

THE CIRCASSIANS IN THE MEMLÜK KINGDOM

Prof. David Ayalon (Neustadt)

Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 69, No. 3. (Jul. - Sep., 1949), pp. 135-147.

Born David Neustadt in Haifa in 1914 and raised in Zikhron Ya'akov and Rosh Pinah, Professor Ayalon came into extensive contact with local Arabs and was first exposed to the Arabic language. In 1933, Ayalon began his studies in Arabic language and literature, Islamic culture, and Jewish history in the recently founded Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He initially devoted his studies to the Jewish aspect of the medieval Islamic world, but subsequently turned toward Islamic history, specifically the study of the Mamluk institution.

His work was disrupted by service in the British army during World War II; nevertheless, he was able to pursue his research and was awarded his doctorate in 1946. In 1947, he compiled his *Arabic-Hebrew Dictionary of Modern Arabic* with Pessah Shinar, and it has remained a mainstay for the study of Arabic in Israel for over fifty years. In the years prior to Israel's independence, Ayalon worked in the Political Department of the Jewish Agency, which in 1948 became the nucleus of the new Foreign Ministry. At this time he was appointed head of research in the Middle East section.

In 1950, Professors Goitein and Baneth invited Ayalon to establish the Department of Modern Middle Eastern History at the Hebrew University. Together with Turkologist Uriel Heyd, they formed what is known today as the Department of Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies. Ayalon headed the Department until 1956, and from 1963–67 was appointed chairman of the Institute of Asian and African Studies. During this period, Ayalon published some of his most important studies: *L'esclavage du mamelouk* (1951), "Studies on the Structure of the Mamlük Army" (1953–54), and *Gunpowder and Firearms in the Mamlük Kingdom* (1956). Around 1970, Ayalon embarked on a completely new area of research—the Mongol *Yasa* (law) and its role in the Mamluk Sultanate.

Aside from his academic interests, Ayalon maintained an avid interest in sports, serving for many years as the head of the Hebrew University's Committee for Sports. He himself was a sprinter of no mean distinction, and up to the mid-sixties was faculty champion in short-distant running at the University. In 1966 he married Miriam Rosen, currently professor of Islamic art and archaeology at the Hebrew University.

Ayalon had a profound impact on two generations of Israeli students of Islamic studies. Many of his students have become pillars of various university departments of Middle Eastern studies and Arabic language and literature, and scores of his students, who saw him as their *ustadh*, have served in public service, journalism, and education in Israel.

In 1972, Ayalon was awarded the Israel Prize, the highest civilian recognition by the State of Israel. He was a member of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, an honorary member of the Middle East Medievalists from its inception in 1990, and, in 1997, an honorary foreign member of the American Historical Association.

Ayalon continued his research after his retirement, which resulted in the writing of *Eunuchs, Caliphs and Sultans: A Study of Power Relationships* (to be published posthumously by Magnes Press).

Ayalon's scholarship demonstrates his keen ability to see not only the particulars, but beyond them. His superb knowledge of Arabic and his historical insight blended well with wit, down-to-earth demeanor, and devotion to students and colleagues. David Ayalon passed away on June 25, 1998. He will be greatly missed by the Israeli Arabist and historical community and by a wide circle of scholars and friends around the world.



Circassian World is an independent non-profit web site dedicated to create an informational resource for Circassians and non-Circassians who wish to learn more about the heritage, culture, and history of the Adyghe-Abkhaz people. For more information regarding Circassian World, please contact info@circassianworld.com

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DAVID AYALON (NEUSTADT)

TEL-AVIV, ISRAEL

BARQŪQ, WHO MADE his fellow-Circassians the ruling caste in the Mamlūk Kingdom, brought about one of, if not the greatest racial transformations ever witnessed in that state since its foundation. This transformation, as will be seen below, led to far-reaching changes in the organization of the state. What were its causes? Were they to be

found in Egypt itself, or outside it, in the country of origin of the Mamlūks?

Although Mamlūk sources deal at length with the different Mamlūk races and furnish extensive accounts concerning their countries of origin and the Mongol Khāns, they devote but little attention to the internal situation in those countries. They describe in detail the process of change in the composition of the Mamlūk army at the end of the fourteenth century; but they give the impression

* This paper is part of a chapter entitled 'The Mamlūk Races' from a work on the Mamlūk Army.

that it was due solely to factors existing within the boundaries of the Mamlūk Kingdom, and not to any outside agency.

A. N. Poliak, basing himself on Russian sources, considers that the decline of the Golden Horde during the latter half of the fourteenth century, and the internal wars that broke out there, were the main causes of the transfer of the Mamlūks' purchasing-center to the Caucasus.¹ As far as Arabic sources are concerned, the present writer knows of only one reference to the destruction of the Kipchak Steppe, and that is by Timūr Lang's biographer, Ibn 'Arabshāh. This piece of information is of the utmost importance, as it describes how the Kipchak, a flourishing territory enjoying security and providing ample room and grazing-grounds for a very varied nomad population, was turned into a wilderness and its inhabitants greatly reduced in number as a consequence of the wars between Tuqtamish and Aydakū and the campaign of Timūr Lang.² At any rate, even if the supremacy of the Circassian race was due in the first place to the will of the rulers of the Mamlūk Kingdom, the decline of the Kipchak population as a consequence of the above-mentioned wars contributed appreciably to the preservation of that supremacy down to the very end of Mamlūk rule. It can also be assumed that the decline in the Kipchak population was due in no small measure to the constant stream of emigration of young Mamlūks on a scale sufficient to maintain for centuries the army of a mighty Power (i. e. the Mamlūks of the sultans and *amīrs*: some of the latter owned hundreds or

more Mamlūks each). Moreover, in the wake of the males followed a considerable stream of women and female slaves belonging to the same races. It should also be borne in mind that the emigration was confined to one age-group, namely, adolescents, so that the resultant harm to the population was far greater than if the same number of emigrants had been distributed among all age-groups.

The Circassians are designated in Mamlūk sources as *Jarkas* or *Jarākisa*³ (sing. *Jarkasi*). There are also alternative spellings: *Čarkas* or *Čarākisa*⁴ (sing. *Čarkasi*); *Sharkas* or *Sharākisa*⁵ (sing. *Sharkasi*);⁶ and less frequently *al-Jiharkas*.⁷ Circassia is variously known as *bilād al-Jarkas*,⁸ *bilād Jarkas*,⁹ or simply *Jarkas*;¹⁰ and occasionally as *jabal al-Jarkas*.¹¹ As regards racial origin, the Circassians are said, by one historian, to be *min al-Turk* ('of the Turks'), and 'they are a well-known tribe to the genealogists.'¹² The tribe of *Jarkas* is described as dwelling in *bilād al-Shimāl* 'in the hills surrounding the plain of the Kipchak and the *Rūs* and *Allāns*, on the eastern (?) side overlooking their plains.'¹³ They live in poverty,

¹ Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *ḥawāḍith al-sulṭān*, ed. Popper, Berkeley, 1930, p. 699, l. 14; Ibn Iyās, *ḥadīṭ al-sulṭān* (vols. I, II, Cairo, 1311-1312 A. H., vols. III, IV, V, Constantinople, 1931-1932), vol. III, p. 2, l. 5; *ibid.*, vol. IV, p. 200, l. 13. For sing. *Jarkasi* see al-Sakhāwī, *al-tibr al-masbūḥ*, Cairo, 1896, p. 110, l. 12.

² Ibn Iyās, II, p. 10, l. 15. For sing. *Čarkasi* see *tibr*, p. 110, l. 2; Ibn Iyās, II, p. 48, l. 13.

³ Ibn Qāṣṭ Shuhba, fol. 40B, ll. 18-19.

⁴ al-Sakhāwī, *al-ḥawāḍith al-ṭawā'if*, Cairo, 1353-1355 A. H., III, p. 250, l. 14; Ibn al-Furāt, *ta'rikh al-dawal wal-mulūk*, ed. Zurayq, Beirut, 1936-1942, IX, p. 101, ll. 1-5.

⁵ *ṣubḥ*, IV, p. 429, l. 6; *ibid.* VII, p. 293, l. 2.

⁶ *ṣubḥ*, IV, p. 416; *ibid.*, p. 462, ll. 2-6; Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-dawar al-khams*, Haydarābād, 1348-1350 A. H., III, p. 269, l. 1, l. 3.

⁷ Ibn Iyās, IV, p. 184, ll. 28-29; *ibid.*, III, p. 145, l. 10; *ḥawāḍith*, II, p. 270, l. 1; *ibid.*, VI, p. 201, l. 1, p. 218, l. 13, p. 221, l. 3; *ibid.*, X, p. 270, l. 2, l. 26.

⁸ *ḥawāḍith*, III, p. 12, l. 48, p. 61, l. 1, p. 63, l. 8, p. 284, l. 18; *ibid.*, VI, p. 229, l. 9; *ibid.*, X, p. 280, l. 15.

⁹ *akḥḥār ḥimār*, p. 273, l. 2.

¹⁰ Ibn Khaldūn: *kitāb al-'ibār*, Cairo, 1284, A. H., V, p. 472, ll. 10-11. The term *Turk* has sometimes very elastic and loose meaning in contemporary sources. On the two ordinary meanings of this term see note 19 below. Classifying the Circassians as *Turks* by race is most unusual in Mamlūk sources. Usually they are mentioned as different from and antagonistic to the *Turk*. The Circassians may be called *Turk* only as far as this term is synonymous to *Mamlūk* (see below).

¹¹ Ibn Khaldūn, V, p. 472, ll. 5-8.

¹ *Revue des études islamiques*, 1935, pp. 241-242; *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies*, London, vol. X, pp. 864-867. There is so far no adequate proof that the Black Death caused a permanent decline in the Kipchaki population.

² *akḥḥār ḥimār*, p. 113, l. 5—p. 115, l. 3; *ibid.*, p. 126, l. 2—p. 127, l. 4 (in the translation of J. H. Sanders, *Tamerlane*, London, 1936, pp. 76, 77, 78). For the destruction by Timūr of Sarai and other towns in the Kipchak, see *ibid.*, p. 122, l. 2. For large-scale movements of tribes carried out by Aydakū in order to mislead Timūr, see *ibid.*, pp. 122-125. These enforced movements doubtless also contributed to the general chaos. On the flourishing condition and dense population of the Kipchak during the 13th century and the first half of the 14th century, see: al-Mufaḍḍal b. al-Faḍā'il, *al-naḥj al-sadiq*, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol. XII, pp. 457, l. 4-458, l. 2; al-Qalqaḥandī, *ṣubḥ al-'ashā*, Cairo, 1353-1355 A. H., vol. IV, p. 451, l. 11; Ibn Taghrī Birdī: *al-manḥal al-ḥafī*, Paris (de Slane No. 2068-2072), and Cairo MSS., vol. I, fol. 187A, ll. 10-12.

and most of them are Christians.¹⁴ We find no evidence in Mamlūk sources of the military prowess of the Circassians, as we do with reference to the ruling race in the early Mamlūk Period.¹⁵

An unexplained tradition concerning the Circassians is to be found in Ibn Khaldūn, according to which they are descendants of the Ghassānīs who entered *bilād al-Rūm* with Jabala b. al-Ayham at the time of Heraclius' retreat from Syria. Ibn Khaldūn, however, considers the tradition to be inexact, and gives what in his belief is the true version, namely, that the Circassians stem from the *Turk*, and that they went to Circassia before the arrival of the Ghassānīs in *bilād al-Rūm*. After the death of Heraclius, the Ghassānīs despaired of returning to their homeland. Internal strife broke out within the Byzantine Empire, and the Ghassānīs, seeking an ally, concluded a pact with the Circassians and 'settled in the eastern plain of the Circassian hills beyond Constantinople.' They entered into relations of genealogy and marriage with them, until the Ghassānī tribes disintegrated and 'went up to the Circassians in the hills and dwelt with them. Nor does this seem unlikely, since a number of Circassians acquired the *nisbas* of al-Ghassānī.'¹⁶ Thus, according to Ibn Khaldūn, Barqūq's father was called *Anas* (correctly, *Anaṣ*) *al-Ghassānī*.¹⁷ That this tradition was known to others besides Ibn Khaldūn is shown by the verse lamenting the destruction of the Mamlūk Kingdom at the hands of the Ottoman Turks: *nasi*

Jarkas yā lahu nasab mudh ilā Ghassān yantasib
'How splendid a genealogy have the progeny of *Jarkas*, since they are related to Ghassān.'¹⁸ Apart, however, from the two references quoted, the present writer has not discovered any other allusions in Mamlūk sources to the tradition attributing the origin of the Circassians to the *banū Ghassān*.

The Circassians were not newcomers to the Mamlūk Kingdom when they assumed supremacy at the end of the fourteenth century. There is intermittent mention of them in the Bahrī period as being one of the more prominent racial groups. What is more important, they are described as a growing force of which the *Turk*¹⁹—the members of the dominant race at the time—were afraid. No such statement is made with regard to any other Mamlūk race. The fact that the Circassians finally ousted the *Turk* and gained supremacy shows that there was good reason for the fears that had been felt, and that the Circassians' desire for power had existed long before its successful realization.

Mention is made of the Circassians as early as the end of the Ayyūbid period, when members of that race are recorded as being among the slaves purchased by al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, founder of the *Bahriyya*.²⁰ This fact, which appears in Ibn Khaldūn, is not, however, mentioned by any other historian. By the time of the founding of the *Burjiyya*²¹ the Circassians had become a very prominent element in this new corps²² which occupied a

¹⁴ *ṣubḥ*, IV, p. 462, l. 5; Poliak, *REI*, 1935, p. 242.

¹⁵ See note 19 below. Poliak's etymology of *jarkas* is quite untenable, *REI*, 1935, Note 5; *BSOS*, vol. X, pp. 865-866; *Khasariya* (in Hebrew), Jerusalem, 1943, p. 35. In his dictum, *jarkas wama'nahu bil-a'jamiya arba'at anfus* (*manhal*, II, fol. 172B, ll. 10-11), Ibn Taghrī Birdī no doubt meant to say 'four persons,' since *kas* in Persian means 'person.' At any rate, it is wrong to translate the phrase as 'having four souls.' Minoraky (*BSOS*, vol. X, p. 867) has already commented on this. Whatever reading is given, Ibn Taghrī Birdī's explanation has nothing to do with 'courageous.' Thus we have to reject Poliak's assertion in his reply to Minoraky (*Khasariya*, p. 319, Note 15) that the explanation published by him 'is the only one substantiated by the sources.' Ibn Taghrī Birdī, incidentally, was not the first to provide this explanation of *jarkas*. He was preceded by Ibn Khalīkān (I, p. 213), from whom Ibn Kathīr (XIII, p. 63) copied it.

¹⁶ Ibn Khaldūn, V, p. 472, ll. 5-18.

¹⁷ Ibn Khaldūn, V, p. 472, l. 4. The epithet *al-Ghassānī* for *Anaṣ*, father of Barqūq, is unknown to us from Mamlūk sources.

¹⁸ Ibn Iyās, V, p. 193, l. 3.

¹⁹ The word *Turk* had two ordinary meanings in Mamlūk times: (a) it was a synonym for the Mamlūks, so that *dawlat al-turk* or *dawlat al-atrak* meant the Mamlūk Kingdom; and (b) it was used as a generic name for the whole of that element coming from the Kipchak plain which predominated in the Mamlūk Kingdom during its earlier period, erroneously styled by orientologists 'the period of the Bahrī Mamlūks.' On the military prowess of the Kipchaks see *ṣubḥ*, IV, pp. 467-58.

²⁰ Ibn Khaldūn, V, p. 373, l. 8.

²¹ The *Burjiyya* was a Mamlūk army corps founded by al-Manṣūr Qalāūn, and at the time of its formation it numbered 3,700 men. It was given that name because it was garrisoned in the towers (*abrāj*) of the Cairo citadel. In many respects the *burjiyya* were the successors of the *Bahriyya*, the *corps d'élite* formed by al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb. The Circassian period is erroneously styled by orientologists 'the period of the Burjī Mamlūks.'

²² The composition of the Mamlūk army in Egypt was as follows: (i) The royal Mamlūks (*mamlūk suiḡāniyya*), who were subdivided into (a) the Mamlūks of former sultans (*mamlūk al-salāḡn al-mutaqaddima*, *gardaiḡ* or

position similar to that formerly occupied by the *Bahriya*.²³ One of the Burjī Circassians, Baybars al-Jashnakīr, even gained the sultanate. From a number of casual remarks in contemporary sources, it can be seen that the Circassians were already a thorn in the side of the ruling race. Al-Ḥājj Bahādūr is reported as stirring up incitement against Aqūsh al-Afram, saying to those who sided with him: 'These Circassians! When they are stronger than we, they will take our souls. Let us do the thing before it is done to us.'²⁴ When al-Muẓaffar Baybars came to the throne, al-Afram was pleased. But al-Ḥājj Bahādūr and other leading *amīrs* were disgruntled and said: 'When the Circassians grow powerful, they will destroy the Muslims and the land' (*yuhlikū al-ibād w-al-bilād*).²⁵ The hostile attitude of the ruling *Turk* is also illustrated by the following. When al-Afram, the Governor of Damascus, read the letter informing him of the appointment of Baybars as sultan, he almost went mad with joy, as he had been his *khushdāsh*²⁶ and was also a Circassian, both being regarded at the time as alien to the *Atrak*.²⁷ There are several other allusions to this feeling of strangeness.²⁸

The gradual decline of the *Burjiya* is marked by

ḡardniya); (b) the Mamlūks of the reigning sultan (*mushāṭarawāt, fulān, aṣṣūb*). From among the *mushāṭarawāt* a corps of pages and bodyguards was selected known as *khāṣṣiyya*; (c) the Mamlūks of the *amīrs* who passed into the service of the sultan owing to the death or dismissal of their masters (*sayfiya*). (ii) The Mamlūks of the *amīrs* (*mamlūk al-umarā', ajnād al-umarā'*). (iii) The sons of the *amīrs* (*awlad al-nās*) and soldiers drawn from among the local inhabitants (*ajnād al-ḡalqa*). The Mamlūk *amīrs* were divided into three classes: (i) *amīrs* of ten; (ii) *amīrs* of forty; (iii) *amīrs* of a hundred.

²³ Two chapters of my work mentioned above are devoted to the history and structure of the *Bahriya* and *Burjiya*.

²⁴ *manhal*, II, fol. 96B, ll. 2-6.

²⁵ *durar*, I, p. 500, ll. 11-14.

²⁶ The *khushdāshīya* were the Mamlūks bought and liberated by the same master. The feeling of comradeship among these Mamlūks, and their loyalty to their lord, who had bought and freed them, were one of the chief foundations of the entire Mamlūk régime. This aspect is dealt with at length elsewhere in our work on the Mamlūk army.

²⁷ Ibn Taghri Birdi, *al-nujūm al-sākira*, Cairo ed., 1928-1944, vol. VIII, p. 236, ll. 3-5.

²⁸ *manhal*, I, fol. 206B, ll. 18-21; *ibid.*, II, fol. 2A, ll. 12-15; *nujūm* (Cairo), VIII, p. 232, cf. p. 227, ll. 1-6, p. 233, l. 2; *durar*, I, p. 396, l. 18; *ibid.*, III, p. 246, ll. 5-6, p. 247, ll. 6-7.

silence concerning the Circassians. Suddenly, however, the following story appears: '*Ramaḍān*, 748 A. H. (during the sultanate of Ḥasan). Then the *amīrs* decided to reduce the royal and other expenses. Lists were drawn up of the state expenditure, and the *amīrs* began to sell those of the royal Mamlūks who were Circassians. It was Sultan Ḥājjī who showed them favour, at the instance of Ghurlū. He brought them from all quarters and wanted to give them precedence over the *Atrak*, until they became very prominent among the *amīrs* with their large turbans and influential positions. They made themselves unusually large caps. All the Circassians were seized and exiled in a degrading manner, and people said: "These be the ones with the hungry souls who stir up much discord."²⁹

The purge does not, however, seem to have been very thorough, for by *Shawwāl* of the same year we hear of an exchange of correspondence between the Circassian Mamlūks and *amīr* Ḥusayn, son of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāūn, offering to make him sultan. Forty of the conspirators were caught and sent separately on swift camels to *al-bilād al-Shāmiya*. Later, another group was caught. These received a sound drubbing opposite the *Iwān*, after which they were handcuffed and thrown into the prison of *Khizdnat Shamā'il*. From then on, as a precautionary measure, the only persons allowed to enter the sultan's palace were *amīrs* of the Supreme Council (*umarā' al-mashūra*).³⁰ In other words, this was an attempt on the part of the Circassians to effect a military *coup d'état* some 35 to 40 years before Barqūq's successful attempt.

Barqūq, as we have seen, was the sultan who effected the greatest and most far-reaching racial transformation in the entire history of the Mamlūk Kingdom. He was able to oust the *Turk* and replace them with his fellow-Circassians.³¹ This change was brought about without any major upheaval. Only during the initial period following the rise of the Circassians are there signs of racial warfare against them, as we shall soon see. Their sanguinary war against the Sultan Faraj did not have a racial basis: it was directed against Faraj personally, as they objected to the appointment of one of the *awlad al-nās* as ruler over them. Their

²⁹ *nujūm*, V, p. 56, ll. 14-20.

³⁰ *nujūm*, V, p. 57, ll. 22—p. 58, l. 12.

³¹ *ḡubh*, IV, p. 458, ll. 16-19; al-Suyūṭī, *ḡuṣṣ al-muḥādḡara*, Cairo, 1210 A. H., II, p. 105, ll. 6-8; *nujūm*, V, p. 362.

success was so decisive that throughout the period of their ascendancy the son of a Circassian sultan did not occupy the throne for more than a very brief period (usually a matter of months).²²

²²The sons of the sultans, who occupied a special position among the *awlad al-nās* (*najm*, V, pp. 159-160; *ibid.*, V, p. 293, Notes; *ḥawddīth*, p. 142, ll. 2-3) were called *al-asyād*, *awlad al-mulūk*, or *al-asyād awlad al-mulūk*. Their style of address was *sayyid*. The reigning sultans, especially in the Circassian period, dealt most rigorously with the sons of the former sultans, to prevent them being used as tools by would-be usurpers. Up till the time of Barsbāy, most of the *asyād* were confined to the Cairo citadel, and many of them had never seen Cairo and had no idea what a city looked like. About 825 A. H., Barsbāy ordered them to leave the citadel and take up their abode in the city. The bustling life of Cairo, however, brought about their rapid degeneration. Many of them became impoverished, and 'all their glory departed' (*manhal*, I, fol. 53A, ll. 2-13; *ibid.*, fol. 179A, l. 21—fol. 179B, l. 2; *Ibn Iyās*, II, p. 15, ll. 11-14; *ḡaw*, III, p. 53 ll. 8-10). The more prominent and dangerous among them, especially those who had succeeded their fathers to the sultanate, were generally sent by the Circassian Mamlūks to the prison at Alexandria (*Ibn Iyās*, II, p. 14, ll. 25-26; and numerous other authorities). Occasionally one of the Circassian sultans, to demonstrate his large-heartedness, would have one of the sultans' sons brought from Alexandria to Cairo, where he would have splendid entertainments held in his honor and even allow him to go on the pilgrimage to Mecca (*ḥawddīth*, p. 706, l. 10—p. 707, l. 15; *Ibn Iyās*, III, p. 66, ll. 12-16, p. 150, ll. 6-14, p. 152 ll. 22-24). These however, were isolated instances, and imposed no obligation whatever on the sultans. The position of the *asyād* remained as described above down to the end of the Mamlūk period. (For material on the *asyād* and their status in the Mamlūk Kingdom, see: *al-Maqrīṣī*, *kitāb al-awlad lima'rifat dawlat al-mulūk*, Cairo, 1934-1942, II, p. 490, l. 13; *najm*, V, p. 228, ll. 18-19, p. 229, l. 3, p. 282, l. 23, p. 320, l. 21, p. 397, ll. 15-17, p. 505, l. 12; *ibid.*, VI, p. 266, ll. 2-3, p. 432, ll. 5-7, p. 514, ll. 7-8, p. 545, ll. 8-9, p. 772; *ibid.*, VII, p. 320, l. 1, pp. 508-509, p. 511, p. 644, ll. 1-8, pp. 664-665, p. 678, ll. 8-9; *ḥawddīth*, p. 149, l. 1, p. 305; *Ibn al-Furāt*, IX, p. 56, ll. 15-18, p. 91, ll. 18-21, p. 176, l. 21; *Ibn Iyās*, II, p. 15, ll. 1-2, p. 60, l. 4, p. 79, p. 108, l. 1, p. 113, ll. 6-10; *ibid.*, III, p. 188, ll. 10-12, p. 193, l. 12; *ibid.*, IV, p. 9, l. 7, p. 399, ll. 15-23, p. 406, l. 9; *ḡaw*, III, p. 53, ll. 8-10, p. 87, ll. 6-7, p. 201, p. 217; *ibid.*, VI, p. 73; *ibid.*, VII, p. 274; *Khallī b. Shāhin al-Zāhirī*, *subdat kashf al-mamlūk*, ed. Ross, Paris, 1894, p. 111, ll. 5-12; *ḡaw*, XIII, p. 167, ll. 16-19.) A surprising feature about the Circassian sultanates is that even the later rulers, who were well aware of the fate that lay in store for the sons of sultans appointed by their fathers to succeed them, did not draw the obvious conclusion, and continued the practice in the certain knowledge that their sons would be deposed. This fact arouses the astonishment of *Ibn Taghrī Birdī*, who can find no

The following is a description of the rise and establishment of the Circassians in the Mamlūk Kingdom.

Barqūq was called *al-qā'im bi-dawlat al-Jarā-kisa*.²³ He bought Mamlūks on an extensive scale, and preferred the Circassians to other races.²⁴ From this it appears that he did not altogether refrain from purchasing Mamlūks of other races, —a fact which is corroborated in several ways. In the first place, *Turk* as well as Circassians are mentioned as fighting for him in 791 A. H.²⁵ Secondly, each sultan automatically took over his predecessor's *kuttābiya*; and as inheritor of Sultan Ḥājji's or *Shābān's kuttābiya* Barqūq had to maintain several hundred *Turk*. Thirdly, we find in the biographical compilations and necrologies contained in the chronicles of the Circassian period a surprisingly large number of *amīrs* belonging to Barqūq who were of Turkish origin (*turki al-jins*).²⁷ The number of *amīrs* of Turkish origin

explanation for it. In one place he remarks: 'We have seen the same reward meted out time and time again, from the day that Barqūq deposed al-Manḡūr Ḥājji down to our own day. They all drink from the same cup handed to them by their *awlad*, and the contents of the cup are prepared by their fathers' Mamlūks. We have mentioned this matter in many places, and it were better to maintain silence concerning it' (*najm*, VII, p. 419, ll. 2-6). Elsewhere he asserts his inability to understand why the sultan at the last moment designates his son to succeed him, since the sultan knows full well that his son will undergo the same fate as overtook the son of the previous ruler (*najm*, VII, p. 394, ll. 9-13; see also *najm*, V, pp. 228-230; *ibid.*, VII, pp. 394-396; *ḥawddīth*, p. 184, ll. 1-2).

²³ *najm*, V, p. 362, ll. 2-7, p. 596, l. 22.

²⁴ *manhal*, II, p. 73A, ll. 19-20; *najm*, V, p. 598, ll. 7-8.

²⁵ See Notes 42, 45, 47.

²⁶ The *kuttābiya* were the young Mamlūks undergoing their training in the military school who had not yet been liberated (they were only freed on their passing-out (*kharj*) of the school). The appellation is apparently derived from the word *kuttāb*, denoting a Moslem boys-school. Students of the Mamlūk period generally read the word as *kitābiya*; but the suggested reading of *kuttābiya*, given here, is based upon an explicit vocalisation in an MS. (see: *manhal*, I, fol. 167A, l. 17; *ibid.*, II, fol. 53B, l. 7; *ibid.*, III, fol. 153A, l. 16; *subda*, p. 116, l. 12, p. 125, l. 12. For the argument in favour of the reading *kitābiya*, see *al-Maqrīṣī*, *al-mawḍ'iq wal-fitāḥ fi dhikr al-khāṣṣ wal-āthar*, Cairo, 1270 A. H., II, p. 213, l. 33; *Dosy, Supplement*, under *kitāba* and *kitābī*).

²⁷ Some examples: *najm*, VI, p. 298, ll. 9-11, p. 449, l. 17—p. 450, l. 1; *ibid.*, VII, p. 265, ll. 20-21, p. 639, ll. 6-7; *manhal*, II, fol. 156B, l. 6, fol. 156A, l. 22; *ibid.*,

under Barqūq's son, Faraj, who was inimical to the Circassians, is found to be far smaller.⁴³ Nevertheless, the complete establishment of Circassian domination was fairly rapid. As early a writer as Qalqashqandī, who completed his book in 1412, states: 'In our time most of the *amīrs* and army have become Circassians . . . The *Turk* Mamlūks of Egypt have become so few in number that all that is left of them are a few survivors and their children.'⁴⁴

The change in the racial composition of the Mamlūks effected by Barqūq, and the consequences it brought in its train, gave rise to strong criticism on the part of the Mamlūk writers, who throughout the Circassian period retained their liking for the *Turk*,⁴⁵ and did not curb their propensity to vilify the Circassians. Referring to Ṭashtamur al-'Alāī, formerly *dawādar* and later *atābak al-'askir* (commander-in-chief), who was removed by Barka and Barqūq, Ibn Taghrī Birdī says: 'The time of Ṭashtamur was a flourishing and plentiful time for the Mamlūk Kingdom under his wise direction, and that condition prevailed until he was removed from office and thrown into prison. In his place came Barqūq and Barka, who did things in the kingdom from which the population suffers to this day. Then Barqūq became sole ruler, and turned the affairs of the realm upside-down, and his successors have maintained his policy down to the present. For he gave precedence to the members of his own race over the others, and gave those of his own Mamlūks (*ajlāb*) who were related to him large fiefs and high offices while they were still in their minority. This is the main cause of the decline of the kingdom. Indeed, is there anything more grave than to set the minor over the senior? This is at variance with the practice of the former sultans; for they did not recognize the superiority of any one race. Whenever they found a man who displayed wisdom and courage, they showed him preference and favour. No one was given office or

rank who was not worthy of it.'⁴⁶ Is it to be inferred from this passage that the Kipchakis were less insistent on racial purity than the Circassians? The great variety of races in the Bahrī period does indeed tend to confirm this view.

The process of the establishment of Circassian supremacy exhibits a number of fluctuations and retrogressions, the first of which took place after Barqūq's downfall and removal from the throne in 791 A. H. Circassian power, which had been built up by Barqūq with so much effort, suffered a heavy check; and but for his rapid return to the throne the establishment of complete Circassian domination might have been considerably delayed.

Although the wars of 791 A. H. are described fully in Mamlūk sources, one factor is almost completely slurred over, namely, that the war proclaimed by Miṭāsh and Yalbughā was not only aimed against Barqūq himself, but also against his Circassians. This can be learned principally from Ibn al-Furāt, who was a contemporary of the events he describes, and who gives a most detailed account of the fighting of 791 A. H. Several important particulars in this connection can also be obtained from Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba. Although the war did not have the extermination of the Circassians as its object, it was at times waged with great determination and vindictiveness.

After the defeat of Barqūq's army in his first encounter with his opponents in Syria, Yalbughā's men, on coming across any Circassian Mamlūk, stripped him of his clothes, took his weapons and accoutrements, and cast him into prison. At the same time any of Barqūq's Turkish Mamlūks who fell into their hands they released, after despoiling them of all their belongings.⁴⁷ The despoliation and incarceration of Barqūq's Mamlūks continued after the fighting was over.⁴⁸ During the fighting in Cairo, *amīr* Ṭuṭṭāy, a eunuch, who fought with great gallantry on the side of Yalbughā and Miṭāsh, cried out: 'Where are the Circassians with their genital organs? Behold me, Ṭuṭṭāy, the

III, fol. 8A, ll. 11-13; fol. 169A, ll. 17-22; fol. 177A, ll. 12-18; *ibid.*, V, fol. 43B, l. 19, fol. 46B, l. 1. For the expression *turki al-jins* in the Circassian period, see *najm*, VI, p. 547, ll. 13-14, p. 675, l. 14, p. 803, l. 15, p. 840, l. 12, p. 853, ll. 5-7; *ibid.*, VII, p. 309.

⁴³ *najm*, VII, p. 309, l. 4, p. 564, ll. 8-12; *manhal*, II, fol. 18B, l. 8; *ḥaw'*, II, p. 266, l. 29.

⁴⁴ *subh*, IV, p. 458, ll. 16-19; cf. *ibid.*, V, p. 416, ll. 8-13.

⁴⁵ See authorities quoted below.

⁴⁶ *manhal*, III, fol. 185B, ll. 14-23 (this passage has been quoted by Poliak, *REI*, 1935, p. 242 Note 1). Of Qalāūn, the historian says that he did not evince leanings towards a particular race, but selected able men, irrespective of the races they belonged to. That is why his reign was so protracted, despite the diverse racial origin of his Mamlūks (*najm*, Cairo, VII, p. 327, ll. 13-15).

⁴⁷ Ibn al-Furāt, IX, p. 64.

⁴⁸ Ibn al-Furāt, IX, p. 64, l. 24—p. 65, l. 8.

eunuch!' ⁴⁴ Barqūq's Turkish Mamlūks joined the enemy during the fighting in Cairo, 'and whosoever was a Circassian was taken.' ⁴⁵ Towards the end even the Circassians began to desert Barqūq. ⁴⁶ Later, Yalbughā gave orders to seize all Barqūq's Mamlūks, *whether Turks or Circassians.* ⁴⁷ When Cairo was stormed, an assurance of safety was given to the Circassians if they came out of their hiding-places and surrendered. ⁴⁸ Despite this assurance, however, Yalbughā exiled some of the Circassians who gave themselves up. ⁴⁹

The anti-Circassian policy which marked the beginning of the war against Barqūq was postponed for a while from the moment the fight broke out between Minṭāsh and Yalbughā to secure the sultanate. It now became of vital importance for each of the contestants to attract as many supporters as possible. The Circassians went over to Minṭāsh. ⁵⁰ As soon, however, as Minṭāsh emerged victorious, he reverted to his original policy towards the Circassians,—a course he was encouraged to adopt by the signs that Barqūq was preparing to stage a come-back. He therefore sought to outwit the Circassians who had fought on his side in the battle against Yalbughā. He invited them, 200 in number, to the citadel on the pretext of distributing pay among them. The moment they were inside, he ordered the gates to be closed and had them thrown into prison. ⁵¹ He also announced rewards for those handing over Circassians who had gone into hiding. ⁵² He then issued an order to the *wālī* to seize the Circassian Mamlūks wherever they were to be found. The *wālī* succeeded in catching some of them. ⁵³ Before Minṭāsh left Damascus, he killed Barqūq's Circassian Mamlūks imprisoned in the citadel. ⁵⁴

On his return to the sultanate, Barqūq resumed

the purchase of Circassians on an increased scale, but regretted his action towards the end of his life, when an attempt was made to assassinate him led by 'Alī Bāy. ⁵⁵ This took place in *dhu al-Qa'da*, 800 A. H. 'From that day on relations between the sultan and the Circassian Mamlūks were impaired. He went into Ird (?), his favourite wife, a *turkiyat al-jins*, who warned him against buying Circassian Mamlūks. Her advice to him was as follows: "Make your army of varied pattern (*ij'al askarak ablaq*), and let it be composed of four races, *Ṭāṭar, Jarkas, Rūm* and *Turkmān*, and then you and your progeny will have respite." He replied: "Your advice is sound, but this is what fate has decreed. Let us beseech the Almighty to mend this matter from now on." ⁵⁶

Evidently Barqūq was unable to accomplish his contemplated alteration of the racial composition of his Mamlūks, as he met his end a few months after the conversation recorded above. During the reign of his son Faraj, who succeeded him, the Circassians passed through a very difficult crisis, and large numbers of them were killed off. The underlying cause of the conflict between Faraj and his father's Circassian Mamlūks was their desire to depose him and place one of their own number on the throne. Attempts to do this were suppressed in rivers of blood. ⁵⁷ In one day alone Faraj slaughtered over 100 Circassians and cast their bodies over the citadel parapet into the moat below. ⁵⁸ On another occasion Taghri Birdī, the Governor, charged Faraj with killing 500 men, and told him that his very horse was rebelling under him. ⁵⁹ Faraj's reply was that what had been done could not be undone, and that he had acted as he had in order to protect his honor. ⁶⁰ According to Maqrīzī, during 814 A. H. alone Faraj killed 630 Circassians. ⁶¹ This historian goes on to say that Faraj brought about the destruction of the Circassians, and points out that the numerical value of the letters forming the names Faraj and *Jarkas* is equal, so that when one is subtracted from the

⁴⁴ *manāḥal*, fol. 193A, ll. 14-21.

⁴⁵ Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, fol. 35A, l. 12.

⁴⁶ Ibn al-Furāt, IX, p. 88, ll. 2-8.

⁴⁷ Ibn al-Furāt, IX, p. 93, ll. 6-15.

⁴⁸ Ibn al-Furāt, IX, p. 95, ll. 24-25, p. 96, ll. 9-11.

⁴⁹ Ibn al-Furāt, IX, p. 101, ll. 4-5; cf. *ibid.*, p. 129; *najūm*, V, p. 487, ll. 9-11; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, fol. 35A, l. 12.

⁵⁰ Ibn al-Furāt, IX, p. 119, ll. 4-5; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, fol. 40A, ll. 18-19.

⁵¹ Ibn al-Furāt, IX, p. 129.

⁵² Ibn al-Furāt, IX, p. 130, ll. 4-6, p. 131, ll. 16-18, p. 141, ll. 21-24.

⁵³ Ibn al-Furāt, IX, p. 169, ll. 11-18.

⁵⁴ Ibn al-Furāt, IX, p. 211, ll. 4-6.

⁵⁵ *najūm*, V, p. 598, ll. 7-9.

⁵⁶ *najūm*, V, p. 585, ll. 3-8.

⁵⁷ *najūm*, VI, pp. 39-40, p. 40, p. 41, ll. 18-20, pp. 129-135, p. 241, ll. 13-14, pp. 246-247, p. 248, l. 8, ll. 13-20, p. 251, ll. 7-10, p. 267, ll. 11-15. See also notes below.

⁵⁸ *najūm*, VI, p. 251, ll. 16-18.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 260, ll. 7-8, ll. 13-14.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

⁶¹ *najūm*, VI, p. 300, ll. 15-16.

other nothing is left (implying that in the natural course of events they would bring about their mutual annihilation). Ibn Taghrī Birdī, on the other hand, argues in justification of Faraj, whom he praises on account of his great bravery. 'For how is it possible, seeing that the Circassians are to this day the rulers of Egypt? For Faraj killed not only them, but the members of other races as well.'⁶² He also claims that Faraj only began slaughtering the Circassians after numerous revolts on their part which he had pardoned. The other sultans would have adopted measures of similar stringency after the first revolt.⁶³ But it is evident, even from Ibn Taghrī Birdī's own account, that Faraj's campaign of extermination was directed primarily against the Circassians who, although not completely wiped out, as Maqrīzī asserts, nevertheless received a very severe blow. Moreover, Ibn Taghrī Birdī himself relates elsewhere that Faraj killed off countless numbers of his father's Mamlūks.⁶⁴ In revenge for his excesses, Faraj himself was finally killed with the approval of the leading Circassian *amīrs*, with the exception of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh.⁶⁵

The accession of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh produced an unexpected result; for he favored the *Turk* until the majority of his *amīrs* were of that race.⁶⁶ According to Ibn Taghrī Birdī, he resembled the former sultans in that his criterion for the choice of soldiers was not race, but efficiency and courage.⁶⁷ Does this imply that during the later period the *Turk* were considered to be a more martial race than the Circassians? While it is difficult to answer this question on the testimony of the contemporary sources, there are no indications that al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh's preference for the *Turk* was extended beyond the circle of the *amīrs* or that it led to any radical changes in the army. Throughout the course of his reign we find no signs of racial conflicts or tension among the Mamlūks.

Following the convulsions during al-Nāṣir Faraj's reign and the preference evinced by al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh for the *Turk*, the Circassians regained their supremacy, which they maintained unquestioned and without any serious challenge, till the

end of the Mamlūk period. Ibn Taghrī Birdī's assertion that Barsbāy, and even Ṭaṭar, were favourably inclined towards the Circassians and *secretly* gave them precedence,⁶⁸ seems more applicable to an earlier state of affairs, since by the time of these sultans Circassian supremacy was indisputably established. Domination by a single race and racial solidarity are far more pronounced in the Circassian than in the Bahrī period. *Al-jins*,⁶⁹ meaning 'The Race,' denotes the Circassian race. Similarly, *al-qawm*,⁷⁰ 'The People,' is applied only to the Circassians (see the examples given below). *Al-tā'ifa*,⁷¹ 'The Sect, Community,' also refers perhaps to the Circassians. On the other hand, *al-jinsiya*, 'racial solidarity,' does not appear to have been in more frequent use during the Circassian than during the Bahrī period.⁷² This, however, is probably fortuitous. Racial solidarity and hauteur characterized the Circassians while they were still a minority and challenging the supremacy of the *Turk* and arousing their enmity during the Bahrī period.⁷³ We shall discuss below the close ties the Circassians maintained with their families in the Caucasus, which they brought over in large numbers to the Mamlūk Kingdom. The importance they laid on race as the primary consideration for military promotion was in evidence already in Barqūq's time, as can be seen from the indisputable testimony of Ibn Taghrī Birdī, quoted above. The policy of racial preference was closely maintained throughout their history. Yalkhujā min Māmīsh was unable to attain to high rank, despite his comeliness, his great skill in games of *furūsiya*, and the fact that he was educated with

⁶² *manhal*, III, fol. 188A, ll. 14-15; *ibid.*, II, 58A, ll. 17-8; *Nujūm*, VI, 773, ll. 9-11.

⁶³ *Nujūm*, VII, p. 667, ll. 9-14. The example given by Popper, *Ukacenihi turkmāniyas ghayr al-jins*, means 'a Turcoman and not a Circassian' (and not as translated by Popper in the glossary to the sixth volume of the *Nujūm*, under *jins*). See also notes below, esp. note 81.

⁶⁴ *Nujūm*, VI, p. 677, l. 14, p. 688, l. 3; *ibid.*, VII, p. 262, l. 12, p. 670, l. 10; and especially *Nujūm*, VI, p. 547. Cf. ll. 10-14 and ll. 20-21.

⁶⁵ *Nujūm*, VI, p. 155. Cf. l. 4 and l. 13, p. 273, l. 16. See also notes below.

⁶⁶ Zetterstéen, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Mamluken Sultane*, Leiden, 1919, p. 29, l. 19; *Nujūm* (Cairo), VIII, p. 42, l. 8; Ibn al-Furāt, VIII, p. 179, l. 17; *al-kātib al-ṣāḥib*, p. 29, ll. 13-30, l. 2; *ṣubḥ*, IV, p. 458, ll. 7-8; *Nujūm*, VII, p. 591, l. 25; *manhal*, III, fol. 181B, l. 22.

⁶⁷ See notes above. On the hatred of the *Turks* for the Circassians in the Bahrī period see also *manhal*, II, fol. 96A, ll. 20-21.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 273-274.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 271, ll. 4-15.

⁷⁰ *manhal*, IV, fol. 218A, l. 6, ll. 19-21.

⁷¹ *Nujūm*, VI, p. 311; *manhal*, VIII, fol. 380B.

⁷² *Nujūm*, VI, p. 430.

⁷³ *manhal*, III, fol. 168A, l. 21-fol. 168B, l. 4.

the sons of the sultan and not in the ordinary military school, simply because he was a Turk and not a Circassian.⁷⁴ But for this disadvantage, he would have become *atābak al-'askir* (commander-in-chief).⁷⁵ Aytamish, who displayed an aggressive attitude towards the Circassians, was deserted by them, and they all went over to the sultan.⁷⁶ The *amīr* Khayr Bak, who was of the *Abkhāsi* race, was at variance with his Circassian *Khushdāshiyā*.⁷⁷ Of a number of *amīrs* who attained high rank, it was said that their only virtue was that they were *Circassians*.⁷⁸ Particular interest attaches to the following story. As he lay on his deathbed, al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh wanted to ensure the succession of his son, al-Muẓaffar Ahmad. What did he do? He appointed as *atābak* Alṭunbughā al-Qirmishī, 'for, since he was a *turki al-jins*, there was no danger of his seizing the throne in place of al-Mu'ayyad's son,'⁷⁹ which was the practice of the *atābaks* during the Circassian period. It was indeed the case that throughout the Circassian period no Turk ever became sultan, although other non-Circassian races (such as the *Būmīs*) were able to gain the throne. Of Alṭunbughā al-Qirmishī, Ibn Taghrī Birdī goes on to relate, 'He had no other fault save only that he was not of the race of *The People*' (*kān min ghayr jins al-qawm lā ghayr*) i. e. he was not a Circassian.⁸⁰ Taghrī Birmish, the Governor of Aleppo, is said to have made no attempt to gain the sultanate *li-ma'rifatihī anna al-qawm lā yuridūnahu li-khalīfah* ('because he knew that *The People* would not have him for that'). He was also aware that, if they could, they would not allow him to retain his governorship *likawnihi turkmāniyan ghayra al-jins* ('for that he was a Turcoman not of *The Race*').⁸¹ Discussing Ṭākh al-Jarkasī, the historian writes: *wa-lā a'rifu fihī min al-mahāsīn ghayra annahu jarkasī al-jins min jins al-qawm* ('I know of no

other virtue to commend him than that he is a Circassian by race belonging to the Race of *The People*').⁸² Only in isolated cases did non-Circassians attain high rank, and even then it was as the result of exceptional circumstances. Jāmbak is shown as opposing the temporary appointment of Jarbāsh al-Muḥammadi as sultan on the ground that it would later be impossible to depose him in favour of Jānim, who was on his way to Egypt from Syria. This was because Jarbāsh was an important personage and *min al-jins* ('of *The Race*'), and was brother-in-law to many of the *Khushdāshiyā* belonging to the *Zāhiriya* and *Ashrafiya* groups. He therefore favoured Khushqadam, *fa'innahu min ghayr al-jins ya'ni kawnahū rūmī al-jins* ('for he is not of *The Race*, that is to say, he is of the *Rūmī* race'), since he would then be able to get rid of him at any moment.⁸³ Jarbāsh, as appears from other sources, was a *Circassian* by race.⁸⁴

Contemporary writers are particularly amazed by the degree of respect shown for a number of incompetent and frivolous Circassians, whose words were received by their fellow-Circassians—including the most prominent and highly-placed among them—as divine utterances. The best-known of them was al-Shaykh Sayf al-Dīn Lājīn al-Jarkasī. Although he remained a simple trooper all his life, his fellow-Circassians wanted to elevate him to the sultanate in place of Faraj. We also know of the series of reforms he wanted to effect in the event of his becoming sultan. The historian's comment on this is as follows: 'That Lājīn speaks such nonsense is no wonder; but what is a source of wonder is that the leading members of the *khāṣṣiyya* and army pay attention to him.'⁸⁵ Another man held in high esteem was Kasaw ibn 'Abdallah al-Zāhiri, also a simple trooper and a prospective candidate for the sultanate.⁸⁶ Apart from these

⁷⁴ The education of a Mamlūk together with the sultan's sons, instead of in the school with the other Mamlūks, was considered a signal honor vouchsafed to only a few. The small number of Mamlūks brought up in this manner succeeded very rapidly in their careers.

⁷⁵ *manhal*, VIII, fol. 444A, l. 10, fol. 444B, ll. 2-6.

⁷⁶ *nujūm*, VI, pp. 18-19.

⁷⁷ *nujūm*, VII, p. 857, ll. 6-7.

⁷⁸ *manhal*, under Qirqmās al-Ashrafi; cf. *nujūm*, VII, pp. 24-26; *manhal*, IV, fol. 4A, ll. 6-8.

⁷⁹ *nujūm*, VI, p. 547, ll. 10-14.

⁸⁰ *nujūm*, VI, p. 547, ll. 20-21.

⁸¹ *nujūm*, VII, p. 58, ll. 14-16.

⁸² *manhal*, IV, fol. 4A, ll. 6-8.

⁸³ *nujūm*, VII, p. 867, ll. 9-20. Jāmbak used all these arguments as a trick in order to establish Khushqadam on the throne; he succeeded only because his arguments seemed to be very convincing.

⁸⁴ *ḡaww*, III, p. 86, l. 11.

⁸⁵ *manhal*, V, fol. 56A, ll. 22-23; *nujūm*, VI, p. 155, ll. 3-17. Also cf. Poliak, *EHI*, 1935, p. 244. Poliak's definition of the *qawāsiq* and his description of their status in the Mamlūk Kingdom are founded on error. We deal with the matter separately elsewhere. Criticisms, largely valid, of Poliak's definition are given by Popper in his glossary to the *ḡaww* under *qiradā*.

⁸⁶ *manhal*, V, fol. 45A.

there were others who gained the admiration of the Circassians for no apparent reason.⁸⁷ The attitude of the Mamlūk historians to the members of the Circassian race can be seen from a remark concerning one of the Circassian *amīrs*: *wa-indahu faysh al-shubūbiya wa-khiffat al-jarākisa* ('he displays the giddiness of youth and the frivolity of the Circassians').⁸⁸

One of the most characteristic features of the Circassian period is the practice of the sultans and *amīrs* to bring over their relatives from their country of origin in numbers unprecedented in the earlier period. Although there is no lack of evidence that this practice was also followed in the Bahri period, it was on an incomparably smaller scale.⁸⁹ The immigration of relatives reached particularly large proportions from the middle of the fifteenth century onwards. The sources bearing on the period in question contain numerous references to relatives being brought over, sometimes singly, but usually in groups.⁹⁰ This migration had a number of negative features, the most important of which was that the immigrants included a very large proportion of adults who could not be given

so effective a military training as the Mamlūks who had been brought over at an early age. These older immigrants frequently obtained high posts as *amīrs*, or at least as *khāṣṣikiya*,⁹¹ without being slaves and without undergoing training in the military schools. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to call the second half of the Circassian period 'the period of rule by brothers-in-law and relatives.' It is, for instance, related that Aynāl sat securely on the throne because all the *amīrs* were his brothers-in-law.⁹² Under Qā'itbāy the rule of relatives reached its climax.⁹³ But even in the reign of al-Ghawri there was no lack of instances where relatives occupied high posts.⁹⁴ Maqrīzī complains bitterly that, whereas in the past only young Mamlūks had been brought over, the Mamlūks in his own day had formerly been sailors, furnace-tenders and drawers of water in their countries of origin.⁹⁵

The decline of the Mamlūk Kingdom was the result of a variety of causes,—political, military and economic. We deal with the nature of these causes elsewhere. Even if the Circassians had not become the dominant race during the second half of the Mamlūk period, the cumulative effect of these causes would finally have led to the disruption of the Mamlūk Kingdom. It is, however, undeniable that the Circassians appreciably hastened this process. The later Mamlūk historians paint the early Mamlūk period in exceedingly bright colors, while their account of the later period is decidedly somber. Although the account of the later period is to a great extent exaggerated, it is basically true. Ibn Taghri Birdī's claim that Barqūq 'turned the affairs of the realm upside-down, he and his successors to this day,' contains a great deal of truth, and is only one of many examples of that historian's profound insight into the character of the Mamlūk régime. To translate

⁸⁷ *manḥal*, II, fol. 129A, ll. 4-6; *ibid.*, IV, fol. 4A, ll. 6-8; *najm*, VII, p. 262, ll. 12-14.

⁸⁸ *manḥal*, IV, fol. 173B, ll. 2-3.

⁸⁹ Zettersteden, p. 132, ll. 6-13; Ibn Qāṣi Shuhba, fol. 110B, footnote; *manḥal*, III, fol. 151A, ll. 14-15; *ḍurūr*, III, p. 256, ll. 5-6, p. 258, ll. 10-11.

⁹⁰ Cf. e.g. *najm*, V, p. 326, ll. 14-16; *ibid.*, VI, pp. 149-150, p. 519, ll. 20-29, p. 571, ll. 5-9, p. 604, ll. 8-10, pp. 806-807; *ibid.*, VII, p. 93, ll. 11-12, p. 308, l. 4, p. 465, ll. 5-6, p. 572, footnotes; *ḥawādith*, p. 38, l. 11, p. 55, ll. 11-13, p. 594, ll. 13-15, p. 730, ll. 10-13; *manḥal*, I, fol. 9A, ll. 2-5, fol. 126B, ll. 4-7, fol. 168A, ll. 14-17, fol. 175B, ll. 12-14, fol. 203A, ll. 1-2; *ibid.*, II, fol. 23A, ll. 6-9; *ibid.*, III, fol. 177B, ll. 1-6; *ibid.*, VIII, fol. 425A; *tibr*, p. 377, ll. 17-18; Ibn al-Furāt, IX, p. 33, ll. 13-15, p. 278, ll. 23-24; Ibn Qāṣi Shuhba, p. 62, ll. 20-22; Ibn Iyās, II, p. 64, ll. 13-15, p. 141, ll. 18-20, p. 210, p. 226, ll. 3-4; *ibid.*, III, p. 78, ll. 16-18, p. 153, ll. 7-9, 22-23, p. 172, ll. 7-8, p. 173, ll. 2-7, p. 184, ll. 17-20, p. 244, l. 6, p. 259, ll. 4-5, p. 281, ll. 16-17, p. 291, ll. 18-19, p. 364, ll. 14-15, p. 388, ll. 21-22; *ibid.*, IV, p. 88, ll. 11-13, p. 129, ll. 11, 15, p. 156, ll. 12-13, p. 184, l. 1, p. 191, l. 22, p. 216, l. 17, p. 362, l. 6, p. 433, ll. 15-18, p. 535, l. 10, p. 437, ll. 6-8, p. 445, l. 20—p. 466, l. 2, p. 477, l. 21; al-Ishāqī, *akḥḥār al-usūl*, Cairo, 1315 A.H., p. 124, ll. 21-24; *ḍaw'*, II, p. 315, l. 23; *ibid.*, III, p. 28, p. 63, l. 8, p. 284, ll. 17-18, p. 287, l. 23; *ibid.*, VI, p. 201, l. 1, p. 219, ll. 2-4, p. 221, ll. 1-3, p. 271, l. 1; *ibid.*, X, p. 288, l. 24; *subḥā*, p. 121, ll. 2-4; see also Poliak, *REI*, p. 242, Note 4, also material collected by Poliak on this question, *REI*, 1935, p. 242, Notes 3, 4, 5.

⁹¹ *najm*, VI, p. 604, ll. 8-10; *ḥawādith*, p. 730, ll. 10-13; *manḥal*, I, fol. 9A, ll. 2-5; *ibid.*, II, fol. 175B, ll. 12-14; *ibid.*, VIII, fol. 425A; Ibn Qāṣi Shuhba, fol. 62A, ll. 20-22; see references in the following notes.

⁹² Ibn Iyās, II, p. 64, ll. 13-15.

⁹³ Ibn Iyās, II, p. 210, p. 226, ll. 3-4; *ibid.*, III, p. 78, ll. 16-18, p. 153, ll. 7-9, 22-23, p. 172, ll. 7-8, p. 173, ll. 2-6, p. 184, ll. 17-20, p. 244, l. 6, p. 259, ll. 4-5, p. 281, ll. 16-17, p. 291, ll. 18-19, p. 364, l. 14-15, and in many other places.

⁹⁴ Ibn Iyās, IV, p. 129, l. 11, p. 156, ll. 12-13, p. 184, l. 1, p. 191, l. 22, p. 216, l. 17, *et passim*.

⁹⁵ *khīṭaṭ*, II, pp. 213-214.

Ibn Taghrī Birdī's judgment into more scientific language, one might say that the Circassians struck a severe blow at several of the main supports on which the military system of servitude in Islām was founded. From the establishment of the first Mamlūk companies in the ninth century in the Abbasid Caliphate down to the decline of the system of servitude under Ottoman rule, several fundamental principles were in operation:

(a) A protracted period of training for the Mamlūks in the military school from boyhood. This training formed the character of the Mamlūks and determined their outlook for the rest of their life.

(b) Blind obedience by the Mamlūk to his overlord, and unwavering loyalty to his companions in servitude.

(c) The importance attached to ability as the chief criterion of promotion.

(d) A very slow rate of promotion.

(e) The unusual degree of importance attached to senior Mamlūks as contrasted with younger ones.

Even at the most flourishing period of the Mamlūk Kingdom, these principles were not elaborated to the degree of perfection witnessed under Ottoman rule. Nevertheless, they remained the backbone of the system of military servitude in the Circassian period as well. But at the same time there is no doubt that they received considerable modification at the hands of the Circassians in contrast to the earlier period. It is not our intention here to furnish a full account of the manner in which the foundations of the Mamlūk system of servitude were weakened during the Circassian period. We should, however, like to review in brief certain aspects of that process. The military school was adversely affected in two ways: the period of study was considerably curtailed as compared with the early Mamlūk period;²² and, as we have seen, a large proportion of adults—relatives of the Circassian *amīrs*—were admitted to the Mamlūk corps without passing through the school at all. This practice was completely at variance with the principles underlying the system of military servitude. If it had become the universal practice for Mamlūks to arrive in Egypt as adults and no longer to

pass through the crucible of the military school, where they were turned from infidels into Muslims, from boys into grown men, from raw recruits into full-fledged troopers, and from slaves into free men, the result would have been to deprive the Mamlūk army of its very lifeblood. (Nevertheless, the majority of the Mamlūks in the late Circassian period did pass through the school, but their training was extremely perfunctory in comparison with earlier times.) Presumably there was not a total absence of nepotism, rapid promotions and racial favoritism in the earlier period; but these practices certainly had not assumed the vast proportion they did in Circassian times.

One of the main reasons for the amazing stability and compactness of the Ottoman slave family (down to the end of Suleiman the Magnificent's reign)²³ was the fact that in the Ottoman State the sultanate was hereditary within the reigning family, and often passed from father to son. Thus the allegiance of the slaves was transferred from one sultan to his successor. With the Mamlūks, however, the legitimacy of kingship had become weakened already in Bahrī times. Even during the rule of the house of Qalāūn, which lasted longer than any other Mamlūk dynasty, Muḥammad b. Qalāūn was on two occasions forced to vacate the throne to make way for powerful Mamlūk *amīrs*. During the Circassian period the principle of heredity was altogether abandoned (see above), so that it was impossible for the Mamlūks of one sultan to transfer their allegiance to his successor. At this time in particular, the Mamlūks purchased and liberated by the reigning sultan (*al-mushtarawāt*, *al-ajlāb*, *al-julbān*; see note 22) formed the entire basis of his rule, and were the sole support on which he leaned in opposing the other groups of royal Mamlūks,²⁴ and especially the Mamlūks of his predecessor. The sultan and his *mushtarawāt* formed a sort of vicious circle. They enjoyed pre-eminence only as long as he reigned; and he could retain his power only as long as he based his rule on his Mamlūks. Each

²² The causes of its decline after the reign of Suleiman have been dealt with in detail by A. H. Lybyer, *The Government of the Ottoman Empire in the Time of Suleiman the Magnificent*, Harvard University Press, 1913. Lybyer gives in this book a most illuminating description of the foundations on which the military slave system was based, both in the Ottoman Empire and in Islam in general.

²³ For the structure of the Mamlūk army see Note 22.

²⁴ *najm*, VI, p. 509, ll. 15-19.

sultan, on ascending the throne, tried to clear the way for his *mushtarawāt* to seize power, and sought to increase their number as rapidly as possible. The accession of a new sultan was frequently accompanied by brutal purges on a vast scale, and especially by the relentless persecution of his predecessor's Mamlūks. In other words, he would try to eliminate the Mamlūks who had only just before been the *mushtarawāt*, and thus had been the ruling element in the state. In order to destroy the immense power they had concentrated in their hands, and to weaken their opposition as a united and organized body, the sultan was not content merely to remove them from their dominant position. In addition he would employ far more stringent measures, throwing some of them (mainly the leaders) into gaol or exiling them to remote parts of the kingdom, and transferring others to the service of the *amīrs*, which was considered as a great degradation.

This practice was a feature of Mamlūk rule from its earliest days; but in the Bahri period it was carried out in a far milder fashion than under the Circassians. For in the Bahri period the principle of hereditary succession had not altogether been abandoned, and the sultan's son could not regard his father's Mamlūks as complete strangers. Similarly, the father's Mamlūks could not regard his son as a completely strange sultan.

Opposed to the *mushtarawāt* were the Mamlūks of the preceding sultans (*al-qarāniṣa*, *al-qarāniṣ*). Unlike the *mushtarawāt*, who were a homogeneous body, the *qarāniṣ*, of their very nature, could not be a compact group; for they were composed of heterogeneous, and frequently mutually antagonistic, elements owing allegiance to different ex-sultans and drawn together solely by their common hatred of the younger *mushtarawāt*, who sought to dominate them. Thus the Mamlūks of ex-sultan A could not forget that the Mamlūks of ex-sultan B had ousted them from their former position as *mushtarawāt*; and the Mamlūks of ex-sultan C were hostile to those of ex-sultan B for the same reason; and so on. The possibilities of fomenting discord among the *qarāniṣ* were particularly extensive during the Circassian period, partly for the reason that the short reigns of the Circassian sultans resulted in the formation of many such groups. Thus plentiful opportunities were provided for creating various combinations and alignments. The Mamlūk histories are full of descrip-

tions of the formation and subsequent disruption of temporary alliances among the *qarāniṣ*. These alliances were mostly of a very casual nature, and the stability of the sultan's rule depended largely upon his ability to exploit the differences among the various groups of Mamlūks in his own interest.

As long as the Mamlūk Kingdom was wealthy and powerful, and its army well-trained, disciplined and controlled by an iron hand, the feeling of comradeship between the slave and liberated Mamlūks of the same overlord (*khushdāshīya*) was a positive factor. There was a restrained competitive feeling, an esprit de corps, among the various military formations, which was useful in keeping the army up to the mark and preventing it from growing stale. When, however, the Mamlūk Kingdom began to decline under the Circassians, and discipline was relaxed and the egoistic passions of the different formations were permitted to break out unchecked, the spirit of comradeship proved harmful to the army and was one of the causes of its disintegration. The way was opened to complete domination by the *mushtarawāt* of the other military groups, accompanied by unlimited extortion and oppression. It was also made possible for the soldiers to occupy themselves constantly with political affairs, to the neglect of their military duties. Matters reached such a pass that the sultan would send the *qarāniṣ*—the members of the veteran formations—on military expeditions, so as to spare his own *mushtarawāt*,⁹⁹ whose military training was of a very low order and who were not moved by a martial spirit. According to Ibn Taghri Birdī, a hundred Mamlūks of the *qarāniṣ* were capable of putting to flight more than a thousand *julbān*.¹⁰⁰ But if they did not show much prowess in the field, they exhibited an amazing aptitude for political intrigue, overcoming and suppressing the weaker military formations, and indulging in acts of wanton lawlessness. Signs of the weakening of discipline had been manifested at the beginning of the Circassian period, and there had even been sporadic manifestations during Bahri times; but from the beginning of the second half of the ninth century A. H. all barriers were broken down. The historians point to Aynāl's

⁹⁹ This subject is dealt with at length in the chapter entitled, 'The Army on the March,' in our work on the Mamlūk army.

¹⁰⁰ *nafīs*, VI, p. 641, ll. 2-5. See also the corrigenda on p. LXXII of the volume in question.

reign as the time when all restrictions on the wild behavior of the *juḫḫān* were swept aside. Describing the year 858 A. H. Ibn Taghrī Birdī writes: 'This is the first appearance of the *al-Ashraf* (Aynāl) Mamlūks; and what follows is still more terrible.'¹⁰¹ From the middle of the ninth century A. H. the Mamlūk chronicles bear the impress of the reign of terror of the *juḫḫān*, who completely dominated all the other groups of slaves and, in fact, all aspects of life in the Mamlūk Kingdom. This subject, indeed, engrosses the attention of the chroniclers during the last 70 years of the Mamlūk régime.¹⁰²

The incessant conflict between the various groups of royal Mamlūks during the Circassian period was

¹⁰¹ *suḫūm*, VII, p. 452, ll. 6-7.

¹⁰² The conclusions given here in brief concerning the adverse effect of the Circassians upon the foundations of the Mamlūk system of servitude, the relations between the various Mamlūk formations, etc., are based on material compiled in the chapter entitled 'The Structure of the Mamlūk Army' in our work on the Mamlūk army. Notes 96 and 98-101 give only some of the more important references.

largely favored by the fact that, from the time of Tīmūr Lang, on the threshold of the 15th century, down to the war of Dābiq at the beginning of the 16th, the Mamlūks did not engage in a single large-scale war. A serious menace of external aggression, such as the Mongol threat during the second half of the 13th century, would either have led to the cohesion of the Mamlūk slave family or to the disruption of the kingdom (as actually happened in 922 A. H.). The absence of any such threat during the greatest part of the Circassian period promoted the process of disintegration and increased the differences among the Mamlūks. Continued pressure on the Ottoman slave régime, which was constantly engaged in fighting difficult, protracted, and bloody wars—firearms were largely employed in them—was without doubt one of the reasons for its effectiveness, cohesion, and supremacy. But the similarities and dissimilarities between the Ottoman and Mamlūk slave systems, which form one of the most important aspects of the history of Islam in the late Middle Ages, calls for separate treatment.