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QĀYTBĀY'S JOURNEY TO BILĀD AL-SHĀM  
IN 882/1477: POWER, PERIPHERY, AND  
ROYAL PEREGRINATIONS

by  
KOH CHOON HWEE

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submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
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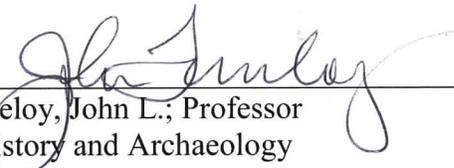
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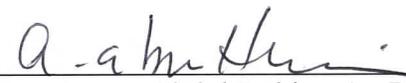
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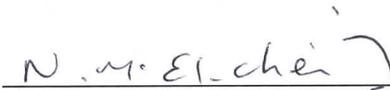
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## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Koh Choon Hwee for Master of Arts  
Major: History

Title: Qāyṭbāy's Journey to Bilād al-Shām in 882/1477: Power, Periphery, and Royal Peregrinations

In 882/1477, the Mamluk Sultan Qāyṭbāy undertook an unprecedented, four-month long journey to Bilād al-Shām, a region hitherto not visited by any reigning Circassian sultan. This thesis presents a close study of this journey in three steps: first, by examining the historical conditions enveloping Qāyṭbāy's reign, from which his agenda and motivations for the journey emerged. Second, an investigation into the pre-modern practice of travelling monarchs in Central Asia, Mughal India and Manchurian China yields crucial, comparative knowledge that 'normalizes' Qāyṭbāy's travels as a prosaic occurrence in his time, as curious as it may appear to us now. Finally, furnished with relevant context particular to both the late Mamluk Empire and pre-modern royal peregrinations, this thesis analyses first-hand accounts of Qāyṭbāy's journey by Ibn al-Ḥimṣī in Damascus, by Ibn Jī'ān, an Egyptian scribe who travelled with Qāyṭbāy, as well as by Ibn Iyās in Cairo.

Ultimately, this thesis argues that the expectation of an impending military confrontation with the Ottomans, compounded by social unrest in the region provoked by Qāyṭbāy's military-linked financial reforms, motivated this unprecedented journey. Considering that Qāyṭbāy's travels have received little scholarly attention, it is hoped that this modest study will contribute towards our increased understanding of the late Mamluk Empire.

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# A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND DATES

## TRANSLITERATION

Generally, I follow the transliteration style adopted by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. However, the following Turkic anomalies should be noted: ‘Aqqyunlu’ instead of ‘Akkoyunlu’, ‘Qaraqyunlu’ instead of ‘Karakoyunlu’, and ‘Zu’l-Qadr’ instead of ‘Dulgadir’.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the word “mamluk” is not transliterated – hence, “mamluk” and not “mamlūk”.

## DATES

In most cases, lunar *hijri* or Islamic calendar dates are given alongside their Gregorian equivalents, separated by a slash. In sections featuring close textual analysis, the calendar system used by the primary source is adopted – in the case of this thesis that would be the *hijri* calendar.

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<sup>1</sup> Referenced from John E. Woods, *The Aqqyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), xiv.

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

After travelling for over thirty days to Alexandria, the Mamluk Sultan Qāyṭbāy returned to Cairo in Rabīʿ II 882/July-August 1477.<sup>1</sup> Barely a month later, the peripatetic sultan set off once more on what seemed to be a routine inspection tour to the Grand Mosque in Ṣāliḥiyya on the eastern outskirts of Cairo, which he had recently founded.<sup>2</sup> Qāyṭbāy stayed in Ṣāliḥiyya until 4 Jumādā II 882/12 September 1477, whereupon he embarked on an unplanned journey towards Bilād al-Shām, a region not visited before by any reigning Circassian sultan.<sup>3</sup> Ibn Iyās (852-930/1448-1524), a contemporary chronicler in Cairo, noted that the sultan's spontaneous departure surprised the people.<sup>4</sup> Badr al-Dīn Abū al-Baqā' Ibn al-Jī'ān, a scribe in the sultan's entourage, described this journey as

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā'i' al-Duhūr*, vol. 3 (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣrīya al-ʿĀmma lil-Kitāb, 1961-1992), 130-133.

<sup>2</sup> Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyá Ibn al-Jī'ān; ʿUmar Tadmurī, *al-Qawl al-Mustazraf fī Safar Mawlānā al-Malik al-Ashraf: aw Riḥlat Qāyṭbāy ilā Bilād al-Shām, 882h/1477m* (Tripoli, Lebanon: Manshūrāt-i Jarrūs Baras, 1984), 46.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' i* vol. 3, 134; Ibn al-Jī'ān, *al-Qawl*, 49. Bilād al-Sham refers to the Eastern Mediterranean littoral, comprising the states of Lebanon, Syria, Israel/Palestine, Jordan and the southern part of Turkey.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

“unprecedented”, comparable only to Baybars’ (the founder of the Mamluk Empire) journey there two centuries earlier.<sup>5</sup>

Several days later, a camel-messenger arrived in Cairo from the travelling sultan with an official decree that publicly declared his aims for his journey. Ibn Iyās recorded the contents of this decree as follows:

[He undertook the journey] ... to discover the affairs of the deputies [of Bilād al-Shām] and the citadels for himself, and to give instructions and advice to the Amīrs regarding the people and the army, and to prepare for the distribution of the jawāmik [monthly wages] while the sultan is absent...

...li yakshif ‘ala amr al-nuwwāb wa al-qilā‘ binafsihi, wa arsal yaqūl lil-umara’ bi an yatawaṣṣu bi-aḥwāl al-ra‘ya wa al-jund, wa an yahḍurū tafriqat al-jawāmik mā dām al-sultān ghā’ibān...<sup>6</sup>

Ostensibly, Qāyṭbāy was travelling to Bilād al-Shām to supervise its administrative, military and financial affairs – yet why were they of such interest to Qāyṭbāy? Why was a personal journey necessary, and further, what were the conditions that enabled Qāyṭbāy to leave his capital for such a long period of time despite the political insecurity such an absence entailed?<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibn al-Jī‘ān, *al-Qawl*, 46, 50.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i* vol. 3, 135.

<sup>7</sup> The historian al-Maqrīzī noted that few sultans even made the pilgrimage (which would take around two months) “due to their political insecurity in leaving Cairo for such an extended period”. John L. Meloy, *Imperial Power and Maritime Trade : Mecca and Cairo in the later Middle Ages* (Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, Center for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Chicago, 2010), 186.

Despite their regularity and prominence during his reign, Qāyṭbāy's roughly four-month journey to Bilād al-Shām and his other travels have received little scholarly attention. No monograph on this topic exists, and not a single article on it appears in any of the sixteen volumes of the *Mamluk Studies Review* from 1997 to 2012. When Carl Petry briefly mentioned Qāyṭbāy's journey to Bilād al-Shām in his book, *Twilight of Majesty*, he wrongly attributed Badr al-Dīn Abū al-Baqā' ibn al-Jī'ān's travelogue to his uncle, Zayn al-Dīn ibn al-Jī'ān.<sup>8</sup> A more recent, Arabic edition of this work again wrongly attributed it, but this time to Abū al-Baqā' ibn al-Jī'ān's brother, Abū al-Barakāt ibn al-Jī'ān.<sup>9</sup> It is unfortunate that this interesting travelogue has been largely overlooked, and that this fascinating journey has eluded academic study thus far, but it is hoped that this modest study will be able to contribute some insights on this topic.

This thesis presents a close study of Qāyṭbāy's journey to Bilād al-Shām, and argues that the expectation of an impending military confrontation with the Ottomans, compounded by social unrest in the region provoked by Qāyṭbāy's military-linked financial reforms, motivated this unprecedented journey. Through close study of contemporary

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<sup>8</sup> Carl F. Petry, *Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of the Mamlūk Sultans al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy and Qānssūh al-Ghawrī in Egypt* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993), 78. He attributes it correctly on page 11, however. The error on page 78 could have been a mix-up with Zayn al-Dīn ibn Muzhir, the chief secretary who was also in the sultan's entourage; Bernadette Martel-Thoumian, *Les Civils et l'Administration dans l'État Militaire Mamlūk (IX/XV Siecle)* (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1991), 297-298.

<sup>9</sup> Li Guo, "Review of Ibn al-Jī'ān, 'al-Qawl al-Mustazraf fī Safar Mawlānā al-Malik al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy, and Anonymous, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy*", *Mamluk Studies Review*, vol. 13 no. 2 (2009): 177.

chronicles by Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, Ibn al-Jī‘ān, and others, I elucidate the varying receptions of the sultan’s journey – from complete neglect, lukewarm interest, subtle antagonism, to outright commendation. I show how Ibn al-Ḥimṣī interpreted Qāyṭbāy’s journey to Damascus in terms of local politics, and contrast this to Ibn al-Jī‘ān’s ‘elite’ perspective as part of the sultan’s entourage.

Following the Introduction, Chapter II examines Qāyṭbāy’s rise and enthronement, as well as particular challenges facing the Mamluk Empire in the late ninth/fifteenth century – namely, the military threat posed by an expanding Ottoman Empire to the north, as well as the financial constraints afflicting the state. This section provides the long historical context, since Qāyṭbāy’s agenda and motivations for the journey would have emerged from the historical circumstances enveloping the Mamluk Empire at the time.

Chapter III investigates the pre-modern practice of travelling monarchs, thereby ‘normalizing’ Qāyṭbāy’s travels as a prosaic occurrence in his day, as curious as it may appear to us now. By analyzing the peripatetic courts of the Timurids and their successors, the Imperial Tours of the Manchurian Emperor in China, as well as the surreptitious sojourns of the Rāshidūn Caliph, ‘Umar, I extract insights regarding how monarchical mobility outside of sedentarized confines may enhance the monarch’s personal authority, charisma and power over the common folk. Here, I also consider two different conceptions of “periphery”: the ethnically Han Chinese Jiangnan region within the Manchurian Empire, as well as the frontier, buffer zone of Bilād al-Shām within the Mamluk Empire.

Chapter IV closely examines various chronicles that recorded Qāyṭbāy’s journey, with special attention paid to two core texts. The first text is *Ḥawādith al-Zamān wa*

*Wafayāt al-Shuyūkh wa al-Aqrān*<sup>10</sup> by Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad bin Muḥammad bin ‘Umar, better known as Ibn al-Ḥimṣī (841-934/1437-1528). Ibn al-Ḥimṣī was the son of a Damascene muezzin and a local historian whose city hosted the Sultan for twenty-five days, or a quarter of his entire journey.<sup>11</sup> His chronicle spans the years 851 to 934 (1447/8 – 1528). The second text, *Al-Qawl al-Mustazraf fī Safar Mawlānā al-Ashraf*<sup>12</sup>, was written by Badr al-Dīn Abū al-Baqā’ Ibn al-Jī‘ān (d. 902/1497). Ibn al-Jī‘ān was an official scribe in Qāyṭbāy’s entourage who enjoyed close relations to the sultan and was a member of the Banū Jī‘ān, an important family that monopolized secretarial positions in government during the Circassian period (784- 922/1382-1516)<sup>13</sup>. The Banū Jī‘ān were originally Coptic Christians from Damietta who converted to Islam at the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century, and served the Mamluk Empire’s civil administration and military until its final days in the tenth/sixteenth century.<sup>14</sup> The sharp contrast between both accounts mirrors the vastly different positions of their authors in the Empire – one subaltern, the other elite – as well as their diverse interests.

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<sup>10</sup> Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥimṣī; *Ḥawādith al-Zamān wa Wafiyāt al-Shuyūkh wa al-Aqrān*, ed. ‘Umar Tadmurī (Beirut: Al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣrīya, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith*, 10,13.

<sup>12</sup> Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyá Ibn al-Jī‘ān, *al-Qawl al-Mustazraf fī Safar Mawlānā al-Malik al-Ashraf: aw Riḥlat Qāyṭbāy ilā Bilād al-Shām, 882h/1477m*, ed. ‘Umar Tadmurī (Tripoli, Lebanon: Manshūrāt-i Jarrūs Baras, 1984).

<sup>13</sup> Ibn al-Jī‘ān, *al-Qawl*, 13; Martel-Thoumian, *Les Civils*, 321.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn al-Jī‘ān, *al-Qawl*, 8-9; Martel-Thoumian, *Les Civils*, 295-319.

Other Arabic chronicles from Cairo, Jerusalem and Damascus are examined in this thesis. They include Ibn Iyās' *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā'i' al-Duhūr*<sup>15</sup> (Cairo), Ibn Taghrībirdī's *al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhira*<sup>16</sup> (Cairo), Ibn al-Ṣayrafī's *Inba' al-Haṣr bi Abnā' al-'Aṣr*<sup>17</sup> (Cairo), Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī's *al-Uns al-Jalīl bi Tārīkh al-Quds wa al-Khalīl*<sup>18</sup> (Jerusalem), and 'Alā al-Dīn 'Alī bin Yūsuf bin Aḥmad al-Dimashqī al-Buṣrawī's *Tārīkh al-Buṣrawī*<sup>19</sup> (Damascus). In addition, biographical dictionaries by al-Sakhāwī (*al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi' li Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi*<sup>20</sup>) and 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ Ibn Khalīl (*al-Majma' al-Mufannan bi al-Mu'jam al-Mu'anwan*<sup>21</sup>) are employed to corroborate facts on historical personalities.

Together, the long perspective of historical conditions surrounding Qāyṭbāy's reign, as well as the exposition on the pre-modern practice of travelling monarchs will furnish

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<sup>15</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā'i' al-Duhūr*, vol. 3 (Cairo: al-Hay'a al-Miṣrīya al-'Āmma lil-Kitāb, 1961-1992).

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhira* (Cairo: Maṭba'at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīya, 1929-1972).

<sup>17</sup> Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *Inba' al-Haṣr bi Abnā' al-'Aṣr* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1970).

<sup>18</sup> Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī al-'Alīmī, *al-'Uns al-Jalīl bi Tārīkh al-Quds wa al-Khalīl* (Amman: Maktaba Dandīs, 1999).

<sup>19</sup> Alī ibn Yūsuf Buṣrawī, *Tārīkh al-Buṣrawī : Ṣafahāt Majhūlah min Tārīkh Dimashq fī 'Aṣr al-Mamālīk, min sanat 871 H li-ghāyat 904 H* (Damascus; Beirut : Dār al-Ma'mūn lil-Turāth, 1988).

<sup>20</sup> Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥman al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-Lāmi' li Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1353-1355 H, (1934-1936).

<sup>21</sup> 'Abd al-Bāsiṭ Ibn Khalīl, and 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad Kandarī. *Al-Majma' Al-Mufannan bi al-Mu'jam al-Mu'anwan*, (Beirut: Dār Al-Bashā'ir Al-Islāmīya, 2011).

relevant context for an analysis of first-hand accounts regarding Qāyṭbāy's journey. The close study of contemporary chronicles, too, will yield valuable insights regarding historiographical methods and traditions from the late Mamluk era, the discussion of which will take place in the concluding section of this thesis.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MAMLUK EMPIRE IN THE LATE NINTH/FIFTEENTH CENTURY

Ibn Iyās recorded that Qāyṭbāy journeyed to Bilād al-Shām in order “to discover the affairs of the deputies and the citadels for himself, and to give instructions and advice to the amīrs regarding the people and the army, and to prepare for the distribution of monthly wages [for the army] while the sultan is absent...”<sup>22</sup> This chapter furnishes the historical context for Qāyṭbāy’s military and social concerns in that region, and begins by examining his rise and enthronement against the historical conditions of the Mamluk Empire in the late ninth/fifteenth century. Though he was a savvy politician and energetic leader, Qāyṭbāy’s first decade of rule (872-882/1469-1477) was plagued with military debacles and financial crises the roots of which predate his rule. I argue that the need to prepare militarily for a confrontation with an expanding Ottoman Empire to the north, and to supervise the social conditions in the region following a spate of revolts and uprisings, motivated Qāyṭbāy’s unprecedented journey to Bilād al-Shām.

#### **A. Qāyṭbāy’s Rule (r. 872-900/1468-1496): Rise and Enthronement**

In the Circassian period of the Mamluk Sultanate, Qāyṭbāy’s long reign (r. 872-900 /1468-1496) is regarded by contemporary and modern historians as an exceptional period of political stability, as well as a phase of rejuvenation that witnessed the proliferation of

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<sup>22</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i* vol. 3, 135.

public works.<sup>23</sup> Under his rule, the fractious nature of Circassian-era mamluk politics was quelled, and the debilitating slew of succession crises that had prefaced Qāyṭbāy's ascent to the throne was relegated to a thing of the past.<sup>24</sup> Yet, as the reins of power slipped from his grasp in old age and sickness towards the end of the ninth/fifteenth century, political turmoil and factionalism returned, exposing Qāyṭbāy's reign as a temporary balm over

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<sup>23</sup> Jean-Claude Garcin, "The Regime of the Circassian Mamluks," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 1: *Islamic Egypt, 640-1517*, edited by Carl Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 295; Stanley Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages* (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1968), 344; Carl F. Petry, *Protectors of Praetorians? The Last Mamluk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1994), 21; Petry, *Twilight*, 16-18.

<sup>24</sup> The Circassian period is distinguished by its unstable successions between reigning sultans, a phenomenon that may be attributed to the rise of nepotistic practices among Circassian mamluks, which often entailed ruthless purges on the accession of any new sultan, who had to extirpate the familial allies, as well as the mamluks, of the preceding sultan. In Ayalon's words, "[o]ne of the most drastic and important steps usually taken by a new sultan, especially in the Circassian period, was to throw all his predecessor's mamluks, bag and baggage, out of the barracks (*tibāq*) of the Cairo Citadel (*qal'at al-jabal*) and establish his own mamluks in their stead." These traumatic personnel overhauls were exacerbated by the large number of seat-warmer sultans in the Circassian period, necessitating frequent purges. Of the twenty-six sultans in this 135-year period, only nine ruled for more than five years. (For a perspective on this statistic, consider that during a comparable period of 131 years, from 1389 to 1520, there had only been six Ottoman sultans.) (A.N. Poliak, "The Influence of Chingiz-Khān's Yāsa upon the General Organization of the Mamlūk state," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 10 no. 4 (1942): 864; David Ayalon, "The Circassians in the Mamlūk kingdom," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 69 no. 3 (Jul-Sep 1949), 136; David Ayalon, "Studies on the Structure of the Mamlūk army – I," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 15 no. 2 (1953): 209; Carl F. Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), 21)

structural fissures, and making plain his failure to enact the deep, institutional reforms that the Mamluk system sorely needed.<sup>25</sup>

Qāyṭbāy's ascent through the rungs of hierarchy was plodding and gradual. Purchased by Sultan Barsbāy in 839/1435, Qāyṭbāy was later retained as a private guard (*khāṣṣak*) by Sultan Jaqmaq (r. 842-57 /1438-53). During Sultan Īnāl's reign (r. 857-65 /1453-61), Qāyṭbāy became a Junior Dawadar, and consequently promoted to an amīr of ten (*amīr 'ashara*). Sultan Khushqadam (r. 865-72/ 1461-67) then made him an amīr of forty (*amīr ṭabalkhānāh*, or *amīr arba 'īn*) and assigned him to the Superintendancy of Royal Provisions (*shādd al-sharābkhāna*). After a short stint as the Deputy of Aleppo (*nā'ib Ḥalab*), Qāyṭbāy was conferred the rank of an Amīr of a Hundred and Commander of a Thousand (*amīr mi'a wa-muqaddam alf*), which he held until his appointment as the Head of the Royal Guard (*ra's nawbat al-nuwwāb*) by Sultan Yīlbāy (r. 871/1467). Upon Sultan Timurbughā's (r. 872/1467-68) ascension to the throne, Qāyṭbāy was finally made an atabeg (*aṭābak*) or Head of the Guard of Amīrs, the last post he held before becoming sultan himself.<sup>26</sup>

As indicated, Qāyṭbāy had progressed incrementally up the mamluk hierarchy in the traditional manner (as opposed to entering the mamluk corps as an adult), serving nine sultans over thirty-three years before claiming the throne.<sup>27</sup> Until the zenith of his career, Qāyṭbāy had been relatively neglected in contemporary chronicles, suggesting that he had

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<sup>25</sup> Petry, *Twilight*, 117.

<sup>26</sup> Petry, *Twilight*, 29; Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt*, 344; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm* vol. 16, 395.

<sup>27</sup> Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt*, 342; Petry, *Twilight*, 29.

not participated in political intrigues or factional rivalries in any pronounced fashion.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, his long years within the Mamluk hierarchy must have sensitized him to the capricious cogwheels of power. Carl Petry described Qāyṭbāy as a politically savvy mamluk who successfully navigated the volatile waters of Circassian-era politics, as well as the brutal purges that distinguished it. This savvy extended to the politically delicate circumstances of Qāyṭbāy's enthronement.

According to Petry, Qāyṭbāy's handling of his enthronement encapsulated many of the characteristics that would distinguish his long reign – his respect for the rule of law, and his opposition to vicious coup tactics. On 6 Rajab 872/1 February 1468, the day of his enthronement, Qāyṭbāy is said to have demonstrated exceptional magnanimity towards his predecessor, first by compelling Timurbughā to sit next to him in a private audience despite the disparity in rank, then by allowing him to journey to Damietta without shackles and not imprisoning him.<sup>29</sup> Further, Qāyṭbāy had abstained from confiscating Timurbughā's property, and allowed him to travel with his intimate retainers.<sup>30</sup> Petry concluded from this that Qāyṭbāy's actions “signaled more than his personal renunciation of coup tactics” as they “not only terminated the crisis following Khushqadam's death, but heralded an era of renewed law and order”.<sup>31</sup>

However, it may be argued that the manner in which Qāyṭbāy dealt with Timurbughā had less to do with the upholding of law and order, but more to do with the

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<sup>28</sup> Petry, *Twilight*, 29-30.

<sup>29</sup> Petry, *Twilight*, 38; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i* vol. 3, 204.

<sup>30</sup> Petry, *Twilight*, 38.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

fact that Qāyṭbāy had not felt politically threatened by his predecessor. Two points substantiate this claim: firstly, upon enthronement, Qāyṭbāy moved swiftly and ruthlessly to capture the supporters of the former sultan, Khushqadam, displaying the brutality characteristic of the Circassian era.<sup>32</sup> Although Khushqadam had not immediately preceded Qāyṭbāy, he was the last sultan who had ruled for a significant length of time – sultans Yīlbāy and Timurbughā had been in power collectively for only about four months. Hence, neither would have had enough time to install their own mamluks in positions of power and consolidate their personal authority. Qāyṭbāy’s move against Khushqadam thus cohered perfectly with the Circassian practice of exterminating allies of preceding sultans, and also demonstrated that he recognized acutely where the truly hostile power blocs lay.

Secondly, Timurbughā, Qāyṭbāy’s immediate predecessor, had undertaken similar acts of ‘magnanimity’ by freeing the imprisoned amīrs of various factions, as well as the former sultans al-Mu’ayyad Aḥmad and al-Manṣūr ‘Uthmān. According to Ibn Iyās, Timurbughā had mistakenly believed that he had conciliated the Īnāliyya (the mamlūks of Sultan Īnāl) and Barsbāyhiyya (the mamlūks of Sultan Barsbāy) factions by releasing key amīrs from each side.<sup>33</sup> In fact, Stanley Lane-Poole noted that this “endeavour to conciliate all parties” backfired, and that the Mamluks soon “[lost] all patience with so incomprehensible a chief” and locked Timurbughā up instead.<sup>34</sup> Hence, far from being evidence of respect for ‘law and order’, charity and magnanimity towards previous power-holders are just one among many instruments in a new sultan’s policy tool-kit. It is also

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<sup>32</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i* vol. 3, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i* vol. 3, 196-7.

<sup>34</sup> Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt*, 342.

unclear what conception of ‘law and order’ Petry is superimposing here onto the Circassian period.

As suggested by Petry, Qāyṭbāy’s treatment of Timurbughā was merely an unexceptional way of neutralizing a minor threat posed by a political lightweight. However, Qāyṭbāy’s merciless actions against Khushqadam’s allies were typical of a newly-enthroned sultan in the Circassian period and certainly did not prove his renunciation of coup tactics. Although Petry had acknowledged these moves against the Khushqadamīya amīrs, he treated them differently from Qāyṭbāy’s “high-minded dealings” of Timurbughā, thereby placing unjustified emphasis on the latter as well as on Timurbughā’s political importance. From this, Petry winkled out the unpersuasive conclusion that Qāyṭbāy’s actions signified the “orderly transition of authority, legally sanctioned, and devoid of brutality”<sup>35</sup>. I argue instead that Qāyṭbāy’s exceptional aspects lay not in his respect for “law and order”; rather, he was exceptional in that he was better skilled at the old Mamluk game of consolidating power, and in that way Qāyṭbāy heralded a new age of political stability. He did not change the rules of the game, he was merely better at it. Nevertheless, these counterarguments against Petry’s preliminary introduction of Qāyṭbāy do not damage his overall thesis. In fact, they actually support Petry’s larger argument that Qāyṭbāy was a skilled conservator, a typical political animal of his time, but not the innovative, reforming leader that the Mamluk Empire needed.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Petry, *Twilight*, 38-41.

<sup>36</sup> Carl F. Petry, *Protectors of Praetorians?*, 224. “Al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy saw his mission fully within parameters of behavior set by his predecessors long before. Even alleged innovations he adopted under pressure of need never exceeded conceptual limits fixed earlier in the regime’s evolution. Qāyṭbāy was indeed

## **B. Prelude to 882/1477: External Threats**

The first decade of Qāyṭbāy's rule (872-882/1469-1477) severely tested the new sultan's political skills and staying power. Almost immediately upon his succession to the throne, Qāyṭbāy was confronted with a rebellion among the Zu'l-Qadr Turkmen confederate, led by Shāh Sūwār. Since the late 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century, the Mamluk frontier defence system consisted of sustaining buffer protectorates in Anatolia, garrisoning fortresses in Bilād al-Shām, and the use of diplomacy. The Shāh Sūwār rebellion represented the collapse of this system, which had been disintegrating over decades.<sup>37</sup>

Under al-Malik al-Ashraf Sha'ḥbān (r. 764-78 /1363-77), the Mamluks had subjugated much of southeastern Anatolia. With the conquest of Little Armenia in 776/1375, the area between the Taurus Mountains and the Euphrates River fell under Mamluk rule. The Taurus Mountains formed a natural boundary between the Mamluk Empire and Turkmen principalities in central Anatolia (Bilād al-Rūm), the latter of which the Ottomans would gradually bring under its control through the 9<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century, drawing nearer to the Mamluk lands (see Figure 3 below).<sup>38</sup> As the Mamluks succumbed to factional infighting at the dawn of the Circassian era (after 784/1382), their ability to directly garrison this frontier region ebbed. Hence, by the end of the 8<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century, two Turkmen

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revered by both Mamlūk colleagues and civilian clients because they found in his actions the reassurance of proven precedent.”

<sup>37</sup> Shai Har-El, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East: The Ottoman-Mamluk War 1485-91* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 35, 39, 47.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

confederations, the Zu'l-Qadr and the Ramaḍānids, were allowed to establish vassal principalities on Mamluk frontier territory with capitals in Elbistan and Adana respectively.

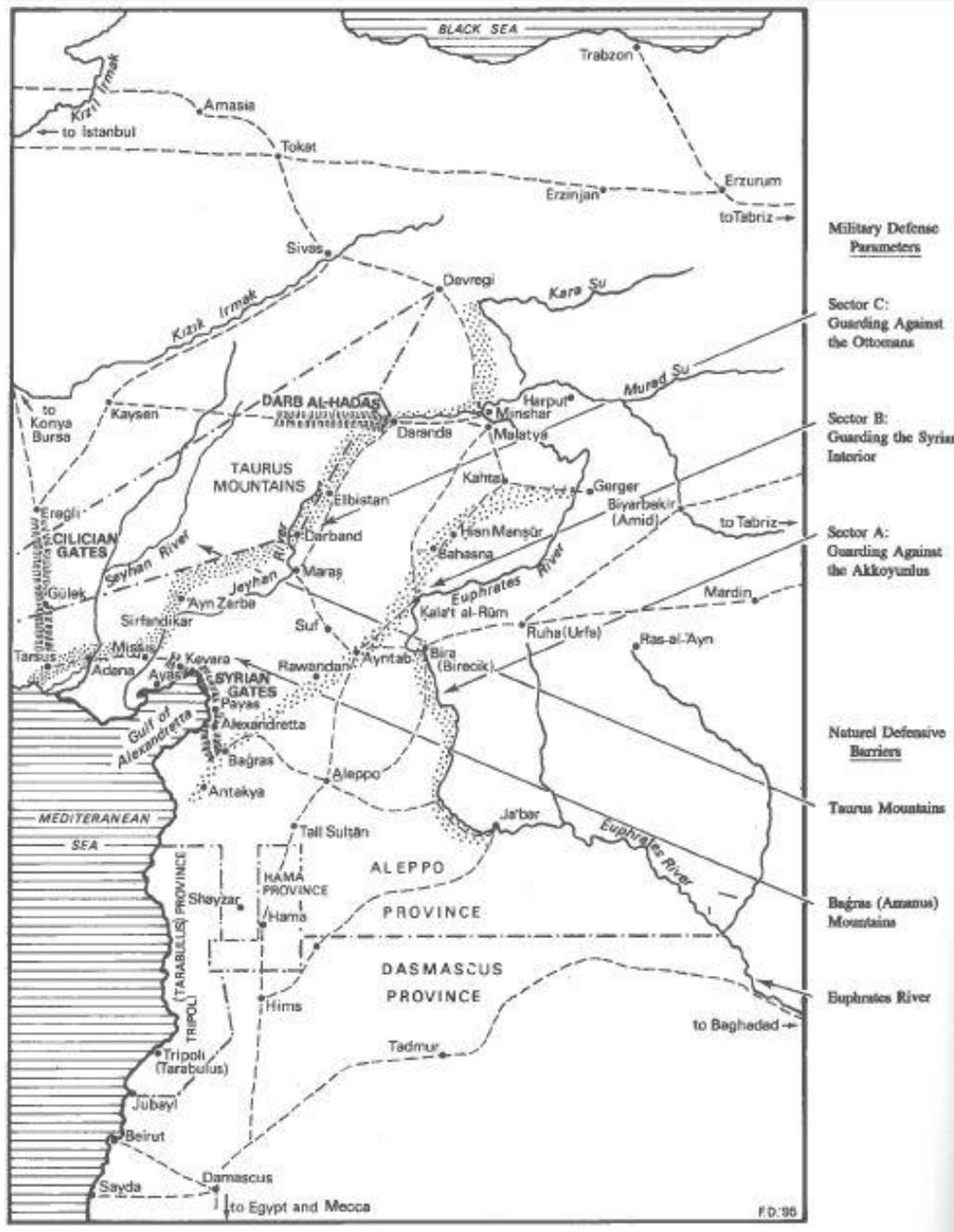


Figure 3. Map of Mamluk-Ottoman frontier in 9<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 46.

In return, these two protectorates were to partake in defensive border skirmishes on behalf of the Mamluks and provide advanced warnings of major invasions or attacks. In principle, the Mamluk army in the Syrian provinces and in Cairo would be reserved only for defending against major attacks that threatened the empire existentially.<sup>40</sup> However, these Turkmen protectorates gained increased independence as central power weakened and did not always fulfill their function as the Mamluks' first line of defence. Ibn Taghrībirdī noted wryly early in his entry for 800/1397 that the difference between the Mamluk Sultanate and the Zu'l-Qadr protectorate lay "only in the title 'sultanate' and the wearing of the cap, nothing more".<sup>41</sup>

The collapse of the Mamluk frontier policy was precipitated when the Zu'l-Qadr ruler Sayf al-Dīn Malik Arslān (r. 858-870/1454-65) was assassinated during a Friday prayer in 870/1465. The succession struggle that ensued soon took the form of a proxy confrontation between the Mamluks and the Ottomans, with the former supporting Shāh Budak and the latter recognizing Shāh Sūwār. Provocatively, the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed had declared his intention to repair the watercourses along the streets of Mecca in a letter to his Mamluk counterpart, Sultan Khushqadam (r. 865-71/1461-67).<sup>42</sup> Evidently, the Ottomans not only sought to challenge Mamluk patronage of the Zu'l-Qadrs in the southeastern pocket of Anatolia, but also the Mamluk Sultan's position as leader of the Islamic world and Servitor of the Two Holy Cities. As the Mamluks persisted in their efforts to keep Shāh Budak on the throne, Shāh Sūwār finally broke out in open rebellion,

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 39, 57-58.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 56; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm* vol.7, 15.

<sup>42</sup> Har-El, *Struggle for Domination*, 87.

claiming his first victory against the Syrian army at the same time that Sultan Khushqadam expired on 10 Rabī' I 871/10 October 1467.<sup>43</sup>

A succession crisis in Cairo swiftly followed, terminating with Qāyrbāy's accession to the throne. Once in power, Qāyrbāy was compelled to deal with this imminent, external threat and the defunct Mamluk frontier defence system. Shāh Sūwār and his rebel forces severely taxed the new sultan of the leading Muslim empire through five long years, inflicting three major humiliating defeats on the Mamluk sultan. They forced him to expend large amounts of money and men in war, and badly damaged his prestige in the Islamic world.<sup>44</sup> Ibn Iyās noted that "even the peasants ridiculed the Turks [Mamlūks]", and disparagingly remarked that "[t]he Sultanate was almost lost by the Circassians".<sup>45</sup>

Compounding Qāyrbāy's problems was the rise of the Aqqyunlus (White Sheep Turkmen) who posed a more formidable threat to both the Mamluks and Ottomans than did the Zu'l-Qadrids. Under Uzun Hasan's leadership, the Aqqyunlus defeated the Qaraqyunlus (Black Sheep Turkmen) in 872/1467, thereby expanding their empire across the Caucasus, Mesopotamia and northern Iran.<sup>46</sup> Unlike the previous Aqqyunlu leader, Uzun Hasan was independent, arrogant and ambitious – he made public his intentions to overthrow the whole Mamluk Empire, to attack the Ottoman lands and ultimately, to become the undisputed ruler of the Islamic world.<sup>47</sup> Uzun Hasan even conspired with the

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>44</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Bada'i* vol. 3, 78; Petry, *Twilight*, 72.

<sup>45</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Bada'i* vol. 3, 78; Translation from Har-El, *Struggle for Domination*, 91.

<sup>46</sup> Har-El, *Struggle for Domination*, 92.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 92, 96-98.

Franks; he planned for the Aqqyunlus to attack by land while the Venetian navy attacked by sea.<sup>48</sup> These intrigues were, however, discovered by the Ottomans, whereupon the Ottomans and Mamluks entered an alliance to defeat this common enemy, and to settle the Zu'l-Qadrid succession affair as well.

Embassies between Cairo and Istanbul were exchanged, culminating in an agreement in Şafar 875/August 1470, where the Mamluks agreed not to interfere in Karamanid affairs and to recognize Karaman as being legitimately within the Ottoman sphere of influence.<sup>49</sup> In return, the Ottomans recognized Mamluk control of Zu'l-Qadrid affairs, and accepted the Mamluk candidate, Shāh Budak, as the leader of the Zu'l-Qadrids.<sup>50</sup> The Ottomans thus withdrew their support for their erstwhile candidate, Shāh Sūwār, which facilitated the Mamluk subjugation of the rebellion and allowed them to finally capture Shāh Sūwār in 877/1473.<sup>51</sup> Shortly after, the Ottomans decisively defeated the Aqqyunlus at Bashkent in 878/1473. Uzun Hasan was finally neutralized and the Ottoman-Mamluk rapprochement lasted at least until Jumādā I 879/ September 1474, before new tensions over the Karamanids erupted again.<sup>52</sup>

The Shāh Sūwār rebellion and the Uzun Hasan threat offered important lessons for Qāyrbāy. The Ottoman triumph over Uzun Hasan, their patronage of Shāh Sūwār and

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 98; John E. Woods, *The Aqqyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999), 114.

<sup>49</sup> Har-El, *Struggle for Domination*, 91.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>51</sup> Petry, *Twilight*, 71.

<sup>52</sup> Har-El, *Struggle for Domination*, 98-99.

attempts to dominate Anatolia highlighted the Mamluk Empire's shaky hegemony on its northern front. Secondly, the difficulties in mustering troops to respond to the rebellion underscored the dire financial situation in the empire, which did not have the money readily available to pay for military expeditions. Finally, the sultan's precarious authority over his governors in Bilād al-Shām was also exposed during these crises.<sup>53</sup> While Qāyṭbāy was able to temporarily unite rival Mamluk factions in Cairo to raise an army against Shāh Sūwār, he had to contend with imperious governors like Īnāl al-Ashqar of Aleppo. In 875/1470, Īnāl al-Ashqar had audaciously bargained with Qāyṭbāy for the viceroyship of Damascus in return for fighting against Shāh Sūwār.<sup>54</sup> Although Qāyṭbāy was able to dismiss this overture, the incident must have highlighted to him the quasi-autonomous spirit of Mamluk officials in Bilād al-Shām. In sum, the Mamluk Empire's precarious position in light of a growing Ottoman power required redress through swift military and financial reform.

### **C. Prelude to 882/1477: Consolidating Domestic Rule**

After successfully quelling the Shāh Sūwār rebellion, Qāyṭbāy resumed the task of consolidating his authority domestically by liquidating remaining hostile factions, notably the Īnāliya. Despite their contributions in fighting the Zu'l-Qadrid rebels, Qāyṭbāy was merciless in removing these amīrs, quickly replacing them with his own allies and

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<sup>53</sup> Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*, 97.

<sup>54</sup> Petry, *Twilight*, 67.

kinspeople.<sup>55</sup> However, the main challenge facing Qāyṭbāy domestically was the dire financial situation and the need to pay his troops. Arguably, the financial crisis was among the outcomes of an economic decline that began with the Black Death in the middle of the eighth/fourteenth century.<sup>56</sup>

The Black Death (748-749/1347-1349) obliterated about a third of the population in Egypt and Bilād al-Shām, along with cattle and other animals.<sup>57</sup> Compounding this recurring epidemic was the invasion of Tīmūr Lang's armies in 803/1400; his armies destroyed Damascus, devastated agriculture and industry, and he uprooted local artisans and craftsmen to populate his capital in Samarkhand.<sup>58</sup> For a limited period, the advent of Barsbāy to the throne in 825/1422 inaugurated an era of relative stability and consolidation. Yet, despite Barsbāy's efforts, there occurred nine more outbreaks of the plague between 749-865/1349-1460, and this protracted demographic decline left a deep, debilitating impact on agricultural production and led to the inexorable collapse of many manufacturing industries, afflicting production in soap, sugar, paper, glassworks, fabrics, and others.<sup>59</sup> The Black Death also drastically reduced the size of the mamluk army; mortality was

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<sup>55</sup> Petry, *Twilight*, 73-74; Ayalon, "The Circassians", 144. According to Ayalon, the "rule of relatives" reached its climax under Qāyṭbāy.

<sup>56</sup> Eliyahu Ashtor, *A Social and Economic History of The Near East in The Middle Ages* (London: William Collins Sons and Co Ltd, 1976), 301-302.

<sup>57</sup> Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, 301-302; Michael W. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), 154-155, 218, 223.

<sup>58</sup> Garcin, "The Regime of the Circassian Mamluks," 291-292; Woods, *The Aqquyunlu*, 41; Ahmad Darraj, *L'Egypte sous le Regne de Barsbay* (Damascus: Institute Français de Damas, 1961), 71-72.

<sup>59</sup> Ashtor, *Social and Economic History*, 306-307; Dols, *Black Death*, 166-167, 255-280.

particularly acute among the royal mamluks.<sup>60</sup> While many non-mamluk soldiers (those who constituted *al-ḥalqa*) perished as well, the frequent deaths of mamluks also wreaked chaos on the *iqṭā'* system as *iqṭā'* ownership kept changing with each new death.<sup>61</sup>

By the end of the eighth/fourteenth century, the economic malaise, exacerbated by factional strife at the center, led to the jettisoning of the old Baḥrī order and the installment of a new Circassian sultanate by Barqūq. In order to redress the decline in agricultural revenue from *iqṭā'* lands and maintain payments to the mamluks, Barqūq created al-Dīwān al-Mufrad, a special bureau charged with the disbursement of monthly wages (*jāmakīyya*), rations for military animals (*'alīq*), and occasionally, vestments (*kiswa*) to the mamluks.<sup>62</sup> Henceforth, al-Dīwān al-Mufrad replaced the *iqṭā'* system entirely, representing a significant institutional change from the earlier Baḥrī era.<sup>63</sup> By the late ninth/fifteenth century however, various factors such as recurring epidemics, the increase in wages for each mamluk, but more importantly, mismanagement, led to the bankruptcy of al-Dīwān al-Mufrad.<sup>64</sup> The indiscriminate registration of wage recipients ballooned over the years and included non-military personnel like legal scholars, 'ulamā, civilians, those with personal

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<sup>60</sup> Dols, *Black Death*, 188.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 275; Igarashi Daisuke, "The Establishment and Development of al-Diwān al-Mufrad: Its Background and Implications," *Mamluk Studies Review*, vol. 10 no. 1 (2006): 118; Martel-Thoumain, *Les Civils*, 53.

<sup>63</sup> Dols, *Black Death*, 275; Daisuke, "al-Diwān al-Mufrad", 118.

<sup>64</sup> Daisuke, "al-Diwān al-Mufrad", 132-134.

connections to high-ranking officials, as well as the sons of mamlūks (*awlād al-nās*).<sup>65</sup> In other words, al-Dīwān al-Mufrad had been financing more than just the Mamluk military for years.

When Qāyṭbāy ascended to the throne in 872/1468, he was faced with a financial crisis, and on top of that, confronted with a rebellion that needed to be met with a military campaign for which he did not have the funds to finance. This constant struggle to muster financial resources for military exigencies would characterize Qāyṭbāy's long reign, which witnessed numerous wars with Turkmen principalities and the Ottomans.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, he displayed resourcefulness, creativity, and much-needed mercilessness in extracting as much money as he could through various means. One of the first reforms he carried out was to reorganize the entire structure of wage payment to mamluk troops. In a meeting with his amīrs and the judges, Qāyṭbāy pointed out that the aggregate monthly wage (*jāmakīyya*) of all mamluks had been pegged at 11,000 dinars under Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh (r. 815-24/ 1412-21), 18,000 dinars under Sultan Barsbāy (r. 825-842/1422-1438), 28,000 dinars under Sultan al-Zāhir Jaqmaq (r. 842-857/1438-1453), but by Qāyṭbāy's reign it had risen to 46,000 dinars.<sup>67</sup> These alarming figures enabled Qāyṭbāy to win the agreement of his subordinates to reform this grossly distorted system. He eliminated all payments to non-

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<sup>65</sup> Daisuke, "al-Diwan al-Mufrad", 134; Igarashi Daisuke, "The Financial Reforms of Sultan Qāyṭbāy," *Mamluk Studies Review*, vol. 13 no. 1 (2009): 33.

<sup>66</sup> David Ayalon, "The System of Payment in Mamluk Military Society (II)," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol.1 no.3 (1958): 279.

<sup>67</sup> Ayalon, "System of Payment II", 277-278. Ayalon appears to be citing aggregate, monthly figures instead of figures for an individual mamluk's monthly pay.

mamluks and carried out tests for the sons of mamluks (*awlād al-nās*) on their military skills.<sup>68</sup> Those who could not pass the test of handling a bow and arrow were obliged to make a payment to the sultanic fisc (*al-dhakhīra*) in order to be excused from participating in military expeditions; those who did not want to pay this penalty had to waive their rights to further payments from al-Dīwān al-Mufrad.<sup>69</sup>

Another means of extracting money was through the devaluation of copper currency, which began under Qāyṭbāy's reign and accelerated thereafter.<sup>70</sup> According to al-Ṣayrafī, in 874/1469, the government re-issued new copper coins at a higher price (36 dirhams) than that at which it was buying back old copper coins (24 dirhams).<sup>71</sup> By devaluing the new copper coin by one-third, the government was able to siphon off this difference for its own financial storage. In addition, coins from the late Mamluk period had inconsistent weight distributions, were crudely made, and often lacked the three essential data of the mint, date and ruler's name. John L. Meloy surmised that the shoddy minting of coins in this period were "a more economical way to produce a cheap currency".<sup>72</sup> The

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<sup>68</sup> Daisuke, "Financial Reforms", 33.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34.

<sup>70</sup> John L. Meloy, "Copper Money in Late Mamluk Cairo: Chaos or Control?" *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. 44 no. 3 (2001): 295; Paul Balog, "I. A Hoard of Late Mamluk Copper Coins, and II. Observations on the Metrology of the Mamluk Fals," *The Numismatic Chronicle* (ser. 7) 2 (1962): 273.

<sup>71</sup> Meloy, "Copper Money", 315.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 296-297.

economization of the minting process was most probably another means of alleviating Qāyrbāy's financial woes.

A significant financial reform that Qāyrbāy undertook was the enlargement of the sultanic fisc (*al-dhakhīra*) that, under his reign, would supplant the state coffers as the main financial source sustaining the Mamluk government.<sup>73</sup> The sultanic fisc (*al-dhakhīra*) was a treasury under the sultan's direct, personal control, and provided Qāyrbāy a way to circumvent the leaky, public avenues of financial extraction from the imperial domains. Taxes on agricultural land, *milk* (private property)<sup>74</sup>, *waqf* (charitable trusts)<sup>75</sup>, leased land, the spice trade, as well as confiscated properties and money paid for offices, all went into *al-dhakhīra*.<sup>76</sup> The practice of venality, or sale of offices, also flourished under Qāyrbāy. Bernadette Martel-Thoumian noted that during his reign (872-901/1468-95), 13 military

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<sup>73</sup> Daisuke, "Financial Reforms," 40, 50.

<sup>74</sup> "Milk," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2014. Accessed on 3 March 2014. <[http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/milk-COM\\_0740](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/milk-COM_0740)>

<sup>75</sup> "Wakf," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Brill Online, 2014. Accessed on 3 March 2014. <[http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/wakf-COM\\_1333](http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/wakf-COM_1333)>

<sup>76</sup> Daisuke, "Financial Reforms," 40; Bernadette Martel-Thoumian recorded that "[a]rbitrary exactions from notables, merchants, or non-Muslims communities, as well as new levies on various branches of commerce and the property of mortmain, allowed Qāyrbāy to replenish his often empty treasury." Bernadette Martel-Thoumian, "The Sale of Office and Its Economic Consequences during the Rule of the Last Circassians (872-922/1468-1516)," *Mamluk Studies Review*, 10 no. 2 (2005): 64.

offices, 39 religious offices and 16 administrative offices were sold for money, more than any other sultan in the last half century of the Mamluk sultanate.<sup>77</sup>

While some historians view venality as a source of corruption that weakened the Mamluk bureaucracy, others, like Doris Behrens-Abouseif argue that this facilitated social mobility, as men of humble origins began to occupy important bureaucratic positions.<sup>78</sup> Under Qāyṭbāy's reign for example, an Anatolian merchant, Muṣṭafā Ibn Maḥmūd Ibn Rustam, was appointed to restore the Azhar Mosque, and a common baker, Qāsim Shughayta, managed to rise to the position of vizier.<sup>79</sup> For Behrens-Abouseif, such social mobility may be seen positively despite the distastefulness of venality. Casting aside moral judgment, from a pragmatic perspective at least, the sale of offices provided Qāyṭbāy with much needed finances to run government.

However, in the immediate period preceding Qāyṭbāy's journey in Jumādā II 882, Bilād al-Shām was plagued by social unrest and uprisings, at least some of which seem to have been provoked by his financial measures. In Rabī' I 882, the people of Hama had reportedly overthrown their deputy, chased him out of the city, killed their *dawādār*, and set the town on fire due to the unjust rule of these officials - the sultan was in the middle of

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>78</sup> Richard T. Mortel, "The Decline of Mamlūk Civil Bureaucracy in the Fifteenth Century: the Career of Abū l-Khayr al-Naḥḥās," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 6/2 (1995): 174; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Craftsmen, Upstarts and Sufis in the late Mamluk Period," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 74, no. 3 (2011): 375-376;

<sup>79</sup> Behrens-Abouseif, "Craftsmen, Upstarts and Sufis in the late Mamluk period," 382-383.

his travels to Alexandria at the time.<sup>80</sup> A year before that, in Şafar 881, the people of Damascus had revolted and attacked Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nābulusī, the sultan's financial agent, at the Ummayyad Mosque.<sup>81</sup> He was captured and imprisoned in Rabī' I 882, in the same month as the Hama uprising, and died the next month in Rabī' II 882.<sup>82</sup> About a month or so later, Qāyrbāy set off on his journey to Bilād al-Shām.

In conclusion, this chapter has furnished the historical conditions prefacing Qāyrbāy's roughly four-month journey to Bilād al-Shām, locating possible motivations for this journey in the need for military preparation and inspection of defences, as well as the need to supervise the social conditions of the region, especially in the wake of revolts and uprisings linked to the sultan's financial measures. It contextualizes the sultan's publicly announced intentions that he wanted to discover the affairs of the region for himself.<sup>83</sup> Secondly, it is becoming more apparent that there existed a trade-off between financial well-being of the state, the military on one hand, and social order on the other, a theme that will be closely looked at in Chapter IV.

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<sup>80</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Bada'i* vol. 3, 132.

<sup>81</sup> Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith* vol.1, 213.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 215; In Şafar 882, Qāyrbāy had ordered an investigation into Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm, the father of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nābulusī, and the previous financial agent in Damascus. Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith* vol.1, 129.

<sup>83</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Bada'i* vol. 3, 135.

### CHAPTER III

## SULTAN QĀYTBĀY AS TRAVELLER: OF PERIPATETIC COURTS, IMPERIAL TOURING AND WANDERING CALIPHS

In the relative peace that followed the Mamluk triumph over Shāh Sūwār and the Zu'l-Qadrid rebels, Qāytbāy began travelling more regularly outside the confines of his citadel, taking at least one trip a month from 875 to the late 880s (1470s).<sup>84</sup> The numerous journeys he undertook were often secretly planned with secret departures, and only his public return to Cairo was celebrated.<sup>85</sup> Notably, Qāytbāy was the only Circassian-era sultan to make the *hajj* to Mecca and Medina in 884/1480, in addition to a small pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 880/1475. While undertaking these pilgrimages, Qāytbāy also involved himself personally in the architectural design of buildings that he had endowed in Jerusalem and Medina.<sup>86</sup> As al-Maqrīzī noted, few sultans left the capital, even to go on pilgrimage, due to the political insecurity that it would entail – this underscores the exceptional stability of Qāytbāy's reign, though the secrecy surrounding the undertaking of his trips may have been concessions to security considerations.<sup>87</sup>

Qāytbāy enjoyed taking recreational sojourns, which sometimes took place at the country residences along the Nile that belonged to his *dawādār* and *atābak*; they allegedly

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<sup>84</sup> Petry, *Twilight*, 74-76.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>86</sup> Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Qāytbāy's *Madrasahs* in the Holy Cities and the Evolution of Haram Architecture," *Mamluk Studies Review*, 3 (1999): 141.

<sup>87</sup> Meloy, *Imperial Power and Maritime Trade*, 186.

vied with each other to host the sultan.<sup>88</sup> Inspection trips featured in Qāyrbāy's itinerary as well, and they allowed him to review the state of public buildings, learn about living conditions in the provinces, and renew ties with local strongmen. He often visited Bedouin tribes who lived along the fringes of the Nile valley, and invested powerful local shaykhs with "symbolic but prestigious titles".<sup>89</sup> He was also said to have "delighted in observing local customs and harvesting techniques", and enjoyed being in close proximity with the common folk.<sup>90</sup> In Shawwāl of 876/ March 1472, al-Ṣayrafī reported that Qāyrbāy was riding from Būlāq to 'Awāsīm to admire the amīr Khushqadam al-Sāqī's horses and camels when the common folk saw the sultan. The crowd, a mix of women, men and children, approached him and gathered around his horse. They shouted welcoming phrases to him and made a veritable din, but nobody was allowed to hit them or keep them away from the sultan.<sup>91</sup> Al-Ṣayrafī was extremely impressed by the sultan's courage to undertake such outings, and that the sultan appeared to relish personal interaction with the common people.<sup>92</sup> In fact, Petry described such tours as allowing the sultan to "[project] his presence vividly before the commons".<sup>93</sup>

Indeed, in a pre-modern era, monarchs who travelled around the imperial domains enhanced their charismatic rule in the regions they toured and boosted their kingly image

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Petry, *Twilight*, 77.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *Inba'*, 419-420; Petry, *Twilight*, 77.

<sup>92</sup> Petry, *Twilight*, 75 n. 134 and 77.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 74.

among the common people they visited. Apart from a means of projecting power, travelling to provincial regions also allowed the monarch to reassert his authority over local officials, his physical presence serving as a regal reminder of their duties, responsibilities, and accountability to the imperial centre. This section presents a comparative analysis of royal peregrinations – namely, the Timurid peripatetic courts, the Manchurian Emperor’s imperial tours in China, as well as the Rashidun and ‘Abbasid caliphs – and extracts relevant insights for this thesis. Together, they offer an illuminating framework to understand Qāyṭbāy’s journey to Bilād al-Shām in 882/1477. In the pre-modern world, how was imperial power exercised and reinforced over large swathes of population? How does the mobility of the ruler overcome, or respond to, challenges imposed by distance and terrain? This section also explores how other scholars have analyzed and answered similar questions.

### **A. The Timurid and Mughal Peripatetic Courts**

The Timurid court, as well as its Mughal Indian and Safavid Persian descendants, boasts a fascinating, peripatetic court tradition that traces its lineage to the Central Asian steppe. Although Timur had established his capital in Samarkhand, he and his army “combined their nomadic heritage with the advantages of sedentary life” – whenever Timur and his retinue went to any city in his empire, including the capital Samarkhand, they

camped regally outside the city walls.<sup>94</sup> According to the Spanish ambassador Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, who visited Timur's royal camp in Samarkhand in 1404, these royal camps were extremely large, resembling a castle or city made of colourful silken cloths:

When they pitched the tents, they used wheels ... which were turned by men, and they have ropes fixed in various directions, to assist them. ... This pavilion was so large and high that, from a distance, it looked like a castle, and it was a very wonderful thing to see, and possessed more beauty than it is possible to describe. ... Round this pavilion, there was a wall, like that of any castle or city, made of silken cloths of many colours, ornamented in various ways, with turrets, and it had cords, inside and out, to draw it straight, and inside there were poles, which supported it.... Near this wall there was another, with many tents and awnings within it.<sup>95</sup>

In some enclosures, Clavijo noted that there were up to fourteen or fifteen thousand tents, "so that whichever way a man turned, he saw plenty of beautiful tents and silken walls."<sup>96</sup>

Even more astounding to the Spaniard was the fact that these immense camps would change locations almost every week.<sup>97</sup>

As inheritors of the Timurid legacy, the Persian Safavid rulers similarly maintained royal camps outside the capital, the location of which was also susceptible to change. Monika Gronke noted that the migrations of the Safavid capital first from Tabriz to Qazvin, and then from Qazvin to Isfahan were hardly remarked by Safavid chroniclers in the

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<sup>94</sup> Monika Gronke, "The Persian Court between Palace and Tent: From Timur to 'Abbas I." In *Timurid Art and Culture: Iran and Central Asia in the Fifteenth Century*, edited by Lisa Golombek and Maria Subtelny (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 19.

<sup>95</sup> Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, *Narrative of the Embassy of Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo to the Court of Timur*, trans. C.R. Markham (London: Hakluyt Society, 1859), 143-144.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 162.

<sup>97</sup> Gronke, "The Persian Court", 19.

tenth/sixteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries. She argued that “[this] obvious lack of interest...in the subject of shifting a capital from one city to another still reflects traces of the old nomadic tradition that the ruler ideally and customarily has no fixed residence.”<sup>98</sup> In other words, the default assumption was of a mobile monarch not anchored in any geographical location, but who roamed and ruled over his vast imperial domain, unfettered and uninhibited.

In the case of Mughal India, whose founder Babur claimed descent from both Timur and Genghis Khan, one observes a similar migration of capital, as well as the tradition of a moving court. Babur and Humayun, the first two Mughal Emperors, lived as “mobile warring chieftains” without fixed capitals as constant warfare necessitated their nomadic mobility.<sup>99</sup> In contrast, the later reigns of Akbar and Jahangir were comparatively more settled.<sup>100</sup> Yet, “settled” is a relative concept, for the capital that Akbar established at Fatehpur Sikri (Agra) moved fourteen years later to Lahore, then back to Agra, and ultimately to Shahjahanabad (Delhi) in the seventeenth century, where it remained until the end of the Mughal dynasty.

Through this later period, not just its capital, but the Mughal court too, continued to retain its mobility, though for different reasons: whereas in earlier periods, Babur and Humayun were forced to remain mobile due to the exigencies of war, in later periods the

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>99</sup> Lisa Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity in the Mughal Empire: Memory and Dynastic Politics in Early Modern South and Central Asia* (London: I B Tauris, 2012), 72.

<sup>100</sup> Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 137.

peripatetic court contributed to the projection of imperial power in unstable regions.<sup>101</sup>

According to Lisa Balabanlilar, the maintenance of a peripatetic royal court by the Mughals was a “classic Turco-Mongol strategy for political control and centralization, [as well as] a reminder and a threat of imperial power and dynastic control”.<sup>102</sup> The awe impressed upon onlookers to the procession of a travelling court is amply articulated by François Bernier, a European traveler in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. He witnessed the progress of the Mughal court from Delhi to Lahore and described it as “slow and solemn marching”, or, “à la Mogole”.<sup>103</sup>

According to Bernier, the journey from Delhi to Lahore was about fifteen days, with two alternate “bodies of tents” travelling one in advance of the other, in order that the sultan was always met with a fully prepared camp at the end of the day’s march.<sup>104</sup>

Elephants, camels, horses, and mules were employed in the procession to transport camping equipment, paraphernalia as well as humans. The traveler raved at the “grandeur of appearance, equipage, and retinue” of various begums (princesses), and remarked at the “very impressive...state and royalty in the march of these sixty or more elephants; in their solemn and, as it were, measured steps; in the splendour of the Mikdembers [a “small house or square wooden tower, gilt and painted”, often perched on an elephant], and the innumerable followers in attendance”.<sup>105</sup> When making a stop, the royal tents were pitched and “sumptuously adorned”, and the sultan gave audience “under a spacious canopy of

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<sup>101</sup> Balabanlilar, *Imperial Identity*, 74.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> François Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire: 1656-1668* (Delhi: S. Chand, 1968), 358.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 359.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 370-373.

velvet or flowered silk”.<sup>106</sup> This eye-witness account substantiates Balabanlilar’s argument that the peripatetic Mughal court projected imperial power to onlookers in the provinces it traversed, impressing upon them the luxury of the court and monumental stature of the ruler. In this way, the peripatetic court may be seen as a pre-modern political spectacle that operates as a reminder of imperial power and authority.

## **B. Imperial Touring**

Unlike the Timurid Empire and its descendants, China during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) had its permanent capital in Beijing, where the Manchu emperor resided. Despite their nomadic roots in the Manchurian steppe, the Manchu rulers of Qing China did not live in royal camps outside the capital, as Timur and his inheritors did. Neither did the capital migrate throughout the Qing dynasty. Nevertheless, the undertaking of grand, imperial tours involving tens of thousands of men on horseback, Mongolian yurts and camp equipment, was employed as a means of projecting Manchu power, and difference, over the Han Chinese populace.

In his book on Qing imperial touring, Michael Chang analyzed six southern tours (*nanxun*) between 1751 and 1784 undertaken by Emperor Qianlong (r. 1736-95). Such imperial tours of inspection had precedents in “ancient hunting practices” during early periods of “decentralized sociopolitical orders” in China, going as far back as 1600 BCE.<sup>107</sup> In more recent history, Qianlong’s grandfather, Kangxi (r. 1661-1722) had undertaken

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 362.

<sup>107</sup> Michael Chang, *A Court on Horseback: Imperial Touring and the Construction of Qing Rule, 1680-1785* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center/ Harvard University Press, 2007), 38.

approximately 128 imperial tours, a figure eventually superceded by Qianlong, who undertook over 150 tours.<sup>108</sup>

For Qianlong, the southern tours addressed two interlinked goals in the reassertion and reinforcement of Qing rule: the first was administrative, the second was ideological. On the administrative front, Qianlong is said to have accomplished the following on his tours:

[He] inspected the hydraulic infrastructure, made obeisances to local deities, evaluated local officials, held audiences with local notables, bestowed various forms of imperial favor and recognition upon individuals, recruited scholarly and literary talents, conducted military reviews, and visited scenic and historic sites.<sup>109</sup>

In addition, Qianlong cultivated wealthy Han merchants as potential sources of finance; they would prove critical during the economic crises of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>110</sup>

On the ideological front, Qianlong intended, through his tours, to reinforce Qing rule in Jiangnan, a region that was the “undisputed center of Han literati scholarship and refinement”, as well as “a bastion of Ming loyalism and anti-Manchu sentiment”.<sup>111</sup> The tensions undergirding Manchu-Han ethnic relations, as well as the dialectical shaping of communal identities, has been the subject of extensive academic study and debate.<sup>112</sup> Two

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 220.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>112</sup> Peter C. Perdue describes two views of the debate as follows, “For Crossley, Manchu identity is essentially not ethnic, but political, a creation of the state. She examines Qing authority from the top down; Elliott looks at it from the “bottom” up, in Manchu terms. Elliott is deeply versed in Manchur archival texts; Crossley concentrates on the imperial texts that legitimated Qing rule. Crossley almost embraces a solipsistic

motifs were most frequently deployed during Qianlong's tours to underscore the martial heritage of the Manchu ruling class to the Han Chinese 'audience' in Jiangnan: the horse and the tent. According to Chang,

Qianlong presented himself as both a Confucian monarch and a Manchu ethnarch. And he did so by transforming the traditionally denigrated spectacle of ruling from horseback into a legitimate means of observing the people.<sup>113</sup>

In official court paintings, Qianlong was often depicted as entering into local urban centers on horseback, where he would be flanked by Manchu and Mongolian troops, all also on horseback.<sup>114</sup> The court on horseback was conversely a political spectacle that also reminded onlookers of a Manchu nomadic and martial heritage that culminated in its triumph over the Ming dynasty.<sup>115</sup>

The construction of large, temporary encampments reinforced similar martial notions of the Manchus in the minds of the Han populace.<sup>116</sup> Despite the increased

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imperial gaze; Elliott immerses the rulers in a diffuse Manchu culture. Crossley highlights the ambiguous role of the Chinese bannermen; Elliott nearly ignores them. Looking up and looking down reveal incompatible aspects of Qing authority. Who creates ethnic difference? The debate will continue.” Peter C. Perdue, “Review of *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* by Mark C. Elliott”, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol 33 No.2 (2002), 343-344. See also Mark C. Elliot, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Pamela Kyle-Crossley, *A Translucent Mirror: History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>113</sup> Chang, *A Court on Horseback*, 364.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 180, 183.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

construction of permanent, imperial lodges, built expressly for imperial tours during Qianlong's time, he persisted in the use of field camps and Mongolian yurts, even in urban areas.<sup>117</sup> As in the case of Mughal India, earlier described, the Manchus transported equipment in a "leap-frogging" manner so as to ensure the Emperor would be met with a fully assembled imperial encampment at the end of each day's travels.<sup>118</sup> The design of imperial encampments harked back to the logic of steppe warfare and security, with two concentric circles comprising the outer encampment, and a rectangular inner encampment.<sup>119</sup> (See Figure 4 below.) Exits and entrances were located at the four cardinal points with guards assigned to each, as well as along the perimeter. In addition, guardsmen units patrolled the camp at every moment of the day.<sup>120</sup> Chang noted that such mammoth encampments represented the quintessence of Qing power, and that Han Chinese elites in Jiangnan would have been cognizant of its martial, Manchu symbolism.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 134-137.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 133.

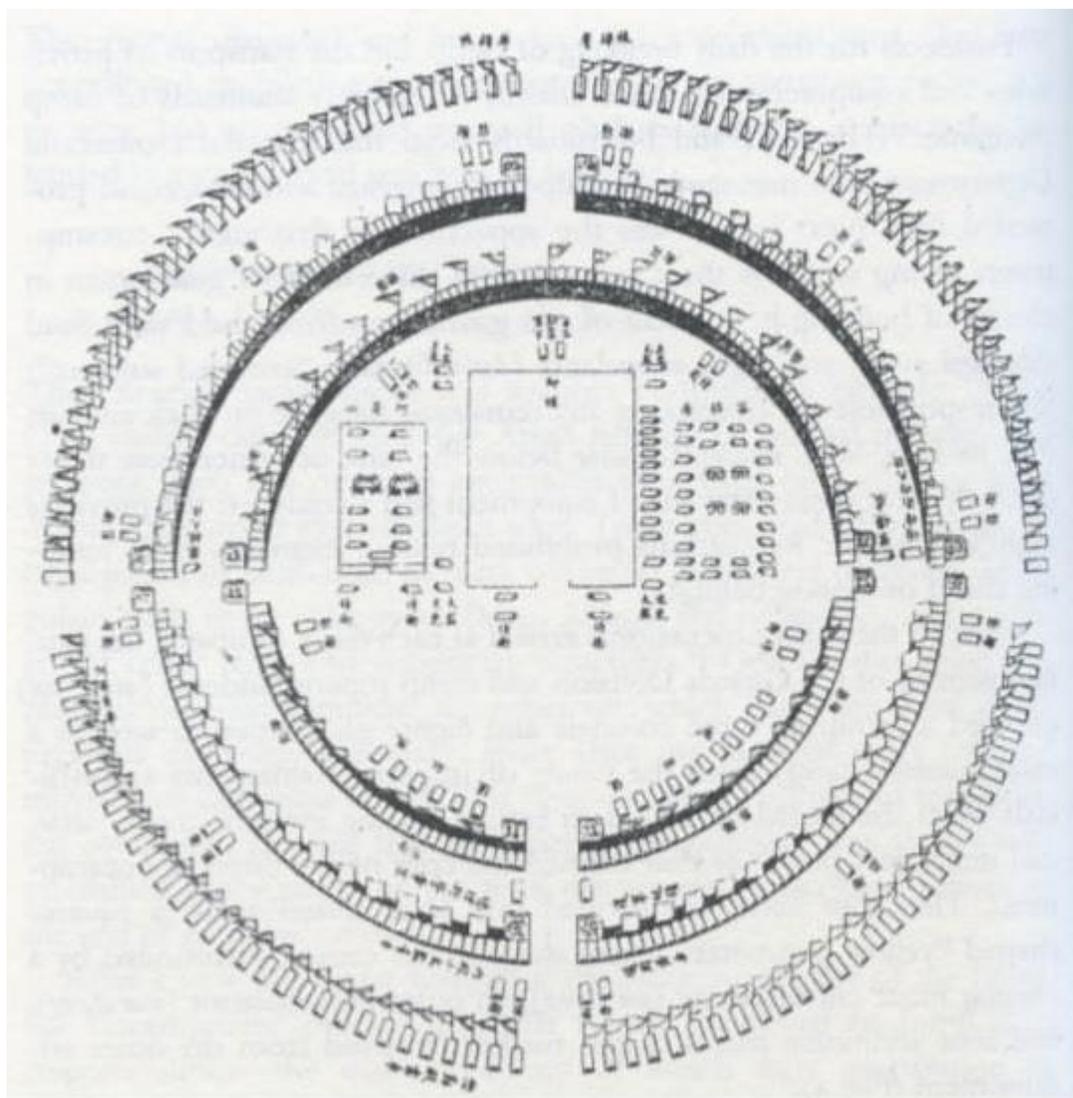


Figure 4. Manchurian Imperial Encampment<sup>122</sup>

He concluded,

The southern tours entailed the reconstitution of the Qing court in the more mobile forms of a court on horseback and a court in camp. They were also reminiscent of a martial tradition of seasonal sojourning and of military exercises...[and] served as a subtle reminder to all that Jiangnan was simply one part of an expansive multiethnic

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 130.

empire to be reconnoitered, surveyed, mapped, and garrisoned.<sup>123</sup>

Hence, Qianlong's southern tours not only sought to intimidate, but also to impress the Han Chinese. Both fear and admiration ensured a docile populace that would not challenge Manchu authority.

Michael Chang's analysis of Qianlong's southern tours adds two useful dimensions to this study: firstly, imperial tours could still function as a means for projecting power even if the monarch resided in, and possessed, a permanent capital. Secondly, Qianlong's southern tours were undertaken in an imperial 'periphery', inhabited by a population that did not readily identify with the ruling regime in terms of language or political history. Bilād al-Shām was also a 'periphery' but in a different context; this will be expounded upon in the conclusion of this section.

### **C. Wandering Caliphs**

Within the Islamo-Arabic historical tradition, there, too, exists the literary notion of sojourning caliphs from the second/eighth century. Given the idiosyncracies of early Muslim historiography, scholars have debated at length on the utility of early Arab-Islamic sources to the study of early Islamic history, at least in its disciplined form of our day.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>124</sup> Albrecht Noth and Lawrence Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition: A Source-Critical Study*, trans. Michael Bonner (Princeton, New Jersey: The Darwin Press, Inc, 1994), 24. Noth and Conrad cite the following scholarly works as partaking in this debate: John Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: the Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977)

Rather than treating these sources as historical fact, from which one can extract brute social, economic or political details, scholars like Albrecht Noth and Lawrence Conrad have proposed a critical, literary approach to them in an important study.<sup>125</sup> Noth and Conrad do not attempt to determine the veracity of early Arab-Islamic sources; rather, they seek “to establish reliable criteria according to which individual traditions or groups of traditions can be assessed.”<sup>126</sup> In their book, they identified salient themes, literary forms, *topoi* and *schemata* that guide the student’s engagement of early Arab-Islamic texts. As Chase Robinson noted, Noth’s and Conrad’s work normalized the notion in the field that “literary representations of the past that purport to be ‘truthful’ (history writing) share affinities with literary representations of the past (e.g. novels) that do not”.<sup>127</sup>

In this vein, following Tayeb El-Hibri, I approach al-Ṭabarī’s chronicle as “commentary on a certain political, religious, social, or cultural issue that may have derived from a real and controversial historical episode.”<sup>128</sup> The passage of interest in al-Ṭabarī’s chronicle for my thesis here is under the year 23/655, and is classified under Noth’s and

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and Suliman Bashear, *Muqaddima fī l-ta’rīkh al-ākhar: nahhwa qirā’a jadīda li al-riwāya al-islāmīya* (Jerusalem: private printing, 1984).

<sup>125</sup> Noth and Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, 19.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-25.

<sup>127</sup> Chase, F. Robinson, “The Study of Islamic Historiography: A Progress Report,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, Vol. 7. No. 2 (1997): 227.

<sup>128</sup> Tayeb El-Hibri, *Reinterpreting Islamic Historiography: Harun al-Rashid and the Narrative of the ‘Abbasid Caliphate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 13.

Conrad's primary theme of *Sīrat al-khulafā'* (Biographies of the Caliphs).<sup>129</sup> The passage concerns the Rāshidūn Caliph 'Umar's night visits, where he wanders anonymously among the common people and interacts with them. The literary trope of the wandering caliph possibly functioned as an archetype for a humble, benign and enlightened ruler who was not estranged from his people, and its use for particular caliphs could have operated as a mode of affirmation of their character and rule.

En route to Ḥarrat Wāqim one night, 'Umar and the narrator of this event, Aslam, came upon people camping outdoors around a fire.<sup>130</sup> Concerned that these travellers would feel cold in the night, 'Umar and his companion called out to them and asked for permission to approach the group. A disgruntled woman responded curtly, not realizing that it was the Caliph who was speaking to her, and told them to "Bring us some good or leave [us] alone."<sup>131</sup> She and her children were hungry and cold, and were not prepared to entertain any strangers as they could hardly feed themselves. Upon apprehending the situation, 'Umar and his companion promptly proceeded to obtain a sack of flour, which 'Umar insisted on carrying himself. They returned to the woman and her children, whereupon the Caliph, using a boiling pot of water, began to make bread out of the flour that he had just procured.

Al-Ṭabarī wrote:

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<sup>129</sup> Noth and Conrad, *The Early Arabic Historical Tradition*, 37.

<sup>130</sup> G. Rex Smith trans., *The History of al-Ṭabarī (Ta'riḫ al-rusul wa'l-mulūk): Volume XIV: The Conquest of Iran (641-643/21-23)* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 110-111.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

[‘Umar] ... began to blow beneath the pot – now because he had a large beard, I could see the smoke through it – until it was cooked and [the contents of] the pot were fit to eat. He put (the pot) down [off the fire] and said, “Get something for me.” So she brought a large bowl and he emptied (the contents of the pot) into it. He then said, “Feed them, while I flatten [the bread in the bowl] for you.” And he continued to do this until they were satisfied. Then he left what remained of this [food] with her. He got up and I with him. “God give you a good reward,” she said, “you have done better in this matter than the Commander of the Faithful!” He replied, “Speak well [of him], for when you come to the Commander of the Faithful, you will find me there, God willing.” .... He then got up, praising God, then he turned to me and said, “Aslam, hunger kept them awake and made them cry. I did not want to leave until I could see them [fall quiet and go to sleep].<sup>132</sup>

This narrative affirms ‘Umar’s rule as a benign Caliph who is able to humble himself to be a servant of his people. The touching scene of the Caliph boiling water and making bread with his own hands for the common folk shows him to be compassionate and concerned for the welfare of those he ruled over. Towards the end of the anecdote, when the grateful woman praises the kind stranger, proclaiming that he had “done better than the Commander of the Faithful [the Caliph, in other words]”, ‘Umar reveals his true identity to her. This revelation shows the reader (or audience, if orally transmitted) that the woman’s expectations of a ruler were fulfilled, that ‘Umar is no less than the ideal leader in the eyes of his people. The Caliph ‘Umar, shrouded in modest anonymity, is established here as a worthy Commander of the Faithful, a paragon of leaders.

While there exist other genres of travelling caliphs in early Arabic chronicles, notably Harun al-Rashid’s multiple pilgrimages and holy wars, this case holds particular resonance because the theme of mingling with the common people, of being in close

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid., 111.

proximity, is shared with some of the literature on Qāyṭbāy. As mentioned previously, in Shawwāl of 876/ March 1472, al-Ṣayrafī had reported that while riding from Bulāq to Awasīm, Qāyṭbāy mingled with an onlooking crowd of common people, maintaining equanimity. The chronicler was impressed by the sultan's courage in being in such close proximity with them.<sup>133</sup> In addition, among the case studies surveyed in this section, the Caliph 'Umar's night visits featured the smallest entourage. Whereas the Timurids, Mughals and the Manchurian court boasted a large retinue of troops, followers, and elaborate camping technology, Qāyṭbāy travelled with only about forty bodyguards and several officials, without comparable pomp.<sup>134</sup> In the narrative of 'Umar's night visits hence, the impressive point is not about the grandeur of the Supreme Leader bestowing his presence upon spaces, but about the accessibility of the caliph, his mobility, and his dedication to the common people.

#### **D. Conclusion**

This section has surveyed diverse instances of royal peregrinations. At a preliminary level, this survey establishes the basic fact that Qāyṭbāy's travels were not uncommon in a pre-modern period, especially considering his martial, mamluk pedigree. At an intermediate level, however, these case studies proffer different insights regarding the projection of power, in a pre-modern era, onto imperial domains outside of the capital and its immediate environs.

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<sup>133</sup> Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *Inba'*, 419-420; Petry, *Twilight*, 75- 77.

<sup>134</sup> Petry, *Twilight*, 78.

Not all these forms of royal peregrinations are comparable to Qāyrbāy's journey to Bilād al-Shām in 882/1477. One obvious difference, as mentioned shortly before, is the size of the royal entourage. Whereas Timur, the Mughals, and the Manchurians travelled in lavish, outsized, royal camps, ferried upon the backs of elephants, camels, horses, and humans, Qāyrbāy's entourage was much more modest, a fact emphasized by his scribe, Badr al-Dīn Abū al-Baqā' Ibn Jī'ān. Despite this disparity, however, Qāyrbāy's travels to cities in Bilād al-Shām did engineer theatre and spectacles of their own, notably the extravagant feasts that he hosted for local officials and visiting Turkmen princes. These may arguably have functioned in the same way as the more elaborate and regal peregrinations of the Mughals or the Manchurians. Hence, whereas the form of the royal journey may have differed, the principle underlying it was held in common – that is, in the projection of power to peripheral provinces, the travelling monarch is cast as itinerant performer, and the royal peregrination as a performance on tour.

The Manchurian emperor Qianlong's travels to Jiangnan also hold important parallels for Qāyrbāy's journey to Bilād al-Shām. Jiangnan was a region known for its Han literati, Ming loyalism and anti-Manchu sentiment. Qianlong's southern tours to the region was thus a pointed political response from the centre to a peripheral, ethnically distinct province with rebellious potential. In the case of the Mamluk Empire, Bilād al-Shām was viewed in peripheral terms as well, though in a markedly different context. As Carl Petry wrote,

Even though the Levant belonged to the Mamluk empire, it did not enjoy the same security from foreign invasion that Egypt did. Indeed, the Mamluks regarded all of Syria-Palestine, particularly Aleppo, as a heavily garrisoned buffer zone, expected to absorb the initial thrust of

invasions and allow the Mamluks time to prepare a counteroffensive from their power base in Cairo. This was the policy during both the Mongol and Timurid invasions, and Damascus itself did not escape the latter.<sup>135</sup>

The Cairene attitude towards Bilād al-Shām as a buffer zone reinforced the conception of insecurity in the region, and many local ‘ulamā’ opted to migrate to Cairo which was viewed as a safer city, the core, heartland of the Mamluk Empire.<sup>136</sup> Qāyrbāy’s journey to Bilād al-Shām thus can be seen as a journey to the periphery, but instead of impressing the locals of the legitimacy of his rule, as was Qianlong’s project in Jiangnan, Qāyrbāy was surveying the state of local defence structures, citadels, and inspecting his local governors. In other words, he was preparing for war.

Overall, this comparative study has contextualized Qāyrbāy’s journey to Bilād al-Shām with regards to his pre-modern contemporaries in other parts of Asia, and analyzed the devices and dynamics of imperial control over peripheral regions. The next section scrutinizes contemporary chroniclers’ records of this journey, and attempts to reconstruct it, its reception, and its goals.

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<sup>135</sup> Petry, *Civilian*, 53.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 54.

## CHAPTER IV

### JOURNEY TO BILĀD AL-SHĀM: JUMĀDĀ II 882 TO SHAWWĀL 882 (SEPTEMBER 1477 to JANUARY 1478)

Thus far, chapters II and III have furnished relevant context to inform a close, textual analysis of primary sources on Qāyṭbāy's unprecedented journey. Chapter II illustrated the specific conditions of Qāyṭbāy's political ascent, enthronement and first decade of rule, and Chapter III described the widely-shared phenomena of royal peregrinations across diverse empires, thereby 'normalizing' Qāyṭbāy's peripatetic disposition. The two main challenges he faced in the period leading up to 882/1477 were military and financial, and these were intertwined closely in the wake of the debilitating Shāh Sūwār rebellion and debacle. As the advance payment of salaries to soldiers had become a prerequisite for any military expedition by this time, perduring financial woes connected to the payment of troops shrouded the Mamluk defence system in uncertainty. To exacerbate matters, a military confrontation with the Ottomans was widely expected at the time – one that eventually took place in 890-96/1485-91 – but the Mamluk army inspired little confidence. Chapter III also described various measures undertaken by Qāyṭbāy to remedy the dire financial situation, and ended by describing the spate of social revolts and unrest in Bilād al-Shām. These incidents of unrest and volatility form the immediate context for Qāyṭbāy's publicly proclaimed decision to inspect his local deputies there. In a similar vein, Mamluk military concerns account for Qāyṭbāy's intention to

inspect the citadels and manage the distribution of monthly salaries (*jawāmik*) for the soldiers, as Ibn Iyās had recorded in his chronicle.<sup>137</sup>

According to available sources, Qāyṭbāy's journey began sometime between Jumādā I and Jumādā II 882. These sources yield a broad, general agreement on certain facts regarding Qāyṭbāy's journey, though they diverge greatly in details and in length. The information they offer on the commencement and end dates of the sultan's journey, as well as the number of accompanying persons, are arranged in Table 1 below for easy reference. All five chroniclers recorded that the sultan embarked on his journey sometime in the months of Jumādā I/Jumādā II 882, left Damascus in Ramaḍān 882 and reached Cairo in Shawwāl 882.<sup>138</sup> It should be noted that since the sultan left Ṣāliḥiyya for Bilād al-Shām spontaneously, it is hard to obtain an exact date for the proper start of his journey to Bilād al-Shām. If one takes the sultan's departure from Cairo for Ṣāliḥiyya as the proper commencement, then the date of departure would fall in the month of Jumādā I; if one takes the sultan's departure from Ṣāliḥiyya for Bilād al-Shām as the proper commencement, then the date of departure would fall in the month of Jumādā II. However, most other chroniclers do not specify which departure point (Cairo or Ṣāliḥiyya) they used. In Ibn al-Jī'ān's account, it is unclear if the sultan's entourage left Ṣāliḥiyya on 4 Jumādā II or after – it must be noted that the scribe was belatedly summoned from Cairo to join the sultan's entourage *after* they had already left Ṣāliḥiyya.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Bada'i* vol. 3, 135.

<sup>138</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Bada'i* vol. 3, 135; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith* vol.1, 216-218; Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī, *al-Uns al-Jalīl*, 444-445; Al-Buṣrawī, *Tārīkh al-Buṣrawī*, 84; Ibn al-Jī'ān, *al-Qawl*, 49, 88, 102-103.

<sup>139</sup> Ibn al-Jī'ān, *al-Qawl*, 50.

**Table 1**  
Comparison of Sources on Qāyṭbāy's Journey<sup>140</sup>

Chronicler	Name of Chronicle	City of Residence	Period covered by chronicle	Date Attributed to Commencement of Journey	Number of accompanying persons	Date Attributed to End of Journey
al-Buṣrawī	<i>Tārīkh al-Buṣrawī</i>	Damascus	871-904 (1466-1499)	Jumādā II 882	About 30 mamluks	10 Ramaḍān 882 (when the Sultan left Damascus for Egypt; no date or mention given when Sultan reached Egypt)
Ibn al-Ḥimṣī	<i>Ḥawādīth al-Zamān wa Wafayāt al-Shuyūkh wa al-Aqrān</i>	Damascus	851-934 (1447-1528)	Jumādā I 882	Less than 60 persons	10 Ramaḍān 882 (when the Sultan left Damascus for Egypt; no date or mention given when Sultan reached Egypt)
Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī	<i>al-Uns al-Jalīl bi Tārīkh al-Quds wa al-Khalīl</i>	Jerusalem	631-900 (1233-1495)	9 Jumādā II 882	Less than 100 persons	4 Shawwāl 882 – Sultan entered Egypt.
Ibn Iyās	<i>Badā'i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā'i' al-Duhūr</i>	Cairo	764-928 (1362-1522)	Jumādā I 882	About 40 mamluks	4 Shawwāl 882 – Sultan entered Egypt.
Ibn al-Jī'ān	<i>Al-Qawl al-Mustazraf fī Safar Mawlānā al-Ashraf</i>	Cairo (travelled with Sultan)	Jumādā I – Shawwāl 882 (duration of journey, 1477)	4-5 Jumādā II 882 (when Sultan leaves Ṣalīhiya for Bilād al-Shām)	About 25 mamluks and 10 officials	4 Shawwāl 882 – Sultan entered Egypt.

It is interesting that both Damascene chroniclers recorded the date that the Sultan left Damascus, and did not note the date when the Sultan arrived in Cairo, though such information should have been available to them. In contrast, the chronicler in Jerusalem, Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī, included the date of the Sultan's return to Cairo in his text. Also noteworthy is the fact that all five chroniclers duly recorded that the sultan fell ill during the

<sup>140</sup> Information gleaned from: Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i'* vol. 3, 134-139; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādīth* vol.1, 216-218; Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī, *al-'Uns al-Jalīl*, 444-445; Al-Buṣrawī, *Tārīkh al-Buṣrawī*, 84; Ibn al-Jī'ān, *al-Qawl*, 47-50, 76-82, 102-103.

trip, and convalesced in Damascus.<sup>141</sup> Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī seemed to have implied in his chronicle that it was in part due to this sickness that the sultan was unable to stop by Jerusalem on his way back to Cairo.<sup>142</sup>

Apart from these convergences, the sources diverged greatly in length, content and coverage of the sultan's journey. Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī's and al-Buṣrawī's entries on this topic were brief – this is more striking in the case of the latter, as the sultan had spent twenty-five days in Damascus, where al-Buṣrawī was based. Apart from a list of places that the sultan had visited - Wādī al-Taym, Biqā', Ba'albak, Ṭarābulus, the coast, Bīra, Aleppo and so on – al-Buṣrawī noted in a few brief lines that the sultan arrived in Damascus in a weakened condition, and stayed at the house of an official named Ibn Shāhīn, who was ordered to prepare the Sultan's meals and medicine.<sup>143</sup> Then, al-Buṣrawī noted, in the passive form, that one official was received in the Citadel, and two others were invested, never mentioning the Sultan directly. Finally, the Sultan left for Egypt, and these brief seven lines were all the Damascene chronicler wrote on his sojourn in Damascus. In a more extreme case, Ibn Sibāṭ, a Druze, Buḥturid amīr of the Gharb, did not comment on Qāyrbāy's journey in his chronicle at all, although he recorded the sultan's pilgrimage two years later.<sup>144</sup> These brief treatments – or, in the case of Ibn Sibāṭ, complete neglect – of

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<sup>141</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Bada'i* vol. 3, 144; Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Hawādith* vol.1, 217; Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī, *al-'Uns al-Jalīl*, 445; Al-Buṣrawī, *Tārīkh al-Buṣrawī*, 84; Ibn al-Jī'ān, *al-Qawl*, 76-82.

<sup>142</sup> Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī, *al-'Uns al-Jalīl*, 445.

<sup>143</sup> Al-Buṣrawī, *Tārīkh al-Buṣrawī*, 84.

<sup>144</sup> Naila T. Kaidbey, "Druze Lebanon Under the Last Mamluks: The Account of Ḥamzah Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Sibāṭ Entitled: *Ṣiḍq al-Akhbār*," M.A. Thesis, American University of Beirut (1981), 151.

Qāyrbāy's journey reflected the priorities of these Mamluk historians, affording us an insight into what was regarded as significant and what was not by them. These will be highlighted again in the conclusion, as part of the assessment of the journey's 'impact' on the region. Despite this thesis' focus on chronicles that waxed at length on Qāyrbāy's journey, it must be remembered that there were just as many contemporary chroniclers who did not deem this event to be noteworthy or significant.

In what follows, I elucidate this relationship between the military, financial and social spheres through a close reading of Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's account of the sultan's visit to Damascus. In his chronicle, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī focused on Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nābulusī, a local agent for the sultanic fisc who played a vital role in Qāyrbāy's financial measures. A combination of al-Nābulusī's corruption and the increased extraction of funds for the sultan exerted unbearable pressures among the common people that ultimately provoked revolts and uprisings, as well as Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's censure. The attempt to redistribute resources from the people to the military through the organs of the state was a delicate balancing act that risked either the wrathful revolt of the masses, or the lack of funds for a defence force in the event of an external invasion. Hence, financial issues undergirded, and intimately connected, the problems of social order and a viable military force, creating a trade-off between the two. The narrow lens of Qāyrbāy's four-month journey thus affords an insight into the challenges he faced as sultan in the late ninth/fifteenth century.

Following that, I present a close reading of Ibn Jī'ān's account of the sultan's journey, with particular emphasis on his sojourn in the major cities of Aleppo and Damascus as it forms an illuminating foil to Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's chronicle. Being an official scribe and a member of the sultan's entourage, Ibn Jī'ān's account seems more concerned

with descriptions of Bilād al-Shām, portrayed as a wondrous, foreign, land, and the activities of the sultan, which range from administrative, diplomatic to recreational.

#### **A. The Case of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nābulusī and its Significance within the Context of Qāyrbāy’s Financial Measures**

The popular revolt of Damascenes against Qāyrbāy’s local financial agent, Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nābulusī, resulted in his arrest, gruesome torture, suicide attempts within prison, and ultimately, death.<sup>145</sup> This scandal was described as one of the “strangest happenings” by historian ‘Abd al-Baṣīṭ al-Ḥanafī al-Malaṭī (844-920/1440-1514).<sup>146</sup> Through close reading of Ibn al-Ḥimṣī’s chronicle, I aim to elucidate the Damascene reaction to Qāyrbāy’s fiscal agent, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Nābulusī, who became closely identified with Qāyrbāy’s financial measures for the locals. I argue that the entry for the year 882 is distinguished by its narrative style compared with earlier entries, and that the narrative structure that Ibn al-Ḥimṣī created enabled him to contextualize Qāyrbāy’s arrival in Damascus as the culminating point of the Nābulusī troubles, thereby fastening a causal link between the two.

A more detailed description of the sultanic fisc, or *al-dhakhīra*, is needed here in order to fully appreciate the role that Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Nābulusī played, as well as the emplotment fashioned by Ibn al-Ḥimṣī. Whereas in the late Baḥrī period, the sultan’s private coffers had been placed under the jurisdiction of the Head of Guards of Amīrs (*ra’s*

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<sup>145</sup> ‘Abd, Al-Bāsiṭ Ibn Khalīl and ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad Kandarī, *Al-Majma‘ al-Mufannan bi al-Mu‘jam al-Mu‘awan* (Beirut: Dār Al-Bashā’ir Al-Islāmīya, 2011), 218-219.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

*al-nawba al-'umara'*), the Circassian period witnessed the re-ascendance of the sultan's position in court, and the sultanic fisc was reinstated under his direct control.<sup>147</sup> This sultanic fisc (alternately referred to as the sultanic treasury, "al-khāzindār" or "al-dhakhīra") had, by the time of the Circassian Mamluk period, become a general term for any official financial resources placed under the direct supervision and control of the sultan.<sup>148</sup> The term "al-dhakhīra" was popularized and became the conventional term of use under Qāyṭbāy's reign; it rarely appeared before that, and was first employed by contemporary chroniclers in reference to the appointment of an official named Ibn 'Urayba to the post of Inspector of the Sultanic Fisc (*nāzzir al-dhakhīra*) under Qāyṭbāy in 877/1472.<sup>149</sup>

After the financial crises of the middle of the ninth/fifteenth century, the sultanic fisc changed in function and began to include public, state revenue sources, in addition to the sultan's private property.<sup>150</sup> Sultans also began to compensate the public deficits incurred by financial institutions of the government using funds from the sultanic fisc.<sup>151</sup> Under Qāyṭbāy, *al-dhakhīra* continued to expand in its function, soon transforming into the quintessential institution for the financing of the empire. Its funds were used to grant pensions to retired amīrs, to provide monthly stipends and wheat rations for his amirs in

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<sup>147</sup> Igarashi Daisuke, "The Evolution of the Sultanic Fisc and *al-Dhakhīrah* during the Circassian Mamluk Period," *Mamluk Studies Review* 14 (2010): 94.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 97.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*

place of a defunct ‘*iqṭā*’ system, and to provide meat supplies to military, civilians and scholars during ‘Īd al-Aḍḥā.<sup>152</sup> Qāyṭbāy displayed a preference for appointing low-ranking officials whom he knew personally to manage the sultanic finances.<sup>153</sup> Members of the al-Jī‘ān family, for example, found employment in this sector until the final collapse of the Mamluk sultanate; incidentally, the official scribe for Qāyṭbāy’s journey to Bilād al-Shām, Badr al-Dīn Abū al-Baqā’ Ibn Jī‘ān, was a member of this prominent family.<sup>154</sup> The rationale behind such appointments was probably to circumvent powerful mamluks and factions in court, in order to ensure the privacy and safety of funds in *al-dhakhīra*. This became even more vital since, henceforth, *al-dhakhīra* began to play the role of the state treasury, and therefore a linchpin for the sustenance of the Mamluk regime.<sup>155</sup>

Given the crucial role of *al-dhakhīra*, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Nābulusī’s function was understandably a valuable one for the cash-strapped sultan in Cairo, whose reign was noted for its severe extortions.<sup>156</sup> His nominal position was the Agent of the Public Treasury (*wakīl bayt al-māl*) of Damascus, a post he obtained in 880/1476 from his predecessor and father, Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Nābulusī, who had held the same position since 874/1469-70. Despite the title of his post, in reality, Aḥmad al-Nābulusī was collecting money for the sultanic fisc, and not the public treasury.

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<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 105; Daisuke, “Financial Reforms”, 50-51.

<sup>153</sup> Daisuke, “Financial Reforms,” 43-44; Daisuke, “Sultanic Fisc,” 103.

<sup>154</sup> Daisuke, “Sultanic Fisc,” 95.; Martel-Thoumian, *Les Civils*, 295-319.

<sup>155</sup> Daisuke, “Sultanic Fisc,” 106.

<sup>156</sup> Ayalon, “System of Payments II”, 291.

Popular grievances against Aḥmad al-Nābulusī began almost immediately upon his tenure in 880/1476, but Ibn al-Ḥimṣī only included accounts of these in the year 882/1477, the year of Qāyṭbāy's journey. This was an anomaly for his chronicle, which is, for the most part, a chronologically arranged history. Table 2 is a statistical representation of the contents of Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's chronicle from 872-881, from the year of Qāyṭbāy's ascent to the throne to his undertaking of the journey in 882. The trends represented in this table by no means extend to the rest of Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's chronicle (which runs from 851-934); that would be beyond the scope of this thesis.

Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's chronicle in this decade consisted mostly of discrete obituaries that are not linked in content with each other. Within each obituary, a short biography of the person's life is typically given. In the year 873, however, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī had recorded many short reports of new officials who were appointed to various posts, other officials who had arrived to take up their posts, or amīrs who had been released from prison.<sup>157</sup> These entries, too, were typically not linked in content to each other, and may be attributed to a host of administrative changes introduced by the newly-installed sultan, Qāyṭbāy, who was enthroned in 872.

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid.,183-188.

**Table 2**  
Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's Chronicle:  
A Statistical Representation of Events over Ten Years (872-881)<sup>158</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Obituaries</b>	<b>Number of Other Events Recorded and Brief Description</b>
872	6	3 (Ascension of Yīlbāy, Timurbughā and Qāyṭbāy respectively to the throne in Cairo)
873	5	15 (Return of a Judge to Damascus, Arrest of Burhān al-Dīn al-Nābulusī, sultanic decrees, appointments of new officials, price inflation, release of imprisoned amīrs)
874	10	1 (Plague)
875	3	0
876	5	0
877	2	0
878	5	0
879	7	0
880	5	0
881	3	0

In contrast to the entries of these ten years, the entry for 882 is distinguished by its narrational style, the comparatively greater interconnectedness of each entry, and its atypical disruption of a hitherto chronological rhythm – indeed, it contains a disproportionately and uncommonly large number of anecdotes that had occurred in 880 and 881, all of which concern popular discontent with both al-Nābulusīs. Ibn al-Ḥimṣī had created a narrative structure beginning with a background context of the Nābulusīs' activities in Damascus and culminating in Qāyṭbāy's arrival there, thereby suggestively fashioning a causal link between the Nābulusī troubles and the sultan's journey.

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<sup>158</sup> Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith* vol.1, 189-211.

Of the three deaths recorded by him in 882, two were those of Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Nābulusī and his son, Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Nābulusī, but they were not given the usual ‘obituary’ consisting of a few lines that indicated date of death and some significant aspects of their lives. Instead, their lives were narrativized and arguably transformed into a morality play that ended in their well-deserved deaths. Ibn al-Ḥimṣī construed Qāyṭbāy’s sojourn in Damascus as intimately rooted in the Aḥmad al-Nābulusī scandal, and up until that moment, for him at least, the figure of the Sultan had been refracted through the character of al-Nābulusī.

In Ibn al-Ḥimṣī’s chronicle, the year 882 begins with the conflict between the Shafī’ī judge of Damascus, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Khayḍarī and the Nābulusīs – both Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad, as well as his father, Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm.<sup>159</sup> Although Quṭb al-Dīn al-Khayḍarī had requested to be transferred to Cairo, problems between him and the Nābulusīs had prevented the success of his transfer.<sup>160</sup> Then, as if to provide a context for this conflict, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī included the following description of Aḥmad al-Nābulusī’s unjust rule (*zulm*):

He ordered the seizure of the people’s properties through [various] pretexts... He does not respect the viceroy, judges, ulama, or anyone. If it was said to a person “al-Nābulusī demanded you [to pay money],” he would die of fear.<sup>161</sup>

Aḥmad al-Nābulusī is portrayed here as being above the law, and willfully abusing his power to seize the wealth of others, even those of respectable stature in society. Yet, as reported by other contemporary chroniclers, the reason behind Quṭb al-Dīn al-Khayḍarī’s

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., 212.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Daisuke, “Financial Reforms”, 43.

failed transfer lay in his inability to pay for his desired offices in Cairo. These transactions of venality were recorded by Ibn Iyās and ‘Abd al-Bāṣiṭ ibn Khalīl, but not by Ibn al-Ḥimṣī.<sup>162</sup> Regardless of whether this omission was deliberate or otherwise, it is certain that Ibn al-Ḥimṣī’s rabidly disapproved of Aḥmad al-Nābulusī.

Following this description is the entry for the month of Ṣafar 882/May-June 1477, when Aḥmad al-Nābulusī is arrested for his crimes by a Cairene official, and suffers the confiscation of his financial assets:

On 7 Ṣafar Jānībak al-Khāṣakkī al-Khāzandār came from Cairo to capture the Sultan’s financial agent and inspector of army Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad bin Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm bin Thābit al-Nābulusī. Al-Khāṣakkī captured him and his followers and brought him to the Citadel, froze his financial assets, [confiscated] them as well as his cash and other related possessions. [Then] he brought [al-Nābulusī] to the Ummayyad Mosque in iron [shackles]. [al-Nābulusī’s] well-known, private cell was opened, as well as the bathroom of his father’s house, and other baffling places, and [in sum] about 100, 000 dinars [was collected].

Then they beat him in the house of the famous deputy, they squeezed him, and they imprisoned him, and they tortured him.<sup>163</sup>

The unbecoming act of hiding money in the bathroom and other baffling places (“...amākin lā yuḥṭan ilayhā...”) conveys the crass and crude nature of the Nābulusīs beneath their respectable, official fronts, at least in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī’s account. Ibn al-Ḥimṣī also provided graphic descriptions of his torture – compared to the pithy obituaries that he wrote in his entries for the previous ten years, these flourishing details regarding the Nābulusīs strike the reader as extraordinary, as if Ibn al-Ḥimṣī were relishing the tale. Meanwhile, in Cairo,

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<sup>162</sup> Martel-Thoumian, “Sale of Offices,” 66; Martel-Thoumian, *Les Civils*, 89-90.

<sup>163</sup> Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawāḍith* vol.1, 213.

Ibn Iyās reported that in the same month (Şafar 882/ May-June 1477) the sultan had altered his opinion of Burhān al-Dīn al-Nābulusī, and ordered his arrest as well as the confiscation of his money and property.<sup>164</sup> Ibn al-Ḥimşī, however, made no mention about the sultan and his role in the downfall of the Nābulusīs. Instead, he inserted at this point two flashbacks from previous years (881, and 880 respectively) regarding popular uprisings against al-Nābulusīs.

Enraged by the forced sale of wheat at officially fixed prices, the people of Damascus erupted into a riot in 881 and chased Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nābulusī onto the rooftop of the mosque, whence he had to leap onto a neighbouring house in order to escape the mob – this turn of events strike the reader today as the choreography in a slapstick comedy:

And in the month of Şafar in the year before this [in 881] wheat was sold in the bakeries and so forth, and suddenly, during the day, after prayers, somebody shouted in the Ummayyad Mosque, “Hey community of Muḥammad, look at this wheat, is it permissible to force its sale?” [hal yaḥul ṭarḥuhu?] And the crowd cried out, “No it is not!” And an uproar ensued; stones were pelted, swords were brandished, arrows were shot. Much blood was spilled onto the courtyard of the Ummayyad Mosque, and during this time Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nābulusī escaped from his private cell in said mosque, from the rooftop, and he threw himself into the house of the Amīr Ibn Manjak.

Then the deputy of Damascus, Jānībak Qalaqsīs, came and with him were the amīrs and chamberlains and so forth, and the torchbearer shouted in the Ummayyad Mosque to calm the people, and told them not to buy the wheat that was sold by force, and then the people calmed down, and they left. .... That was a dreadful day the likes of which have never been heard of before.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Bada'i* vol. 3, 129.

<sup>165</sup> Ibn al-Ḥimşī, *Ḥawāḍith* vol.1, 213.

The juxtaposition of this anecdote from 881 right after the entry on Aḥmad al-Nābulusī's arrest in 882 buttresses and justifies al-Nābulusī's arrest.

Following the revolt against the forced sale of wheat, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī inserted another example of unjust rule from the year 880, but this time of Burhān al-Dīn al-Nābulusī, the father of Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad as well as the former financial agent of Damascus. A popular revolt against Burhān al-Dīn occurred when he ordered the arrest of the Malikī judge al-Sayyid Kamāl al-Dīn al-‘Abbāsī, who promptly escaped to the Ummayyad Mosque:

... On 28 Jumādā I 880 the people were stopped two times during their prayers at the Ummayyad Mosque... and the reason for that was that the father of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nābulusī, Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm bin Thābit, the former Wakīl of Damascus for the [Sultan]. When he arrived to the house where he wanted to stay, and it was the house of Ibn al-Bārizī, he ordered the arrest of the Malikī judge al-Sayyid Kamāl al-Dīn al-‘Abbāsī, and the arrest of his brother the Inspector of the Army al-Sayyid Muwaffaq al-Dīn. So al-Sayyid Kamāl al-Dīn al-‘Abbāsī escaped to the Ummayyad Mosque and took refuge there, and the people helped him by throwing stones at al-Nābulusī Burhān al-Dīn. They burned his door, and Burhān al-Dīn could not save himself (escape) except through the bathroom, and so he escaped through the small door to the Citadel, and he stayed at the Citadel... It was a dreadful day, and I witnessed [the incident], and what happened before it...<sup>166</sup>

These examples of unjust behaviour by two generations of sultanic fiscal agents, both father and son, underscore Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's outrage and antagonism towards these officials.

Looking closer at both anecdotes, the revolts described may be understood as articulating a political struggle and opposition to the Sultan, who was embodied by his local fiscal agent in Damascus. Following the study of food riots in England and France, Boaz

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<sup>166</sup> Ibid., 214.

Shoshan argued that grain riots in Cairo during the Mamluk period were mobilized by crowds, who, as historical agents, protested against the collapse of a ‘moral economy’ and the lapse of the Sultan’s guarantee on their subsistential welfare.<sup>167</sup> Similarly, Ira Lapidus noted that in Mamluk Cairo, “[e]very grain crisis... becomes a political game raging around the sultan without formal organs for articulation of the political struggle.”<sup>168</sup> Whereas Shoshan and Lapidus focused on grain riots in Cairo, I argue that the revolt against the forced sale of wheat in Damascus operated within a similar paradigm, with Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nābulusī replacing the Sultan as the target of the crowd’s antipathy, and perhaps even symbolized for them the Sultan himself, and the power of Cairo.

The paradigm of a ‘moral economy’ may also be applied to the crowd’s revolt against Burhān al-Dīn in defence of the Malikī judge al-Sayyid Kamāl al-Dīn al-‘Abbāsī, whose arrest was ordered by the former. Amalia Levanoni’s study of how chroniclers depicted al-Nashw, the Inspector of the Sultan’s Private Treasury (*naẓir al-khāṣṣ*) under Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, contains instructive parallels and contrasts to Ibn al-Ḥimṣī’s treatment of both al-Nābulusī.<sup>169</sup> Like al-Nābulusī, al-Nashw was accused of confiscating money, forcing compulsory purchases (*tarḥ*), plotting against amīrs and other crimes. Levanoni noted that contemporary historians accorded to al-Nashw a “hate ritual”, where they would “depict him as the person inciting the sultan to injustice,” then call for his

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<sup>167</sup> Boaz Shoshan, “Grain Riots and the ‘Moral Economy’: Cairo, 1350-1517.” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol 10, No 3 (1980): 460-462.

<sup>168</sup> Ira Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1967), 147.

<sup>169</sup> Amalia Levanoni, “The al-Nashw Episode: A Case Study of ‘Moral Economy’,” *Mamluk Studies Review* 9 (2005): 207-220.

removal from office and finally for his public punishment – “public festivities [would then mark] the meting out of punishment and the return of justice”.<sup>170</sup> For Levanoni, and in the tradition of Louise Tilly, E. P. Thompson, Boaz Shoshan, the crowd protests in order to motivate the government to restore order, to restore a ‘moral economy’ that the crowd feels had been infringed and harmed.<sup>171</sup> In this way, both revolts in 881 and 880 as described by Ibn al-Ḥimṣī can be seen as bottom-up responses to a violated ‘moral economy’, an infringement of the compact between ruler and ruled that was brought about by al-Nābulusī.

Unlike the case of al-Nashw however, al-Nābulusī is not depicted as the wayward official who misleads the sultan to injustice. Rather, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī portrays al-Nābulusī as closely connected to, and identified with the sultan. In other words, the sultan Qāytbāy is implicated, not innocently misguided – this becomes clearer as the narrative continues. Meanwhile, in Rabī‘ I 882, both Shihāb al-Dīn ibn al-Nābulusī, in Damascus, and his father, in Cairo, receive their punishment:

In the month of Rabī‘ I [882], Shihāb al-Dīn ibn al-Nābulusī continued with confiscations and taxation in Damascus. His father was in Cairo, and his father was captured there at the same time as Shihāb al-Dīn ibn al-Nābulusī himself was captured in Damascus. Their properties were impounded and they were beaten, and the skin of their heads was peeled off, and all their money was confiscated, and they took away their valuable objects and so forth.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>172</sup> Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith* vol.1, 215.

As Ibn Iyās' chronicle stated that his father had already been captured previously in Şafar 882, which differs from what Ibn al-Ḥimşī has reported here, it may be possible that the news took some time to reach Damascus. Significantly, Ibn al-Ḥimşī does not mention that these were under orders of the sultan, as Ibn Iyās had done.

In the following month, Rabī' II 882, both Nābulusīs died, though the common people remained skeptical of the younger Nābulusī's death – he had committed suicide in prison:

In the month of Rābi' II, he and his father and their followers continued to be in prison until Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn al-Nābulusī died on the fourteenth, and he was buried at the Small Gate...and most of the people did not believe that he was dead. They said: beware that he does not escape from his grave. He stabbed himself with a knife while he was imprisoned in the tower due to excessive fear and pain.

And his father died in Cairo in this month...<sup>173</sup>

Unlike the “hate ritual” that Levanoni observed in the chronicles regarding al-Nashw, Ibn al-Ḥimşī did not record any public festivities greeting the deaths of Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn al-Nābulusī or his father, indicating that he was not writing in the same tradition as those earlier chroniclers. Rather, Ibn al-Ḥimşī noted bleakly that the people feared that Aḥmad ibn al-Nābulusī would escape from his grave. In addition, there is a discrepancy here concerning the time of death of Burhān al-Dīn al-Nābulusī. Whereas the biographer al-Sakhāwī recorded that Burhān al-Dīn al-Nābulusī died on 12 Rabī' I 882, Ibn al-Ḥimşī recorded that both father and son died in the same month of Rabī' II 882.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw'* vol.1, 10-11.

While this could be attributed to the time lag in the transmission of news between Cairo and Damascus, it is also possible that Ibn al-Ḥimṣī arranged for both father and son to meet the same fates at the same time in order to achieve a kind of poetic justice.

Thus far, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī had taken great pains to flesh out the unjust histories of the Nābulusīs, interspersing flashbacks from 880 and 881 with events from 882. In the next entry, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's critiques, hitherto trained on the Nābulusīs, are subtly retargeted at the sultan. In the month of Jumādā I, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī reported the sultan's reaction to both Nābulusīs' deaths, in the process revealing his own views of the Sultan as the endorser and patron of the Nābulusīs:

[Jumādā I] In this month the Sultan grieved greatly over Burhān al-Dīn al-Nābulusī and his son, but he could not show his grief because most of the Egyptians hated al-Nābulusī due to his violence and unjustness and conspiracy against the people (*ta'āwunihi 'ala al-nās*)<sup>175</sup>

It is uncertain how Ibn al-Ḥimṣī received the information that the sultan had grieved for the Nābulusīs, who was still in Egypt at the time. Two contemporary sources in Cairo, by Ibn Iyās and al-Sakhāwī, duly noted the Nābulusīs' unjust behaviour, but neither mentioned the sultan's personal grief over their deaths.<sup>176</sup> Yet, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī reported that the sultan was unable to show his grief because "most of the Egyptians hated al-Nābulusī".

Bracketing the issue regarding the veracity of the Sultan's grief, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's report arguably reveals more about his own view of the Sultan as being complicit in the Nābulusīs' authority in Damascus. For Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, the Sultan had a personal attachment to the Nābulusīs, a partiality that sustained their unjust careers. Further, significant

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<sup>175</sup> Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith* vol.1, 216.

<sup>176</sup> al-Sakhāwī, *al-Ḍaw'* vol. 1, 10-11 ; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ī'* vol. 3, 129-130.

omissions in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's text, whether intentionally or otherwise, reinforce his view of the culpability of the sultan. While Ibn 'Iyās had noted that it was the Sultan who gave orders for Burhān al-Dīn al-Nābulusī to be arrested and his properties confiscated, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī never attributed any of his or his son's punishments to the Sultan, even though they were meted out under orders from Cairo and by Cairene officials. As far as Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's chronicle is concerned, the Sultan was in league with the Nābulusīs.

It is unsurprising, thus, that Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's account of the Sultan's sojourn in Damascus is centred upon the Nābulusī affair, to the exclusion of any other activity that the sultan had undertaken in the city:

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of this month [Sha‘bān] the sultan arrived in Damascus before the dawn call to prayer riding a sedan chair. He fell ill in Hama and continued feeling ill in Damascus, until he finally convalesced. He summoned the Inspector of the Army, al-Sayyid Muwaffaq al-Dīn as well as Quṭb al-Dīn al-Ḥalabī. . . .

The sultan revealed his anger at the death of Ibn al-Nābulusī, and said, “You all killed my man without my permission,” and ordered that all of them including al-Sayyid Muwaffaq al-Dīn and al-Najamī, were to be beaten, but the Chief Secretary of Cairo, Ibn Muzhir, he uncovered his head and kissed his hands until [the sultan] withdrew his order, and then he withdrew all his orders, but the orders for al-Najamī were delayed until after the Sultan continued on his travels, and then [the order was given] for [al-Najamī's] release.<sup>177</sup>

Ibn al-Ḥimṣī dramatized the Sultan's confrontation with Damascene officials behind Ibn al-Nābulusī's death, and in the process revealed the close identification of the sultan with Ibn al-Nābulusī. When the Sultan uttered, “You all killed my man without my permission,”

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<sup>177</sup> Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith* vol.1, 217.

(“...’antum qataltum rājulī bi ghayr ’idhnī...”), he is publicly staking a claim to Ibn al-Nābulusī as a personal follower.

Ibn al-Ḥimṣī’s portrayal is corroborated by al-Malaṭī to a certain extent, who noted in the biography of Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn al-Nābulusī that the Sultan had ordered his release on the very day that he committed suicide:

...and the strange thing was that at the end of the day in which he [Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn al-Nābulusī] died, an official order from the sultan arrived in Damascus calling for his release from prison and from his shackles... and this story was one of a strangest and most shocking of events...<sup>178</sup>

The true nature of personal relations between Qāyṭbāy and Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn al-Nābulusī are difficult to verify, but what is certain here is Ibn al-Ḥimṣī’s adamant affirmation of the sultan’s partial feelings towards his fiscal agent.

In addition to abetting the unjust Nābulusī, the Sultan is also negatively portrayed as being rash, impetuous and arbitrary. Shortly after the Sultan ordered a host of officials to be beaten for causing the death of Nābulusī, the Chief Secretary of Cairo, Ibn Muzhir, had to intervene to soothe the sultan by uncovering his own head and kissing the sultan’s hand. Only through such mediation did the sultan finally retract his orders – one exception was al-Najamī, who had to wait until after the sultan left Damascus for his punishment to be withdrawn. In sum, by portraying the sultan’s grief and anger at the Nābulusīs’ fate, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī is in reality critiquing the sultan; the sultan’s grief and anger are, after all, contrasted with the anger of the Damascene crowds which hounded the Nābulusīs’ on various occasions.

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<sup>178</sup> Ibn Khalīl, *Al-Majma’*, 219.

After the departure of the sultan from Damascus, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī resumes his previous style of discrete, unconnected entries for the rest of 882. What follows are reports of new appointments for the office of the Ḥanafī judge as well as the Inspector of the Army, the travels of al-Khayḍarī to Cairo, the sighting of the Crescent Moon for ʿĪd and strange events of the year. The very last report that rounds up the year 882 however, concerns the sale of the functions of the Nābulusīs, which echoes the main theme of the year for Ibn al-Ḥimṣī.

In conclusion, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's account of Qāyṭbāy's sojourn in Damascus conveys a local, commoner's experience and reception of the sultan's financial policy, as victims of an overzealous, corrupt sultanic fiscal agent. Through his exclusive focus on the Nābulusīs and the design of his narrative, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī critiqued the unjust rule and order of his day. The studied neglect of any other activity Qāyṭbāy undertook in Damascus showed that for Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, the rule of the Nābulusīs was the most significant issue for a commoner in Damascus, trumping the Ottoman military threat, or the government's financial woes. Ultimately, it is hard to determine Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's view of Qāyṭbāy's reign, because he refrains from personal views on the sultan in the rest of the chronicle, and the manuscript for the year 901 was lost, and that would have contained his obituary for the Sultan.

## B. Badr al-Dīn Abū al-Baqā' ibn al-Jī'ān's text: Geo-Strategic and Military Aspects of Qāyrbāy's Journey

Badr al-Dīn Abū al-Baqā' Ibn al-Jī'ān's account of Qāyrbāy's journey, and its version of the Sultan's sojourn in Damascus in particular, forms a sharp contrast to Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's chronicle. While the latter adopted a Damascene perspective that focused exclusively on the Nābulusīs' unjust rule, Ibn al-Jī'ān, writing as an official scribe in Qāyrbāy's entourage, produced a travel account that was more concerned with the extraordinary sights in the lands they came upon, the attention paid by the Sultan to citadels and infrastructure, as well as the feasts he organized for officials and foreign dignitaries. Considering his close proximity to the Sultan, Badr al-Dīn Abū al-Baqā' Ibn al-Jī'ān's account may also be read as enjoying official endorsement, and as approximating the Sultan's own preferred view of how his journey should be interpreted and understood by others.

As previously mentioned, Badr al-Dīn Abū al-Baqā' Ibn al-Jī'ān was a close confidante of the Sultan, and was belatedly summoned, among others, to join the Sultan on his journey to Bilād al-Shām.<sup>179</sup> He left Cairo on 5 Jumādā II 882, eventually catching up with the Sultan and his entourage ten days later at Munya, near Gaza.<sup>180</sup> His account of the Sultan's journey begins with praises of God, of Sultan Qāyrbāy, and includes the following statement of purpose for this work:

I wanted to write an account (*nubdha*) of what occurred in this great undertaking which has no precedent, and which no kings have ever been presented with, nor any of their sons,

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<sup>179</sup> Ibn al-Jī'ān, *al-Qawl*, 50.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*

and may this gift from me be as the gift of an ant to Solomon.<sup>181</sup>

Although Ibn al-Jī‘ān claimed that he had wanted to author this account, it is possible that it was commissioned, or at least, encouraged, by the Sultan.

A closer look at the concluding sections of the text may furnish more clues regarding the goals of this travelogue. Qāyṭbāy’s triumphant return to Cairo at the end of this unprecedented journey evoked, for Ibn al-Jī‘ān, the memory of Baybars, founder of the Mamluk Empire in 1260, famed for his role in the Mamluk-Mongol battles, and ostensibly, the paragon of Mamluk kingship even in the late ninth/fifteenth century.<sup>182</sup> Ibn al-Jī‘ān proceeded to expound upon Baybars’ own journey in 667/1269 to Bilād al-Shām, sketching a parallel with the present while heaping praises upon this eminent pioneer. When he arrived in Damascus, Ibn al-Jī‘ān wrote, Baybars exchanged letters with Hulegu, the Mongol leader of the Ilkhanate. The latter insulted Baybars for being a slave, questioning his right to kingship.<sup>183</sup> In response, Baybars declared aggressively that he would “pursue his conquests in Iraq, Jazīra, Rūm, al-Shām” –in other words, lands under Mongol rule at the time.<sup>184</sup> The mention of Baybars’ correspondence with the Mongols, retained in

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>182</sup> For more on Baybars, see Linda S. Northrup, “The Baḥrī Mamlūk sultanate, 1250-1390,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 1: *Islamic Egypt, 640-1517*, edited by Carl Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 250; R. Stephen Humphreys, “The Emergence of the Mamluk Army (Conclusion),” *Studia Islamica*, no. 46 (1977): 152-155, 160-161; Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260-1281* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 40-44.

<sup>183</sup> Ibn al-Jī‘ān, *al-Qawl*, 105.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

collective memory as a formidable foe from the East, becomes significant in light of Ibn al-Jī‘ān’s following comparison of Qāyṭbāy’s journey with that of Baybars’.

According to the loyal scribe, Qāyṭbāy’s journey was “grander, vaster, and nobler”<sup>185</sup> than Baybars’,

...because our Noble Lord – may He grant him Victory – travelled with a small escort, and was the object of splendor, grandeur, discipline, awe and valour, and the people obeyed him, and the amīrs of Egypt served him, and he travelled to the Euphrates river and back... and he found his subjects, the inhabitants of the land, his amīrs, his mamlūks, the army, the Bedouins, the Persians, in the greatest order and submission and obedience towards him, the grand and the minor, the noble and the common.<sup>186</sup>

Unlike Baybars, Qāyṭbāy travelled with a small entourage, which, under Ibn al-Jī‘ān’s pen, enhanced Qāyṭbāy’s courage and valor rather than diminished his majesty. Further, Ibn al-Jī‘ān’s description of an empire in perfect submission contrasts sharply with the recent history of Bilād al-Shām, which, as earlier noted, had been unsettled by uprisings and revolts.<sup>187</sup> The emphasis of Qāyṭbāy’s charismatic authority over the inhabitants of Iraq and of Anatolia (Rūm), paints an unconvincing scene of security and stability in regions only recently rocked by upstart Turkmen principalities (Aqqyunlus) and rebellions (Zu’l-Qadrīds). Such idealized descriptions may be interpreted not only as Ibn al-Jī‘ān’s wish to please Qāyṭbāy, but perhaps also as Qāyṭbāy’s foremost concerns to reassure his people (the intended audience was most probably Cairenes) about the security and stability of Bilād al-Shām.

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 106-107.

<sup>187</sup> See pages 45-46.

In this section, Ibn al-Jī‘ān also recast Qāyrbāy’s illness, which began in Hama and healed in Damascus, in a positive light, alleging that everyone in the empire, the public, the private, the men, the women, the children, the adults, all prayed for his recovery.<sup>188</sup> The scribe asserted that during the sultan’s illness, the “order” (*al-nizām*) of the Empire was not disturbed.<sup>189</sup> This, however, is blatantly contradicted by Ibn Iyās’ chronicle, who noted that rumours of a coup were rife in Cairo when news of the sultan’s sickness in Bilād al-Shām reached Egypt.<sup>190</sup> A group of mamluks had coalesced around a mamluk, Jānibak al-Faqīh, who was plotting to make himself sultan should the rumours surrounding Qāyrbāy’s death prove to be true, and who was already speaking of himself as sultan.<sup>191</sup> Although these plots came to naught, and Jānibak al-Faqīh was eventually arrested by Qāyrbāy for his seditious acts in Muḥarram 883/1478, this incident showed that Qāyrbāy’s rule was certainly not as stable or impervious to challenges as Ibn al-Jī‘ān claimed it to be.<sup>192</sup>

In the final paragraphs of his travelogue, Ibn al-Jī‘ān commented on Baybars’ fear of returning to Bilād al-Shām – despite deputizing his son to be in charge of the region, Baybars was afraid for his own safety.<sup>193</sup> This critique then segues into a commendation of Qāyrbāy once more, who is shown to have outstripped Baybars through the undertaking of this journey, and Ibn al-Jī‘ān exhorts God to prolong Qāyrbāy’s rule, and to grant him

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<sup>188</sup> Ibn al-Jī‘ān, *al-Qawl*, 107.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Bada’i* vol. 3, 136.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>193</sup> Ibn al-Jī‘ān, *al-Qawl*, 107.

victory.<sup>194</sup> The scribe's attempts to compare Qāyṭbāy with Baybars, and to show that Qāyṭbāy completely triumphed over his predecessor, are unconvincing given recent events and may be an attempt to cover up the true state of affairs. In sum, Ibn al-Jī'ān's travelogue was transparently in service of Qāyṭbāy's rule and regime, and functioned as an official, idealized version of his journey.

Nevertheless, flowery praises and elaborate commendations aside, Ibn al-Jī'ān also dutifully recorded the quotidian realities of the journey. This information furnishes invaluable context for Qāyṭbāy's activities, and Ibn al-Jī'ān's own comments about what he saw and observed enhances our knowledge of Bilād al-Shām in the late ninth/fifteenth century. For example, Ibn al-Jī'ān expressed surprise that the inhabitants of al-Bīra spoke more Arabic than Turkish, noting that all the inhabitants from Latakia to al-Bīra spoke only Turkish.<sup>195</sup> He also described his awe at witnessing the turning of the windmill in Latakia, noting that this was a marvel constructed by a man formerly imprisoned in the Frankish countries, and who returned to this land to recreate the windmills he saw there.<sup>196</sup> These interesting observations reveal the knowledge (or lack thereof) of an average Cairene official regarding Bilād al-Shām.

A salient theme running through Ibn al-Jī'ān's travelogue concerns the difficult terrain they traversed. Employing certain set phrases and adjectives, Ibn al-Jī'ān would typically remark that 'the road was very difficult' ("ṭarīquha ṣ'ab jiddan"), or 'the road was rugged, bumpy, muddy and rose and declined' ("wa 'aw'āruhu wa 'awḥāluhu wa ma fīhi

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<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., 58-59.

min ṣu‘ūd wa hubūṭ”).<sup>197</sup> In one memorable description, Ibn al-Jī‘ān described the road to Tripoli as being fraught with great obstacles, with steep, inclined slopes ascending to the sky (“...kānat ‘aqaba ‘azīma, ṣu‘ūd ’ila al-jaww...”).<sup>198</sup> Yet, perhaps the greatest testimony to the difficulty of the journey were the two deaths in the sultan’s entourage. An amīr of forty died after one day of illness in Qaṣṭal<sup>199</sup> whilst the Head of the Royal Guard (*ra’s nawba al-’amīr*) died and was buried in Aleppo<sup>200</sup>. A third, the Adjutant of the Armies (*naqīb al-juyūsh*), was not part of the Sultan’s entourage but visited him in his Royal Tent at Antakiya; he fell ill and died soon after in Aleppo.<sup>201</sup> Although the causes of these deaths were not explicitly stated, it may be reasonable to suggest that the challenging terrain and exposure to elements had a part to play in their untimely ends.

Considering these difficulties, as well as the small size of his entourage, Qāyṭbāy must have been rather healthy and fit for a man in his earlier sixties. Despite the brief illness he contracted in Hama, Qāyṭbāy was mostly active and vigorous in examining the landscape and infrastructure during his journey. Ibn al-Jī‘ān recorded that the sultan had mounted six different citadels, in person, to survey the terrain, including those at Aleppo

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid. Quoted from p 62 and 93 respectively, but see pages 52, 53, 55, 56, 59, 64, 65, 90, 93,95, 96, 98 for more examples. (Note: Pages 68-74 cover the Sultan’s stay in Aleppo, and pages 80-89 cover the Sultan’s stay in Damascus. In both cases, there was no travelling involved.)

<sup>198</sup> Ibn al-Jī‘ān, *al-Qawl*, 55-56.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., 62, 69.

and Damascus.<sup>202</sup> During the journey, Qāyṭbāy also commissioned the restoration of the Citadel of Ṣafad<sup>203</sup>, the repairs of a bridge in Yughra<sup>204</sup> and a bridge in Darkūsh,<sup>205</sup> and ordered a khan to be built at Sa‘sa‘.<sup>206</sup> Barring sustained and consistent deception on the part of Ibn al-Jī‘ān, such personal attention to infrastructural detail would reflect Qāyṭbāy’s meticulous nature and, perhaps, expectation of a serious military confrontation with the Ottomans in this region.

The journey did not only consist of arduous trekking and conscientious inspection. In the major cities of Bilād al-Shām, notably Aleppo and Damascus, Qāyṭbāy participated in public processions around the city, and hosted “lavish feasts”<sup>207</sup> as well as investiture ceremonies for local officials and dignitaries. In Aleppo, Qāyṭbāy toured the city on horseback in woollen dress.<sup>208</sup> He also hosted two grand feasts to which Turkmen vassals and princes, notably Shāh Budāk (the Zu‘l-Qadrid) and Ibn Ramaḍān, were invited. These Turkmen princes ate in the sultan’s presence, and were consequently invested with woollen cloaks (*silārī ṣūf*), a symbolic reaffirmation of their loyalty to the Mamluk Sultan.<sup>209</sup>

According to Petry, the *silārī* is awarded “during rituals intended to reaffirm ties of mutual

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 63 (Bughradd), 66 (‘Ayntab), 68 (Bira), 73 (Aleppo), 85 (Damascus), 92 (Safad).

<sup>203</sup> Ibid., 92

<sup>204</sup> Ibid., 64

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., 89

<sup>207</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 69; Henriette C. Devonshire, "Relations d'un voyage du Sultan Qāyṭbāy en Palestine et en Syrie." *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archaeologie Orientale* 20 (1922): 18, n.1.

<sup>209</sup> Ibn al-Jī‘ān, *al-Qawl*, 70-71.

dependence between the sultan and his subordinates”, thereby implying its “role in the augmentation of the sovereign’s primacy”.<sup>210</sup>

Similarly, Qāyṭbāy hosted two grand feasts in Damascus. After recovering from the illness he contracted in Hama, Qāyṭbāy invited local officials and Ottoman pilgrims en route to the Hijaz for a feast at the Citadel of Damascus.<sup>211</sup> Everyone feasted and drank to their hearts’ content, and at the end the Sultan bestowed the guests with honors and precious gifts, like satin, silk, and rabbit fur.<sup>212</sup> The following day, Qāyṭbāy held another grand feast at the hippodrome of Damascus featuring many of the same guests, and also with plenty of drink and wine.<sup>213</sup> After this feast, Qāyṭbāy mounted the Citadel of Damascus, displaying himself to the common folk. The Damascenes rejoiced in his renewed health, and there followed a grand procession on this significant day.<sup>214</sup>

Despite their extravagance, these lavish feasts performed an important function – they created a conducive arena for the Sultan to reaffirm diplomatic ties with foreign counterparts, as well as reassert sultanic authority over local officials. The presence of Shāh Budāk and Ibn Ramaḍān in the Aleppan feast, for example, was significant as these Turkemen vassals played pivotal roles in the Mamluk defence system that the Shāh Sūwār

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<sup>210</sup> Carl Petry, “Robing Ceremonials in Late Mamluk Egypt: Hallowed Traditions, Shifting Protocols,” in *Robes and Honor: The Medieval World of Investiture*, ed. Stewart Gordon (New York and Houndsmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 362.

<sup>211</sup> Ibn al-Jī‘ān, *al-Qawl*, 84.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 85.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*

rebellion had damaged, and which Qāyṭbāy was trying to repair. The presence of local officials, on the other hand, allowed the sultan to evaluate their conduct and to keep himself abreast of local goings-on through wine-lubricated conversations.

Whereas the grand feasts were exclusive to officials and foreign dignitaries, the Sultan's ascent to the Citadel of Damascus, as well as the grand processions in both Aleppo and Damascus, may be construed as public spectacles produced for popular consumption. Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's omission of lavish events in his chronicle is peculiar, since a procession involving a reigning sultan had not occurred before in Damascus during the Circassian period. In addition, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī did not write about the Ottoman delegation that was passing by Damascus at the time. By contrast, Ibn al-Jī'ān devoted long paragraphs describing the gifts Qāyṭbāy bestowed upon the Ottoman delegation, prior to the first feast. Qāyṭbāy prepared 1000 dinars, 300 head of sheep, 400 qantars of biscuits, 200 chickens, sugar, raisins, white rice and more for these Ottoman pilgrims.<sup>215</sup> A few days later, as his health continued to improve, Qāyṭbāy again prepared another barrage of gifts for the Ottoman delegation. They included 51 Alexandrian dresses, 10 golden plaques, 10 lances, 7 shields, 10 pieces of high quality muslin, 10 boxes of sweets from Hama, 2 jars of ginger jam and more.<sup>216</sup> As the Servitor of the Two Holy Cities and the leader of the Muslim world, Qāyṭbāy had to make a show of largesse and magnanimity to the pious pilgrims of a subordinate empire. The improvement in Qāyṭbāy's health after the first set of gifts could also have encouraged his generosity, as his recovery may have been construed as a sign of

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<sup>215</sup> Ibn al-Jī'ān, *al-Qawl*, 82; Devonshire, "Relations d'un voyage," 24.

<sup>216</sup> Ibn al-Jī'ān, *al-Qawl*, 83; Devonshire, "Relations d'un voyage," 25.

divine favour. The disparity in attention by Ibn al-Ḥimṣī and Ibn al-Jī‘ān towards this Ottoman delegation reflect their different vantage points – the former’s attention was trained on provincial matters, whilst the latter was cognizant of foreign affairs, due to his proximity to the imperial centre.

Apart from inspecting citadels and hosting feasts, Qāyṭbāy also handled various administrative matters ranging from the abolishment of taxes and monopolies, resolving complaints of the common folk, and personnel management. For example, he abolished taxes on the tanners in Tripoli and taxes on firewood in Damascus. In addition, he decreed the ending of the soap monopoly in Aleppo, as well as the monopoly of khans (caravanserais/guesthouses) in Damascus.<sup>217</sup> The decree issued in Tripoli remains today, carved in stone, at the entrance of a mosque in the city. It reads,

God be praised. On 23 Jumādā II of the year 882, it is proclaimed by Royal Edict of the Master, the Sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Abū-l-naṣr Qāyṭbāy, may God prolong his royal dominion, on the occasion of his visit to Tripoli, the well-protected, ordering that the tax on tanners in Tripoli be abolished.... And that not one dirham will be imposed upon these tanners any longer...<sup>218</sup>

In a similar vein, on 24 Rajab 882, Qāyṭbāy abolished the soap monopoly in Aleppo.<sup>219</sup> On 6 Ramaḍān 882, while in Damascus, Qāyṭbāy abolished the monopoly of khans, as well as the taxes on firewood.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>217</sup> Ibn al-Jī‘ān, *al-Qawl*, 56 (Tripoli), 70 (Aleppo), 87-88 (Damascus).

<sup>218</sup> Moritz Sobernheim, *Materiaux pour un Corpus inscriptionum Arabicarum / sous la direction de Max van Berchem*, v. 25. (Cairo: Institut Français d'Archaeologie Orientale, 1894-1985), 131-132.

<sup>219</sup> Ibn al-Jī‘ān, *al-Qawl*, 70.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

It is unclear what the context surrounding these measures was. I argue that these abolitions of taxes and monopolies ought to be treated skeptically. Given the financial woes plaguing the Mamluk Empire at the time, it is unlikely that Qāyrbāy would have abolished lucrative sources of taxes. Thus, these taxes or monopolistic arrangements most probably benefitted the local nobility rather than the state's coffers or the sultanic fisc. By abolishing these in person, Qāyrbāy would have won credit and goodwill in the eyes of the populace at no real cost to himself.

Another way Qāyrbāy used to endear himself to the common folk was through personal interaction with them and through resolving their complaints. In the village of Sarmīn, Qāyrbāy found himself greeted by the villagers who collectively presented a complaint against a Syrian amīr under whose jurisdiction they fell.<sup>221</sup> In response, Qāyrbāy decreed that the lands around Sarmīn would be annexed by *al-dhakhīra* (sultanic fisc), and the owner of this iqṭā' would be compensated for his loss with a small sum. There are two interesting points to note here: firstly, from a commoner's perspective, a travelling monarch represents increased accessibility to the ultimate authority of the land. Instead of having to go through multiple levels of government bureaucracy, the common folk can bring their grievances directly to the sultan. Secondly, as mentioned previously, the mechanics of financial extraction for *al-dhakhīra* were described as arbitrary, onerous, and as the example of the Nābulusīs in Damascus showed, harsh on the common folk. Was Qāyrbāy's proposed solution for the villagers of Sarmin an ideal solution? Or would these villagers come to realize that having to pay taxes directly to the sultan would be more onerous than

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<sup>221</sup> Ibid., 74.

paying taxes to a Syrian *amīr*? Unfortunately, Ibn al-Jī‘ān did not elaborate on this matter, and it is impossible to draw further conclusions from this case.

The most important administrative matter that Qāyrbāy handled through his journey concerned personnel management and reshuffles. As mentioned previously, Qāyrbāy hosted grand feasts in major cities to which many of the local officials were invited. Such general social events may have afforded him the opportunity to better understand his personnel at a particular city, but apart from that, he also took care to manage personal relations between individual officials. Significantly, Qāyrbāy engineered a reconciliation between Qānṣuh, the Governor (*nā’ib*) of Aleppo, and Jānim bin Tānībak, the Governor of the Citadel of Aleppo.<sup>222</sup> Citadels in Bilād al-Shām were administered separately from the provincial administration. They enjoyed independence, military resources, and reported directly to the sultan; the Governor of the Citadel also had to monitor his civilian counterpart for rebellious intent.<sup>223</sup> As Igarashi Daisuke surmised, “the citadels served as extensions of the sultan’s authority in Syria [Bilād al-Shām].”<sup>224</sup> Given the conflict of interest between these two centres of power, one civilian, one military, it is understandable that both governors would have shared a fraught relationship. Ibn al-Jī‘ān’s note, however, that the sultan reconciled both of them again reflects his meticulous management style and attention to details, even those concerning personal relationships of his subordinates. As Aleppo was an important garrison on the northern frontier, unity amongst Mamluk officials was essential in any eventual military confrontation.

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>223</sup> Daisuke, “Financial Reforms,” 47.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., 48.

New appointments and reshuffling of personnel were also undertaken during the course of Qāyṭbāy's journey. In Damascus, for example, Qāyṭbāy promoted the Grand Secretary of the Governor of Damascus, appointed a new Inspector of the Citadel, a new Ḥanafī judge, as well as new replacements for Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn al-Nābulusī's recently vacated posts (in addition to fiscal agent, he had also been a commander in the army).<sup>225</sup> He also ordered the release of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nābulusī's supporters, on condition that they paid a fine.<sup>226</sup> Around the same time, the Sultan received word that the Commander of the Army in Gaza had passed away; he promptly issued a decree that the deceased commander would be succeeded by his son.<sup>227</sup> These mundane, administrative tasks were dutifully recorded by Ibn al-Jī'ān, showing Qāyṭbāy to be very much in control of Mamluk personnel in Bilād al-Shām. It is also possible that these new appointments and personnel reshuffling were pecuniary avenues for a sultan who oversaw increased incidents of venality, or sale of offices. However, if this had indeed been the case, Ibn al-Jī'ān remained silent on these delicate matters.

In conclusion, Ibn al-Jī'ān's travelogue offers a wealth of information on Qāyṭbāy's roughly four-month journey. Firstly, he undertook this textual project under the auspices, and most probably, direct endorsement of the Sultan. Hence, his travelogue likely approximated how the Sultan wanted his journey to be seen by the public – for example, his fitness and health, his efficiency and competence as a leader, and as a tireless manager of imperial affairs. Indeed, Qāyṭbāy undertook a wide spectrum of matters during this trip – he

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<sup>225</sup> Ibn al-Jī'ān, *al-Qawl*, 86.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

inspected military infrastructure and ordered their repairs whenever necessary, hosted foreign dignitaries and local officials at grand feasts, renewed diplomatic ties, invested subordinates with symbolic titles and favours, abolished taxes and monopolies, adjudicated complaints by the common people, reconciled feuding local officials, made new appointments and promotions. Judging purely on the basis of Ibn al-Jī‘ān’s travelogue, the Mamluk Empire appeared to be in good hands.

Ibn al-Ḥimṣī’s account, in contrast, jars incongruously with Ibn al-Jī‘ān’s idealized portrait of the empire, revealing social dissatisfaction and resentment at the Sultan’s financial policies and choice of personnel. This does not, however, necessarily detract from the positive aspects of Qāyṭbāy’s character as sultan – the decision to embark upon this journey was certainly novel and courageous, and the historical fact remains that Qāyṭbāy was one of the longest-reigning sultans in the late Mamluk Empire. Rather, what these two sources, together with the other secondary literature considered here, show us, is that the complexity of challenges facing Qāyṭbāy at the time, structural challenges that went beyond the power of any single leader to reform. As Carl Petry and other scholars have noted, the Mamluk Empire needed a complete overhaul, especially in the financial and military arenas. Qāyṭbāy was a skilled conservator, and he innovated only within the circumscribed limits of existing institutions. Hence, for the most part, he was managing the trade-off between the Empire’s financial needs and social well-being, and Qāyṭbāy’s journey forth to Bilād al-Shām can be seen as one of the tools he utilized for such conflict management.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

In 882/1477, the Mamluk Sultan Qāyṭbāy undertook an unprecedented, four-month long journey to Bilād al-Shām, a region hitherto not visited by any reigning Circassian sultan. This thesis presented a close study of this journey in three steps: first, by examining the historical conditions enveloping Qāyṭbāy's reign, from which his agenda and motivations for the journey emerged. Second, an investigation into the pre-modern practice of travelling monarchs in Central Asia, Mughal India and Manchurian China yielded crucial, comparative knowledge that 'normalized' Qāyṭbāy's travels as a prosaic occurrence in his time, as curious as it may appear to us now. Finally, furnished with relevant context particular to both the late Mamluk Empire and pre-modern royal peregrinations, this thesis analysed first-hand accounts of Qāyṭbāy's journey by Ibn al-Ḥimṣī in Damascus, and by Ibn Jī'ān, an Egyptian scribe who travelled with Qāyṭbāy, while referencing chronicles by Ibn Iyās in Cairo and a variety of other historians and biographers.

This thesis argued that the expectation of an impending military confrontation with the Ottomans, compounded by social unrest in the region provoked by Qāyṭbāy's military-linked financial reforms, motivated this unprecedented journey. The Mamluk Empire in the late ninth/fifteenth century had just survived a debilitating five year insurrection from a minor Turkmen principality (the Shāh Sūwār rebellion), narrowly averted a second war with an expanding Turkmen empire (the Aqqyunlus), and had to prepare for a military confrontation with the rising Ottoman Empire to the north. With its defence system of buffer principalities in shambles, its military forces weakened from recent campaigns, and

its treasury broke, Qāyṭbāy had to innovate in the financial arena to secure a modicum of capital in the event of war. His various reforms, ranging from debasing the Mamluk coinage, reforming the wage system for mamluk troops, selling offices, and expanding the sultanic fisc (*al-dhākhira*), can be interpreted as desperate measures undertaken by an albeit resourceful and vigorous leader. Although his financial policies provoked revolts amongst the common people in various regions of Bilād al-Shām, the fact remains that they never seriously threatened the security of the empire – Qāyṭbāy did skillfully manage the trade-off between social well-being and financial needs of the state.

While in Bilād al-Shām, Qāyṭbāy undertook a wide spectrum of activities. Apart from traversing across challenging and arduous terrain, thereby proving his vigorous health, the sultan inspected military infrastructure and ordered their repairs whenever necessary. In major cities like Aleppo and Damascus, Qāyṭbāy hosted foreign dignitaries and local officials at grand feasts, renewed diplomatic ties, and invested subordinates with symbolic titles and favours. In addition, he reconciled feuding local officials, made new appointments and promotions. Finally, the sultan also found time to abolish taxes and monopolies, as well as personally adjudicate complaints by the common people,

The impact that Qāyṭbāy's journey had on Bilād al-Shām, however, is more nebulous and harder to ascertain from available sources. Although this thesis considered primary sources that covered his journey in some detail, there were other contemporary chronicles, however, that did not even mention it. As previously mentioned, Ibn Sibāṭ, a Druze, Buḥturid amīr of the Gharb, did not comment on Qāyṭbāy's journey at all, although

he recorded the sultan's pilgrimage two years later.<sup>228</sup> As far as the relatively isolated Druze community in the Gharb was concerned, the Sultan's affairs held little interest for them. Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī, a Jerusalem chronicler, and al-Buṣrawī, a Damascene chronicler, both recorded Qāyrbāy's journey but their comments were brief. In contrast, only Ibn al-Jī'ān waxed effusively on the journey's unprecedented nature, and Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's entry betrayed the journey's significance to him through his anomalous narrative style. In fact, it may be argued that without the sultan's personal visit, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī would not have had cause to launch into an invective against the Damascene fiscal agent, thereby revealing much social discontent with the sultan's financial policy. After all, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī remained reticent on al-Nābulusī's scandals in 880 and 881, but unleashed his fury and complaints only when the sultan journeyed forth. From this angle, it may be argued that Qāyrbāy galvanized and focused public anger in Damascus through his journey, rather than neutralizing it.

Together, the heterogeneous coverage of these six chronicles on the sultan's journey yields insights into the diverse historiographical traditions of the late Mamluk Empire. Each chronicler appeared to have autonomy over his work, and could include only what he felt was significant. The city of residence certainly had influence over the content of the chronicle, but in a nuanced way – the best instance of this lies in Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's and al-Buṣrawī's text. While both recorded the sultan's journey, the former interpreted it in light of local political events, whilst the latter brushed over the event in broad strokes. Overall, it

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<sup>228</sup> Naila T. Kaidbey, "Druze Lebanon Under the Last Mamluks: The Account of Ḥamzah Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Sibāṭ Entitled: Sidq al-Akḥbār," M.A. Thesis, American University of Beirut (1981), 151.

is difficult to ascertain the impact of Qāyrbāy's journey on Bilād al-Shām, and apart from the motivations for this enterprise that have been mentioned earlier, it may also be surmised that this act underscored his dedication to maintaining the empire at the very least. It is possible, however, that there had been poetry or paintings in which the Sultan's unprecedented visit was featured, that this thesis had failed to take into account.

This four-month journey to Bilād al-Shām offers a rare insight into Qāyrbāy's disposition as a leader, his manner of rule, as well as to the Mamluk Empire in the late ninth/fifteenth century. Future research into his other travels may yield more information of the same vein.

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