1262.⁴⁰ He thus made Egypt the seat of the caliphate and the cynosure of Moslem eyes. Cairo, the new focus of Islam, was nearer Europe and more accessible to many Moslem countries than was Baghdad. Moslem savants flocked to Cairo, where they found plenty of patronage and encouragement, and the learning they spread elsewhere in the process of migrating to Egypt gave impetus to a sort of renaissance in Islam. But the 'Abbāsīd "caliphs" in Cairo were to be mere court functionaries of the Mamluk sultans.

Baybars had another pressing problem to solve before he felt wholly secure. The Aiyūbid prince of Kerak, al-Mughīth 'Umar, continued to assert his own legitimist claims, persisting in serious schemes of acquiring Egypt, unlike the other Syrian Aiyūbids, who now lived in peace with the Mamluk sultanate. Baybars knew him well, having taken refuge at his court as an exile in previous years, and collaborated with him in several raids on the Egyptian border. At the first move of Baybars against the fortress principality of Kerak, al-Mughīth caused the caliph to intercede for him, without any lessening of his pretensions. Eventually Baybars had him entrapped, and sent him a prisoner to the citadel of Cairo, where he was executed on a charge of treasonable correspondence with the Mongols (April 1263).

During these three years of general consolidation of his empire, Baybars had also been busy with the organization of a regular Mamluk army, the levying of Arab contingents, the rebuilding of a navy, the redistribution of fiefs among the army commanders and the soldiery, the building of roads and bridges, and the digging of irrigation canals in various parts of Egypt. He also strengthened the fortresses of Syria, garrisoned them with mamluks, and connected Damascus and Cairo by a twice-weekly postal service. Moreover, the fortifications of Alexandria were carefully repaired and inspected, and the estuaries of the Nile at Damietta and Rosetta were protected by watchtowers. To those years also belong the building of the mosque and college (*madrasah*) of Baybars, besides

³⁹ Muḥyī-ad-Dīn, *Sīrat al-malik* (tr. Sadeque), pp. 123-134.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-160; adh-Dhahabī, *Ta'rīkh al-Islām*, folio 257.

a free cemetery with an endowment for the burial of poor Moslems.⁴¹

Having disposed of the last recalcitrant Aiyūbid in Syria, Baybars now felt able to embark upon a vigorous foreign policy that had the double purpose of keeping the Mongols away from Mamluk border territories in northern Iraq, and of punishing those crusader states which had made common cause with them, while suitably preparing against any crusading expedition from Europe. He naturally had little knowledge of what had been taking place in the west to make the formation of a European crusade on the old grand scale almost an impossibility; but it was in consonance with his policy of thoroughness to have the Egyptian coasts well manned and fortified. He then initiated amicable relations with the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus, and with Manfred of Sicily, who could be relied upon to inform Baybars of any European activity intended to help the crusader states in Syria.⁴² Manfred's enemy Charles of Anjou accordingly sent a friendly embassy to Cairo, which Baybars received in 1264.⁴³ Even earlier Baybars had allied himself with the chief of the Golden Horde of Kipchak Mongols in the valley of the Volga, Berke Khan, a grandson of Genghis Khan who had embraced Islam in his youth and was now the inveterate enemy of the Il-khanids of Persia. Equally important for Baybars was the alliance with the Selchūkids of Rūm, whose strategic position threatened both the northern Mongol flank and the Christian kingdom of Cilician Armenia. In order to forestall any surprise Mongol attack on his eastern frontiers through northern Iraq Baybars had the earth scorched along the invasion route between Amida and Akhlāt, and repaired the Syrian fortifications that the Mongols had once destroyed.

Small wonder that by 1265 Baybars was able to launch a vigorous military offensive in more than one direction. He began by capturing the ports of Caesarea, Haifa, and Arsuf, razing their fortifications to the ground, and returning to Egypt to resume an unfinished inspection of fortifications and waterways in Alexandria, and to replenish his forces with a new Mamluk army.⁴⁴ In 1266 he gave orders for intensive raids against the crusader towns along the Syrian coast, while he himself took Safad, returning to Damas-

⁴¹ K. A. C. Creswell, *The Works of Sultan Baibars* (Cairo, 1926).

⁴² The embassy to Manfred included the historian Ibn-Waṣīl.

⁴³ Al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, 513. On Charles of Anjou, see above, chapter X, pp. 363-371, and chapter XVI, pp. 583-590.

⁴⁴ On this and subsequent campaigns of Baybars against the crusaders, see above, chapter XVI, pp. 575-582.

cus to prepare for an expedition against Armenia, whose capital, Sis, he next sacked in a swift campaign.⁴⁵ After a brief sojourn in Cairo, where he generally passed the winter months to rest his troops, he repaired to Syria in 1267 to inspect the new fortifications of Safad, going back to Cairo highly elated with the results of his campaign. Early in 1268 he again went to Syria, where he took Jaffa, Belfort, and, after a strenuous siege, Antioch, chief city of the strongest crusading principality in those years. He could well afford to spend 1269 in leisurely travels in Egypt, Syria, and Arabia, performing the pilgrimage to Mecca with great pomp, and incidentally realizing his dream of extending Mamluk sovereignty over the holy cities of Islam. He left the emir Shams-ad-Dīn Marwān in Mecca as governor, to present the Ka'bah with a covering embroidered with the sultan's name in letters of gold.

In 1270 Baybars conducted negotiations with the Syrian branch of the Assassins, forcing the Old Man of the Mountain to pay tribute as the price of peace. In that same year Louis IX led his fateful crusade into Tunisia; Baybars stayed in Cairo closely watching events, and even considered giving help to his fellow Moslems against the invaders.⁴⁶ But the death of the French king on the Tunisian coast dispelled all his anxiety, and in 1271 the sultan marched to Syria, where he took Chastel Blanc, Krak des Chevaliers, and 'Akkār, followed by the swift conquest of several fortresses of the Assassins. In that year a flotilla of eleven ships attacked the shores of Cyprus, but was repulsed and wrecked in a storm.⁴⁷ Baybars went back to Cairo late in the year, but returned to Syria in 1272 to make a general inspection of Syrian garrison towns. He left Damascus in 1273 for Bira on the Euphrates, where he inflicted a severe defeat on the Mongols, after swimming the river to meet them at the head of his troops. On his way back to Damascus he seized the remaining fortresses of the Assassins, while other Mamluk troops were operating in Cyrenaica, Cilicia, and Nubia.⁴⁸

The crusader principalities now felt that their only safety lay in a general truce, which Baybars concluded with them in 1274, and a year of calm ensued. In 1275, however, Baybars was again in Cilician Armenia, where he seized and sacked Sis and Ayas; other

⁴⁵ For Baybars' attacks on Cilician Armenia, see above, chapter XVIII, pp. 653-655.

⁴⁶ On the crusade against Tunisia, see above, chapter XIV, pp. 508-518, and chapter on North Africa in the forthcoming vol. III.

⁴⁷ Al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, 593-594; on Cyprus during this period, see above, chapter XVII, pp. 615-616.

⁴⁸ For Baybars' Nubian operations, see al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, 608, 621-623; and J. S. Trimmingham, *Islam in the Sudan* (London, 1949), pp. 69, 79. For a spirited treatment of Baybars' campaigns, see also Wiet, *Les Sultans mamelouks*, pp. 252-254.

Mamluk troops were once more in Nubia in that year. In 1277 Baybars was again in the north, to meet combined Mongol and Selchükid forces in Anatolia, where he won a signal victory in a battle near Albistan. He then entered Caesarea, in Cappadocia, where he received the homage of the people and caused coins to be struck in his name as suzerain of the Selchükids of Rüm.⁴⁹ By June of 1277 Baybars was back in Damascus, where he died at the height of his eventful career, after a short illness following a bout of drinking fermented mare's milk, in which a poisoned cup was rumored to have figured.⁵⁰

Berke Khan, the eldest son of Baybars, reigned for only a little more than two years, during which the usual Mamluk plotting and wirepulling came into full play. The young sultan was acquainted with the art of government, since his father had appointed him co-sultan early in his reign, and had left him as virtual ruler of Egypt during his frequent campaigns in Syria. Yet neither his experience, nor his too literal interpretation of his father's instructions to execute potential rivals,⁵¹ availed him in keeping the throne for long. Berke Khan was deposed in August 1279 by his own father-in-law Kalavun, and was given the province of Kerak in Transjordan as an independent principality. Salamish, another son of Baybars, only seven years old, was solemnly proclaimed sultan at the suggestion of Kalavun, now appointed guardian and commander-in-chief, with all the trappings of a co-sultan. Kalavun placed his own supporters in most of the key offices of the administration in Egypt and Syria, thus preparing the way for the inevitable next step. Salamish was quietly deposed (December 1279), and was sent later to join his brother in Transjordan. Baybars had a third son, Khiḍr, but there was no need any longer to resort to the pitiful farce of setting up child sultans on the throne. Kalavun had made all his dispositions to become sultan himself; Khiḍr was given Krak de Montréal (ash-Shaubak) near Kerak, to rule after the fashion of his eldest brother.⁵²

Sultan Kalavun was a Baḥrī mamluk like Baybars, and followed closely in his steps. He had witnessed the coming of the Mamluk sultanate into power, and had played an active though unspectacular part in its fortunes.⁵³ Having acceded to the throne, Kalavun had to

⁴⁹ See above, chapter XXI, pp. 727-728.

⁵⁰ On Baybars' death, and the rumors of poison, see the account by Sadeque in his edition of Muḥyī-ad-Dīn, *Strat al-malik*, p. 11.

⁵¹ See the letter in Ibn-Wāṣil, *op. cit.*, II, folio 440A.

⁵² Abū-l-Maḥāsīn, *An-nujūm*, VIII, 27.

⁵³ On this phase of his career, see al-Maqrizī, *As-sulūk*, I, 436, 445, 528.

face a double measure of the usual opposition, which chose for its own ends to feign loyalty to the house of Baybars. Several Mamluk emirs who had participated in the military triumphs of Baybars felt that they had as good a claim to the sultanate as did Kalavun; notably Sungur al-Ashkar, governor of Damascus, who proclaimed himself sultan immediately after the mysterious death of Berke Khan in his principality of Kerak. Sungur found support among the beduins of Syria as well as the remaining sons of Baybars, Khidr and Salamish, whose adherents were by no means negligible. Sungur was routed by Kalavun's forces in a battle south of Damascus, but he escaped and appealed for help to the Il-khan Abagha, son and successor of Hulagu. Abagha had been one of the most persistent protagonists of the scheme of crusader-Mongol alliance against the Mamluk empire; he had seen with his own eyes the havoc wrought on Mongol armies at Albistan, and was only too eager to aid Sungur or any other rebel from Egypt or Syria in any plan to disrupt the Mamluk empire.

Mongol troops thereupon invaded northern Syria (September 1280), causing much destruction around Aleppo. Kalavun marched to Syria to meet a second Mongol invasion on a larger scale, but before the clash took place Sungur had made peace with the sultan, in exchange for the promise of certain north Syrian fortress towns to rule independently, and of an unprecedented rank in the Mamluk hierarchy that would make him second only to the sultan. Kalavun was thus able to concentrate his whole attention upon the Mongols, who had mustered a formidable army under Mengü-Timur, brother of Abagha, with contingents of Armenians, Georgians, and others. The contending forces met at Homs (October 1281), where the Mongols were defeated and compelled to withdraw from Syria. In 1282 Abagha died, and was succeeded in the Mongol Il-khanate of Persia by Tegüder ("Ahmad"), who had recently embraced Islam, and showed his devotion to the religion he had adopted in friendly letters to Kalavun, expressing his ardent desire to live on terms of peace and amity with all Moslem countries. The Mongols as a people were far from sharing these sentiments, and when the pagan Arghun came to the throne in 1284, Tegüder's policy was reversed, for Arghun revived Abagha's old scheme of a crusader-Mongol alliance to crush the Mamluk empire. To block it Kalavun, like Baybars, entered into diplomatic relations with the Mongols of the Golden Horde, the Byzantine emperor, the kings of France, Castile, and Aragon-Sicily, the republic of Genoa, and the German emperor, Rudolph of Hapsburg.

On the way to meet the invading Mongols, Kalavun had prudently renewed the general truce concluded by Baybars towards the end of his reign with crusader cities anxious for peace. That truce was nominally for ten years, and some of the new terms added to it by Kalavun were none too favorable or reassuring to the crusaders.⁵⁴ But Kalavun had no intention of respecting his word the moment his lands were free of the Mongols. He had made known his intentions against the crusaders in the first year of his reign in a letter to Sungur al-Ashkar;⁵⁵ so when the fear of the Mongols was finally abated, his first target was the Hospitallers' fortress of al-Marqab, covering the northern frontiers of the county of Tripoli. Kalavun fell upon it suddenly, and undermined its walls so rapidly that the garrison had to surrender and depart (May 1285). He then marched against Maraclea, a strong castle built in the sea, belonging to a vassal⁵⁶ of Bohemond VII of Tripoli. The sultan warned the latter that unless the castle was dismantled and abandoned, he would make war upon the county itself, and Bohemond had to give the necessary instructions (1286), if only to save his own shrunken territory. About that time Margaret of Tyre had to purchase a treaty of peace with Kalavun on humiliating terms, and a similar treaty was made with king Leon III of Cilician Armenia, in return for a heavy yearly tribute.

Having achieved so much against the crusaders at little cost to himself, Kalavun was able to think of ousting his old rival, Sungur al-Ashkar, from his vast principality in Syria, ultimately compelling him to give it up and retire to obscurity in Cairo (1287). Kalavun also harassed Khiḍr, prince of Kerak, until he too yielded and came to Cairo. Khiḍr and his brother Salamish were sent much later to honorable exile in Constantinople. In 1288, Kalavun sent two disciplinary expeditions southward to regulate Nubian relations with the Mamluk sultanate, though no serious attempt was made to turn the country into a dependency.⁵⁷ About the same time, succession disputes in Tripoli, following the death of Bohemond VII without male issue, decided Kalavun to capture the city for himself. But he had to lay siege to it, storm it, and level it to the ground, before he could claim it as his own (1289). Shortly afterwards the fortress of Botron south of Tripoli was taken, and also

⁵⁴ For Kalavun's attacks on the crusading states, see above, chapter XVI, pp. 589-595.

⁵⁵ Al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, 641.

⁵⁶ Identified by Röhrich, *Königreich Jerusalem*, pp. 988-989, as Bartholomew Embriaco (see above, chapter, XVI, p. 591), but by Rey (p. 387) as Meillor III of Ravendel.

⁵⁷ Al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, 736-737, 743, 749-755; Trimmingham, *Islam in the Sudan*, p. 70.

demolished; but this was Kalavun's last feat of arms. He went back to Egypt to prepare for the siege of Acre, on the convenient pretext that Moslem traders in the city had been mistreated; but when about to depart with his army he fell ill and died in camp (November or December 1290) at the age of seventy.

Kalavun had followed Baybars' example in embellishing Egyptian and Syrian towns with buildings and renovations, including a mosque, a mausoleum, and a general hospital in Cairo which brought special credit to its founder.⁵⁸ He had given much attention to discipline and efficiency in the Mamluk army, a third of which he organized for duty in the citadel of Cairo; the name *Burjīyah* (men of the tower) was thenceforward attached to the new corps.

It was perhaps likewise in imitation of Baybars, but in hope of better family luck, that Kalavun appointed his eldest son, 'Alī, as his successor in the Mamluk sultanate. When 'Alī died mysteriously, a second son, al-Ashraf Khalīl, was made heir, though Kalavun, whether from dislike of Khalīl's violence and alleged immorality, or because he suspected him of poisoning the elder brother, could not be induced to sign the formal deed of appointment. Yet Kalavun consented to have Khalīl solemnly declared his successor, and had him made deputy-sultan before leaving for his last campaign in Syria. Even after Khalīl had been cleared of the charge of causing the death of his brother, Kalavun left the diploma of appointment unsigned, partly because of the mixed advice of his ministers, such as the emir Turun-Tai, who detested Khalīl and used every possible occasion to slight him.⁵⁹ It also seems likely that Kalavun was withholding his signature for the benefit of a younger son, Muḥammad, who was born to him by a young wife in his later years; but the sultan's unexpected death left no time for hesitation, and Khalīl duly succeeded to the throne, which was to be held thereafter by Kalavun's descendants for nearly a hundred years.

When sultan Khalīl saw his father's unsigned diploma at the first meeting of the council of state in Cairo (November 1290) he quietly remarked: "My father refused to bestow on me what God had ordained to give me", and threw the scrap of paper away.⁶⁰ It was an appropriately regal remark for a young sultan of twenty-seven, notoriously accused of ungodliness, violence, and unnatural vice. Khalīl pursued a vindictive course of action against those of

⁵⁸ For a graphic description of this hospital and other buildings of Kalavun, see al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, appendix IX, 997-1001.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 757.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 756; Abū-l-Maḥāsīn, *An-nujūm*, VIII, 4.

his father's men whom he had known to be the source of his own unpopularity and who had accused him of fratricide. The consequent executions, imprisonments, and confiscations of property turned Khalil's short reign of three years into a long nightmare, in which the sultan's favorite minister and lifelong companion, Ibn-as-Sal'ūs, grotesquely lorded it over the court.⁶¹ Khalil's old enemy, the emir Turun-Tai, was the first to suffer death after terrible torture; yet the sultan provided amply for the dead man's blind son.⁶² Khalil even remitted some arrears of taxes in Egypt and Syria to alleviate hardship, and was remarkably respectful to the memory of his father Kalavun, observing the anniversaries of his death with much solemnity and ceremonial.⁶³

In external affairs, Khalil had courage, ability, and vigor. He took up his father's plan of besieging Acre, after careful additional preparations in men and material. The siege engines which he finally assembled before the city, in the spring of 1291, numbered more than were known to have been employed at any previous operation in the crusades. On the other hand, Acre was splendidly fortified, and it withstood fierce bombardment for ten consecutive days, after which Khalil decided to storm it. The final assault took place in the early morning of Friday, May 18, 1291, while the doomed city was shrouded in mist; effective resistance soon became hopeless, and for ten days longer Acre was subjected to fire and sword as well as plunder, followed by the dismantling of its fortifications. Within a few months after the fall of Acre, all the other coastal towns still in the possession of the crusaders were taken in turn by a small army force, and all were demolished except Beirut, which capitulated as soon as it was summoned to surrender.⁶⁴

The sultan returned to Damascus with a multitude of captives in his train; the news that preceded his triumphal progress caused feasts and festivities to be held everywhere in Egypt and Syria. Poets sang the praises of the sultan who had made an end of the last crusaders in Syria, and the sultan's cruelties towards his father's men were for the time forgotten. Khalil then busied himself with renovating and developing fortifications and public buildings in Aleppo, Baalbek, Damascus, and Tripoli; but he returned to Cairo early in 1292, apparently full of dreams of further conquest.

He caused the 'Abbāsid caliph al-Ḥākīm to preach a holy war against the Mongols, but his subsequent march to the upper

⁶¹ Al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, 760-763, 771.

⁶² *Ibid.*, I, 757-759.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, I, 759, 764, 774-775.

⁶⁴ On the fall of Acre and other cities of Frankish Syria, see above, chapter XVI, pp. 595-598.

Euphrates to challenge them to fight was limited to the siege and capture of Hromgla (July 1292), a fortress town opposite Bira. He signaled this victory in Cairo by arresting a number of leading emirs of his government, whom he suspected of making trouble for him in his absence, and imprisoning them.⁶⁵ The following spring he prepared for an invasion of Cilician Armenia, but he moved no farther than Damascus, where envoys sent by the Armenian king, Toros III, ceded to him the towns of Marash and Behesni as the price of peace.⁶⁶ He returned to Cairo to review his troops in preparation for a campaign apparently against the Mongols, for no sooner had he settled in his capital than some Mongol envoys arrived with daring demands for the surrender of Aleppo, on behalf of the Il-khan Gaikhatu. The sultan dismissed the envoys with the threat that he would march upon Baghdad. This idle exchange of bluster led to no hostilities. Some of Khalil's own men who could no longer tolerate his abnormality, capriciousness, and suspicion lured him into a hunting party northwest of Cairo, where he was taken unawares and brutally cut to pieces (December 1293).

Mamluk polity was that of a military oligarchy, in which the sultan, a mamluk by origin (unlike his successor sons) was surrounded by a caste of emirs, who had been mamluks themselves. Like the sultan, these emirs were foreigners of various origins, but in the thirteenth century mostly Kipchaks like both Baybars and Kalavun. The emirs, who were organized as cavalry of well defined grades and services, held all military commands and court offices, as well as high administrative appointments in the provinces of Egypt and the rest of the Mamluk empire. They were all Moslems, nominally at least, and were collectively called Men of the Sword, to distinguish them from Men of the Pen, who were the native holders of civil appointments, many of whom were non-Moslems. For their services, and in proportion to their grades, the emirs were rewarded with fiefs (Arabic singular *iqṭā'*), which might be landed estates (compact or scattered), towns, villages, or even annual allowances from the revenue of a tax, customs duty, or excise levied by the central government.⁶⁷ Each emir was obliged to divide two thirds of his fief among his own private mamluks, by granting them either portions of the fief, or pecuniary allowances from its revenue. Allocation and supervision of fiefs and sub-fiefs

⁶⁵ Al-Maqrīzī, *As-sulūk*, I, 781.

⁶⁶ See above, chapter XVIII, pp. 655-656.

⁶⁷ Poliak, *Feudalism in the Middle East*, p. 18. This work is an exhaustive study of the whole subject, based on all the available material, and the writer is indebted to it for several ideas expressed here.

were the charge of the state department for the army, the *dīwān al-jaish*, called also the *dīwān al-iqtā'*; but there were other grants, in money and in kind, which were made at certain times by the sultan to the emirs through other departments of the state.⁶⁸

The rudiments of the system go back to the days of Saladin in the twelfth century. But it should be made clear that though the Mamluk system of the late thirteenth century bore striking resemblance to that of feudalism in western Europe, the two systems differed fundamentally and essentially in regard to the theory of land tenure. Thus the fief, which formed the backbone of the feudal order in the west, was in the Mamluk system no more than a land or other endowment, significantly called in French "une dotation foncière", which gave the holding emir, in the words of an eminent French scholar, "ni la propriété, ni la possession, ni la jouissance du fonds; elle fait seulement participer le titulaire aux revenus du sol, dont elle lui confère l'impôt".⁶⁹

Springing from a stratum common to the rest of the military oligarchy, the sultan came to the throne by no hereditary right of succession. He was simply chosen by the common consent of the emirs in council, and on his elevation to the dignity he was duly recognized by the 'Abbāsid "caliph" in Cairo, from the time of Baybars onwards. Thus in fact the sultan was rather a head Mamluk or a chief emir than king in the absolute sense of the word, though men like Baybars and Kalavun had no great difficulty in towering high above their entourage, and Kalavun's progeny, to the fifth generation, would hold the Mamluk sultanate in their hands in almost unbroken succession.

The Mamluk army consisted of three principal units: the knights who were in the sultan's service without being his freedmen, the royal mamluks who were the freedmen of the reigning sultan, and the private mamluks of the emirs. There were sub-units within these categories, with special assignments of service in peace and war, such as the Bahri corps, which had produced Baybars and Kalavun. There were also auxiliary troops of Arab beduins, Turkomans, Kurds, Syrians, and Palestinians as well as small native Egyptian levies.⁷⁰ Otherwise the rest of the population of the Mamluk empire had little in common with their stern foreign masters, to whom they were useful as city artisans supplying the ruling Mamluk fraternity with all their needs in peace and war, or

⁶⁸ Poliak, *Feudalism in the Middle East*, pp. 4-5, 20-22.

⁶⁹ M. Gaudesfroy-Demombynes, *La Syrie à l'époque des mamelouks* (Paris, 1923), p. cxiv; see also Poliak, *op. cit.*, p. 18, for a clear definition of the Mamluk fief.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-15.

as servile tenants and serfs in the countryside, cultivating the land and paying the various taxes. Beyond these functions, and that of filling judicial, religious and minor offices in administrative departments of the Mamluk empire, the native population in general had no part in the business of the state.

Such was the impression which the socio-economic historian Ibn-Khaldūn formed for himself, on his visit to Cairo and Alexandria at the beginning of the fifteenth century: "The sultan of Egypt," he noted, "lives in perfect tranquillity; so rare is the spirit of faction or rebellion among the people of that country, where one sees nothing but a ruling sultan and submissive subjects. The government of the country is in the hands of Turkish Mamluk sultans and their appertaining bands of similar Turkish stock, succeeding each other, family after family, with a caliph who is denoted 'Abbāsīd, and is a descendant of the caliphs of Baghdad.'" ⁷¹ Ibn-Khaldūn has another acid remark, in which he describes the good people bearing themselves in life as if they had finished with the Day of Judgment. ⁷² But if this description of placidity held true of the people of Cairo, who would nevertheless join in public rejoicings when the sultan came back from a victorious campaign or had his son circumcised, it certainly applied neither to the turbulent mamluk companies in the city, nor to the peasantry, rife with economic unrest caused by bad agrarian conditions in the provinces, where Mamluk tyranny bore down more heavily. ⁷³

For all their tyranny and stiff social isolation from their subjects, however, the Mamluk sultans and their emirs were active patrons of art, architecture, and solid learning. The latter field would claim a splendid array of biographers, theologians, historians, geographers, and encyclopaedic scholars in the fourteenth century; but the preceding fifty years, though not devoid of learned men of distinction in Egypt and Syria, saw especially the building of magnificent mosques, graceful colleges, stately tomb chapels, and other foundations attesting to the splendor of Mamluk rule. The enthusiasm which produced these monuments, in increasing number and variety throughout the Mamluk period, has been somehow attributed partly to an instinct for architecture, partly to a passion for display. But having been the creation of the Aiyūbids, who were themselves great builders of pious works, the Mamluks evidently aped their masters in this respect, before and after the establishment of the Mamluk sultanate, in much the same way as they generally

⁷¹ Ibn-Khaldūn, *Al-muqaddimah*, quoted by Wiet, *Les sultans mamlouks*, p. 249.

⁷² Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-khitāt*, I, 50.

⁷³ Poliak, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

imitated them in methods of government and administration. The Mamluk sultans and their emirs, however, surpassed their Aiyūbid predecessors in pious works, apparently because as a group they were recently converted Moslems, with additional zeal for their adopted religion. Because of their imperfect understanding of the tenets of Islam owing to the paucity of their Arabic, and because of their over-literal interpretation of the precepts of the Moslem religion as regards reward and punishment for deeds and actions in this world, they apparently indulged in these material manifestations of piety as a guarantee for their own salvation in the hereafter. This theory is supported by the low standard of their private morals. Their abundant wealth and prosperity, acquired especially through the international transit trade, enabled them to atone for such shortcomings by lavish expenditures for public works.