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e-mail: alexfilippov1983@gmail.com**POWER TRANSITION MECHANISM
IN THE MAMLUK STATE IN THE LATE BAHRI PERIOD:
THE VIEW OF IBN DUQMAQ**

The study aims to identify the key elements in the mechanism of power transition in Egypt during the Late Bahri Mamluk period (1341–1399).

The article is based on an analysis of the narrative of the Egyptian historian Sarim al-Din Ibn Duqmaq (d. 1407) and his work "The Precious Jewel in the Biographies of Caliphs, Kings, and Sultans." The study proceeds from the hypothesis that Ibn Duqmaq described the political processes of the preceding era not so much in terms of their historical accuracy, but rather through the lens of the normative conditions of his own time – namely, the reign of the first Burji sultan, al-Zahir Barquq (1382–1399). The analysis itself rests on the descriptions of the succession of twenty-four rulers of the Mamluk state, which constitutes a sufficiently representative sample. The comparative method is actively employed, juxtaposing the mechanisms identified in Ibn Duqmaq with those revealed through an analysis of the early Bahri chronicle "The Cream of Thought in the History of the Hijra" by Baybars al-Mansuri (d. 1325).

The work's scholarly contribution lies in identifying the elements of the power-transition mechanism during the Late Bahri period in comparison with the Early Bahri period, thereby making it possible to pinpoint significant changes in institutions of power and their legitimization over the period under study.

Ibn Duqmaq does not draw a strict division between the Bahri and Burji dynasties, treating them instead as a single "Noble Turkic State." Based on an analysis of the characteristics of twenty-four rulers, the author identifies the mechanisms of legitimation and deposition of power: the fragmentation of the emirate corps, the weakening role of blood kinship and marital ties, the shift from vertical (direct) succession to horizontal succession (within a single generation), and the declining role of the "assembly of emirs" as a tool for temporary political compromise, accompanied by the growing influence of ordinary mamluks. Special attention is paid to the personal qualities of the ruler as a factor of legitimacy and to the dominance of the principle "order is more important than righteousness," rooted in classical Muslim political thought.

The conclusion states that the model of power transition described by Ibn Duqmaq reflects the diminishing significance of traditional Turkic elements of succession (a female ruler, the institution of atabeg, the "council of senior emirs" as a modification of the kurultai), the weakening of kinship ties as a stabilizing factor, and the increasing factional fragmentation among the Mamluk elite.

Keywords: Mamluks, Egypt, Ibn Duqmaq, Qalawunids, Power Transition, Mulk, Late Bahri Period.

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e-mail: alexfilippov1983@gmail.com**Кеш бахрилік кезеңдегі Мәмлүк мемлекетіндегі
билік ауысу механизмі: Ибн Дұқмақтың көзқарасы**

Мақаланың әдіснамасы мысырлық тарихшы Сарим әд-Дин Ибн Дұқмақтың (1407 ж. қ.б.) нарративін және оның «Халифалар, мәліктер мен сұлтандардың өмірбаянындағы асыл тас» атты шығармасын талдауға негізделген. Зерттеу Ибн Дұқмақ өткен дәуірдің саяси үдерістерін олардың тарихи шынайылығы тұрғысынан ғана емес, көбінесе өзі өмір сүрген кезеңнің – алғашқы бүржілік сұлтан әз-Захир Барқұқтың (1382–1399) билігінің нормативті өлшемдері призмасы арқылы сипаттаған деген болжамға сүйенеді. Талдаудың өзі Мәмлүк мемлекетіндегі 24 билеушінің ауысуын сипаттауға құрылған, бұл айтарлықтай репрезентативті іріктеу болып табылады. Зерттеу барысында салыстырмалы әдіс белсенді қолданылды: Ибн Дұқмақ еңбегінде анықталған тетіктер Бейбарыс әл-Мансұридің (1325 ж. қ.б.) «Иджра тарихындағы ой қаймағы» атты ерте бахрилік шежіресін талдау барысында анықталған билік ауысу механизмдерімен салыстырылды.

Жұмыстың ғылыми жаңалығы кеш бахрилік кезеңдегі билік ауысу тетіктерінің элементтерін ерте бахрилік кезеңмен салыстыра отырып айқындауында; бұл қарастырылып отырған дәуірде-

гі билік институттары мен оның легитимациясындағы елеулі өзгерістерді анықтауға мүмкіндік береді.

Ибн Дұқмақ бахрилік және бүржілік әулеттердің арасын қатаң ажыратпай, оларды біртұтас «Ұлы түрік мемлекеті» («Дәуләт ат-түрк») ретінде қарастырады. Жиырма төрт билеушінің сипаттамасын талдау негізінде автор билікті легитимациялау және оны құлату механизмдерін көрсетеді: әмірлер корпусының фрагментациясы (бөлшектенуі), қандас-туыстық және некелік байланыстар рөлінің әлсіреуі, мұрагерліктің тік (әкеден балаға) бағыттан көлденең (бір буын шеңберінде) бағытқа ауысуы, сондай-ақ қатардағы мәмлүктер ықпалының артуы есебінен уақытша саяси ымыра құралы ретіндегі «әмірлер жиналысының» рөлі төмендеуі. Билеушінің жеке қасиеттеріне легитимдік факторы ретінде және классикалық мұсылмандық саяси ойдан бастау алатын «тәртіп тақуалықтан маңыздырақ» қағидасының басымдығына ерекше назар аударылады.

Қорытынды бөлімінде Ибн Дұқмақ сипаттаған билік транзиті моделі билік ауысуындағы дәстүрлі түркілік элементтер (әйел билеуші, атабек институты, құрылтайдың модификациясы ретіндегі «аға әмірлер кеңесі») мәнінің төмендеуін, қандас-туыстық байланыстардың тұрақтандырушы рөлінің кемюін және мәмлүк элитасы арасындағы фракциялық фрагментацияның күшеюін көрсетеді деген түйін жасалады.

Түйін сөздер: мәмлүктер, Мысыр, Ибн Дұқмақ, Қалауын әулеті, билік ауысуы, мүлік, кеш бахрилік кезең.

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Механизм смены власти в Государстве мамлюков в позднебахритский период: взгляд Ибн Дукмака

Методология статьи основана на анализе нарратива египетского историка Сарим ад-Дина Ибн Дукмака (ум. 1407 г.) и его сочинения «Драгоценный камень в жизнеописании халифов, мамлюков и султанов». Исследование исходит из гипотезы, что Ибн Дукмак описывал политические процессы предшествующей эпохи не столько в их исторической достоверности, сколько через призму нормальности современного ему периода – правления первого бурджитского султана аз-Захира Баркука (1382–1399). Сам анализ основывается на описании смены 24 правителей мамлюкского государства, что является достаточно репрезентативной выборкой. Активно использован компаративный метод – сравнение выявленных у Ибн Дукмака механизмов с механизмами смены власти, выявленными в ходе анализа раннебахритской хроники «Сливки мысли в истории хиджры» Бейбарса аль-Мансури (ум. 1325 г.).

Научная новизна работы заключается в выявлении элементов в механизме смены власти в позднебахритский период в сравнении с раннебахритским, что позволяет определить существенные изменения в институтах власти и ее легитимизации в рассматриваемый период.

Ибн Дукмак не проводит жесткого разделения между бахритской и бурджитской династиями, рассматривая их как единое «Благородное тюркское государство». На основе анализа характеристик двадцати четырех правителей автор выявляет механизмы легитимации и свержения власти: фрагментация эмирского корпуса, ослабление роли кровно-родственных и брачных связей, переход от нисходящей линии наследования к горизонтальной (в рамках поколения), а также снижение роли «собрания эмиров» как инструмента временного политического компромисса за счет роста влияния рядовых мамлюков. Особое внимание уделяется личным качествам правителя как фактора легитимности и доминированию принципа «порядок важнее праведности», восходящего к классической мусульманской политической мысли.

В заключении делается вывод, что описанная Ибн Дукмаком модель властного транзита отражает снижение значения традиционных тюркских элементов смены власти (женщина-правитель, институт атабека, «совет старших эмиров» как модификация курултая), снижение стабилизирующей роли кровнородственных связей и нарастание фракционной фрагментации среди мамлюкской элиты.

Ключевые слова: мамлюки, Египет, Ибн Дукмак, Калауниды, смена власти, мулык, позднебахритский период.

Introduction

The Late Bahri period (1341–1399) occupies a distinct place in the Mamluk history and historiography. On the one hand, one can tentatively speak

of a certain dynasty, as practically all rulers of this era were descendants of al-Mansur Qalawun [1279–1290] – the Sultan-Malik under whose reign, as well as that of his comrade-in-arms, al-Zahir Baybars [1260–1277], the Mamluk state reached its zenith.

On the other hand, the kaleidoscope of successive Sultans-Maliks on the throne – many of whom held power, and even then only nominally, for a mere matter of months – has arguably few parallels elsewhere.

The Late Bahri period also marked an era of relative tranquility in the Middle East. The Crusader states had been decisively defeated by the Mamluks as early as the late 13th century, and the Ilkhanate, once the Mamluks' most formidable adversary, had entered a period of terminal crisis. Meanwhile, the Turkic principalities of Asia Minor – one of which, the future Ottoman Empire, would ultimately bring an end to independent Mamluk rule – had not yet risen to prominence. However, this regional lull was counterbalanced by a volatile internal political struggle within the Mamluk state.

Sarim al-Din Ibrahim b. Muhammad b. Aydamur al-Alai al-Misri, better known as Ibn Duqmaq, born around 750 AH / 1350 CE (Ibn Duqmaq, 1986, p. 756), is considered one of the most prominent historians of the period. His extensive body of work serves as a crucial source for the history of the Mamluk state during the early Burji era (late 14th to early 15th centuries), particularly concerning the reign of Sultan al-Zahir Barquq, the first Burji sultan [1382–1389; 1390–1399].

In this context, this author is of particular interest specifically for his description of both the transition itself – from the conventional Bahri dynasty to the conventional Burji one – and the conditions and circumstances preceding this transition. In historiography, the prevailing consensus holds that the shift from the Bahris to the Burjis was primarily driven by factional struggles among the amirs. However, it remains unclear how this transition was perceived by contemporaries and by what ideological means it was legitimized. The present study proposes to examine this transition not merely as a political fact, but as a narrative construction crafted by the court historian Ibn Duqmaq to justify Barquq's rule.

Materials and methods

Following the studies of V.A. Kuznetsov (Kuznetsov, 2017) and D.V. Mikulsky (Mikulsky, 2006), we operate under the assumption that historical narrative within the medieval Islamic tradition was primarily didactic and legitimizing, rather than record-keeping in nature. Therefore, our focus centers not on historical events as they actually transpired, but on how Ibn Duqmaq constructs this process. It is highly probable that he described the past

based on the needs of his present. However, it is precisely this selective approach that holds significant value: thinking in the categories of his own era, the author projected familiar mechanisms and rationales onto past events, interpreting them from contemporary perspectives rather than the actual realities of the period under discussion. Put simply, when describing the mechanism of political succession in the Late Bahri period, Ibn Duqmaq did so based on the normativity of his own time. This premise constitutes the core hypothesis of the present study.

Factually, the study is based on an analysis of the successions of 24 rulers of the Mamluk state, which provides a sufficient sample size to understand how issues surrounding the transfer of power were perceived at the turn of the 14th and 15th centuries. A significant component of this research is a comparative analysis of Ibn Duqmaq's narrative against the accounts of succession mechanisms found in the works of earlier Mamluk historians – specifically, in the chronicle by Baybars al-Mansuri al-Nasiri (d. 1325), 'The Cream of Thought in the History of the Hijra' ('Zubda(t) al-Fikra(t) fi Tarikh al-Hijra(t)') (Baybars al-Mansūrī, 1998).

Another significant methodological problem lies in defining what constitutes 'power' or 'authority' in medieval Islamic society. The most obvious term is 'sulta / sultan' (Sultān, 1997). This concept evolved quite rapidly within religious literature, closely converging with the term 'wali al-amr', which is explicitly mentioned in the Quran¹. However, in one of the earliest in the history of Arabs non-religious works concerning governance – Ibn al-Muqaffa's 'Epistle on Companionship' (first half of the 8th century) – the term 'sultan' is mentioned relatively infrequently, especially in comparison to the term 'wali al-amr'. It appears that the latter was the most comprehensive term, encompassing various types of rulers, ranging from the caliph to leaders in widely differing capacities (Wālī, 2002). On the whole, a broad spectrum of opinions has emerged within the exegetical tradition regarding the interpretation of this term².

In this context, it is difficult to expect a coherent system of ideas regarding the succession of 'sulta / sultan', and even less so 'wali al-amr' in all its manifestations. Gradually, the term 'mulk' (and

¹ The 59th verse of the 4th Surah ("The Women" / Al-Nisa) of the Quran states: "O believers, obey God, and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you". Within the Quranic text, this does not necessarily refer to a monarch.

² Ismailzadeh, 2010; Surah, 2024.

‘malik’ as the holder of ‘mulk’) began to dominate with respect to the military-political leadership. Although these terms are virtually absent in the aforementioned work by Ibn al-Muqaffa, they progressively assumed a leading position in historical chronicles.

Thus, for instance, in the work of Izz al-Din Ibn al-Athir (1160–1233) ‘Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh’ (‘The Complete History’), which is considered one of the most essential for describing the history of the Islamic world in the second half of the 12th and early 13th centuries, this history is presented as a successive change of holders of mulk – the maliks. In particular, this is precisely how Ibn al-Athir attempted to present the rise to power of Saladin (Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi) within the panorama of Islamic history, noting: ‘I have seen many from whom rule (mulk) originated, with the state (dawla) passing from him to some of his men and his relatives’ (Filippov, 2024, p. 17).

In the ‘Encyclopaedia of Islam’, ‘mulk’ is the subject of a relatively brief entry (Mulk, 1993, p. 574), where it is defined as ‘sovereignty’ or ‘kingship’. The term is used quite frequently in the Quran with reference to the Lord, to whom all ‘mulk’ belongs. This is described in detail in the Surah bearing the corresponding name – Surah 67, ‘Al-Mulk’. For instance, the first verse of this Surah states: “Blessed be He in whose hand is the Kingdom, and He is powerful over everything.” Mulk can be granted by the Lord. The Quran contains numerous examples of it being bestowed upon various figures of the pre-Islamic era – both righteous (Adam, Ibrahim) and unrighteous (Fir’awn).

The concept of ‘dawla’, frequently translated into English as ‘state’, is more ambiguous. During the era of Ibn Duqmaq (as well as in earlier periods), the meaning of this word was more diverse and could vary from source to source. Thus, the ‘Encyclopaedia of Islam’ notes that ‘dawla’ is much more frequently used to mean ‘dynasty’ (Dawla, 1991, p. 177). Regarding Ibn Duqmaq’s own usage, this observation holds true, albeit with the caveat of his specific attitude toward consanguineous succession. For instance, the phrase ‘The Noble Turkic State (dawla)’ appears, even though the ‘Turks’ as a ‘dynasty’ clearly differ from the Abbasids or Fatimids as ‘dynasties’. Baybars al-Mansuri also employs the term ‘Turkic State’ (accompanied by various epithets, such as ‘The Victorious – al-Qahira’), but simultaneously uses this term in reference to a specific ruler (for example, ‘the dawla / state of al-Manсур Ali’). In such a context, the word ‘dawla’ closer

aligns in meaning with the concept of a ‘state apparatus’. In contrast, for Ibn al-Athir, the dominant concept is ‘mulk’ rather than ‘dawla’.

Historiography of the Problem

In many respects, the Late Bahri period laid the foundation for the peculiar political development that characterized the Burji period (until 1516) and continues to attract the attention of numerous scholars. Nonetheless, despite the existence of a number of compelling academic studies, it is certainly premature to speak of the Late Bahri period as being fully explored. Notable works include those by Jo Van Steenberg (e.g., ‘Order out of Chaos: Patronage, Conflict and Mamluk Socio-Political Culture, 1341–1382’), ‘The Mamluk Sultanate: A History’ by Carl F. Petry, as well as the comprehensive research by Amalia Levanoni, ‘A Turning Point in Mamluk History’, which focuses on the reign of al-Nasir Muhammad (d. 1341). One must also note the important contribution of the Israeli scholar Amir Mazar in his work ‘The Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment: The Manşūriyya in the First Mamluk Sultanate, 678/1279–741/1341’. Additionally, the articles by A.A. Filippov concerning the dynamics of the amirs corpus during the Early Bahri period are of significant value for understanding the processes of the Late Bahri era.

Nevertheless, the primary attention of Mamluk studies scholars remains focused on the Burji period. In this context, authors and sources who lived and wrote at the turn of these eras are of particular value. One such author is Ibn Duqmaq, whose work ‘The Precious Gem in the History of the Caliphs, Maliks, and Sultans’ (‘Al-Jawhar al-Thamin fi Ta’rikh al-Khulafa’ wa-l-Muluk wa-l-Salatin’) serves as the primary source for the present study.

Research results

Ibn Duqmaq authored an extensive body of work, estimated by al-Maqrizi to encompass around 200 titles (‘Āshūr, p. 12), though not all have survived to the present day. The present study is based on his work ‘The Precious Gem in the History of the Caliphs, Maliks, and Sultans’. This book was commissioned for Sultan al-Zahir Barquq, the first sultan of the so-called Burji dynasty. In terms of genre, the work is traditional for Islamic historiography, although it cannot be categorized as a classical chronicle since the narrative does not follow a strict annalistic, year-by-year structure.

In this text, the author outlines the history of the Islamic world from the first caliph, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq [632–634], to the early years of al-Zahir Barquq's reign. The Rightly Guided Caliphs are followed by the history of the Umayyads, and subsequently the Abbasids. After the Abbasids (in terms of structural arrangement, though naturally not chronologically), the history of the Fatimids is presented, followed by the Ayyubids, who are then succeeded by 'The Noble Turkic State'. Its first malik is identified as al-Mu'izz Aybak. Al-Zahir Barquq is also situated within this very 'State'. Consequently, the number of 'states' (dawla) in Ibn Duqmaq's schema is far fewer than in that of Ibn al-Athir – totaling only five. This is partly because the Rightly Guided Caliphs do not constitute a state; rather, the first state in Islamic history is 'The State of Banu Umayya (the Umayyads)'.

The internal division between the Bahri and Burji dynasties, which has become firmly established in modern historiography, is likewise uncharacteristic of Ibn Duqmaq. Sultan al-Zahir Barquq, in fact, continues the lineage of the preceding 'Turkic maliks'.

In total, Ibn Duqmaq counts 24 rulers among the 'Turkic maliks'. Non-consecutive reigns – as in the cases of al-Nasir Muhammad (three reigns: 1293–1294, 1299–1309, and 1309–1341), al-Nasir Hasan [1347–1351 and 1354–1361], and al-Salih Hajji [1382 and 1389–1390] – are noted accordingly but do not alter the overall number of individuals. From the first accession of al-Nasir Muhammad to the initial rise to power of al-Zahir Barquq in 1382, 16 rulers succeeded one another; among them were 12 descendants of al-Nasir following his death in 1341. Thus, over a period of 42 years (accounting for the second reign of al-Salih Hajji in 1389–1390), the average duration of rule was approximately three and a half years per sovereign. The absolute outlier according to this metric was the very first successor of al-Nasir Muhammad – malik al-Mansur Abu Bakr – whose reign following his father's death lasted for a mere two months (the summer of 1341). Conversely, the absolute record holder was malik al-Ashraf Sha'ban, whose reign lasted just over 14 lunar years, which equates to slightly less than 14 solar years, spanning from 1363 to 1377.

It was precisely the prolonged reign of al-Nasir Muhammad that created an illusion of stability; the sharp contrast with the period after 1341 subsequently shaped Ibn Duqmaq's conception of a 'normal' transition.

If counting from the first reign of al-Nasir Muhammad, three rulers – al-Adil Kitbugha, al-Mansur

Lajin, and al-Muzaffar Baybars – did not possess any explicit or declared consanguineous relationships with the preceding maliks. Among the remaining thirteen, nine were brothers to the previous ruler, two were sons, one was a nephew, and one was a cousin. Thus, a clear shift in the paradigm of mulk inheritance and succession is evident – moving away from the succession along the father-son line desired during the era of the early Mamluks, and transitioning toward succession within a single generation.

Attempts to return to patrilineal succession occurred with the accessions of malik al-Mansur Abu Bakr (742 / 1341), a son of al-Nasir Muhammad (Ibn Duqmaq provides no information on whether al-Mansur left any sons behind, though he was not a minor); al-Mansur Muhammad (762–764 / 1361–1363), a son of malik al-Muzaffar Hajji (747–748 / 1346–1347); and al-Mansur Ali (777–783 / 1376–1382), a son of al-Ashraf Sha'ban.

Malik al-Ashraf Sha'ban himself ('the twenty-second sultan among the Turkic maliks', who reigned from 1363 to 1377) ascended the throne at the age of ten and was assassinated as a result of a conspiracy with the alleged participation of his sons. In reality, of course, this scenario appears highly improbable, given that his son and successor, al-Mansur, was only eight years old at the time of his accession.

This is a highly compelling subject, as the dilemma between the preference for patrilineal succession (from father to son) and the agnatic seniority system (from brother to brother within a single generation) constitutes a fundamental issue within the Islamic world.

Among the most significant studies addressing this problem during the Bahri Mamluk period are the works of Amalia Levanoni, Jo Van Steenberg, Henning Sievert, and Milana Yu. Ilyushina.

One of the central cross-cutting premises in these works is the notion of the factional nature of the Mamluk elite (e.g., Sievert, 2014, pp. 85–86). This factionalism had been intensifying since the first reign of al-Nasir Muhammad, a trend clearly reflected in the amirs' corpus (see the works of A.A. Filippov and Amir Mazor).

H. Sievert notes that for natural reasons – owing to the specific nature of the Mamluks as a social group – their consanguineous ties were much weaker than what might be expected in a traditional society (Sievert, 2014, p. 90). Instead, relations of group solidarity within the service of a single amir predominated, thereby forming the concept of a 'one-generation nobility'. In principle, the pivotal

nature of solidarity within a single ‘house / bayt / household’ has been actively discussed in Mamluk studies at least since the seminal works of D. Ayalon. Subsequently, these relations significantly influenced the formation of the concept of ‘asabiyya’ (group solidarity) in the thought of Ibn Khaldun. The scholar viewed the source of asabiyya (‘cohesion’) not only as kinship (which can weaken for various reasons) but also as alliances based on contract or covenant (Istoriya, 2012, p.218).

Mamluk rulers sought to institutionalize the familial nature of political succession even in cases where the principle of consanguinity was disrupted (for instance, in 1279, during the transfer of power from al-Adil Salamish, the youngest son of malik al-Zahir Baybars, to al-Mansur Qalawun, whose descendants comprise nearly all the maliks and sultans examined in this article).

Attempts to elevate the significance of familial ties (at least through intermarriage) are clearly discernible among the amirs elite during the first decades following the Mamluks’ rise to power. However, from the late 13th and early 14th centuries, the element of chaos within this process appears to have escalated significantly. This was due to several factors: the natural attrition of the amirs ‘backbone’ that had stood at the inception of the Mamluk state; substantial casualties incurred in the confrontation with the Ilkhanate (particularly during the successful campaigns of Ghazan Khan in 1299–1303); the diversification of supply channels for new mamluks and their more varied ethno-tribal origins; an overall increase in the number of amirs; and the subsequent fragmentation of the resource base. Collectively, these factors led to the fractionalization of Mamluk groups, rising tensions among them, and more rapid shifts in the domestic balance of power. Consequently, this diminished the utility of intermarriage between the families of individual amirs for forging enduring alliances, as well as the military and political potency of such coalitions.

Thus, fragmentation, ethnic diversification (the influx of Mongol, Circassian and other ethnic elements), and the demographic rupture of the preceding Mamluk generation undermined the corporate solidarity upon which the early Mamluk system had been built. Consequently, intermarriages became more situational, frequent, and politically speculative. This largely deprived the new maliks of an avenue for additional support, while also contributing to a devaluation within the elite of the ruling dynasty’s significance – or, at the very least, that of a young, inexperienced malik – in compari-

son to the ustadh, the head of the house or Mamluk faction.

Parallels can be drawn with early Bahri history, when the underaged al-Ashraf Musa (the last representative of the Ayyubid dynasty in Egypt, who nominally reigned from 1250 to 1252), al-Mansur Ali [1257–1259], al-Adil Salamish, and indeed al-Nasir Muhammad himself during his first reign [1293–1294], were deposed with appeals to their minority and their inability to participate in military campaigns.

Concurrently, a decline in the significance of women in the succession of power is observed, particularly against the backdrop of early Mamluk history and the figure of Shajarat al-Durr. In his narrative regarding the latter, Ibn Duqmaq significantly shifts the emphasis in comparison to one of the earliest historical works of the Mamluk period – Baybars al-Mansuri’s chronicle, ‘The Cream of Thought in the History of the Hijra’. The legitimizing role of Shajarat al-Durr in the dynastic and state (dawla) transition from the Ayyubids to the Mamluks is considerably diminished. Although the mothers of sultans periodically appear in Ibn Duqmaq’s text, including within episodes of political succession, no function of theirs in providing even symbolic legitimacy is discernible. This allows for the conclusion that the archaic Turkic element of power transition – the concept of a female ruler or institutional marriage for the purpose of entering the ruling lineage – had completely vanished on the level of ideological narrative by the Late Bahri period. The steppe mechanisms of integrating a usurper into the ruling house were replaced by the developed Near Eastern model of vertical monarchical legitimacy of the Qalawunid house. A synergistic effect in this process was undoubtedly exerted by the general weakening of consanguineous ties within the amirs elite during the period under consideration.

Sultans and prominent amirs sought to consolidate their positions among various Mamluk factions through intermarriage. For instance, during the reign of Sultan al-Mansur Muhammad, al-maqarr al-atabaki Batuluba married the wife of his ustadh, malik al-Nasir Hasan. Ibn Duqmaq reports several other similar marriages. The primary issue regarding the efficacy of these marital alliances seemingly lay in the increasing number of these factions, which led to a higher degree of fragmentation within the amirs elite.

A crucial characteristic of Ibn Duqmaq’s narrative regarding the succession of power was his emphasis on the duration of an interregnum – more

precisely, on his absolute disfavor toward such a period, regardless of how brief it might be. Any interregnum was viewed as a matter of exceptional emergency. This concept aligns fully with the mainstream of Islamic political thought, which interpreted anarchy (the absence of a ruler) as an inherently destructive factor for society. The presence of power and governance is considered an indispensable attribute of society, effectively embedded in the very essence of human nature, though the primary emphasis, naturally, remained on the obligation to observe religious commandments (see the works of Crone, 2004, Black, 2011, Syukriyaynen, 2017 etc.).

In medieval Islamic legal literature, the principle that even a tyrannical ruler is preferable to anarchy became firmly established (al-Mawardi, Ibn Taymiyyah, et al.), as expressed in the famous maxim: ‘Sixty years with a tyrannical ruler are better than one night without a ruler’.

Nevertheless, when characterizing the reigns and personalities of the Mamluk maliks, Ibn Duqmaq rarely resorted to such harsh judgments, consistently identifying positive traits as well. Not all maliks were deemed worthy of an evaluation of their personal qualities. Below are the characteristics of those whom the author of the chronicle described in some detail. Thus, the first Mamluk ruler, al-Mu’izz Aybak, is characterized as follows: ‘Al-Mu’izz was a great malik – resolute, brave, generous, and adept in administration and governance (siyasa). However, he was eager to shed blood, killing many and depriving a multitude [of people] of their lives for no transgression whatsoever’. The characterization of al-Zahir Baybars is exclusively positive: ‘He was – may the [Almighty] Lord have mercy upon him – a great, noble malik, renowned for his chivalry (furusiiyya) and bravery’, while that of al-Mansur Qalawun is brief: ‘He abolished numerous taxes and levies’.

Al-Adil Kitbugha, who deposed malik al-Nasir in 1294, is described as follows: ‘Kitbugha was dark-skinned, of short stature, and possessed Mongol [features – A.F.]; he had little hair on his chin, and his neck was extremely short. He was described as a brave, religious, calm, and secretive man, yet he lacked discernment and resolve’. Al-Mansur Lajin, another participant in the deposition of malik al-Nasir, is characterized briefly: ‘He strictly observed the fast’.

Al-Nasir Ahmad, the third successor of al-Nasir Muhammad within a single year (742 AH / 1342), is characterized in enthusiastic terms: ‘And there was

none among his brothers like unto him, yet fortune was not granted to him. He was the best of al-Nasir [Muhammad’s] sons and the bravest among them, may the Lord Almighty have mercy upon him’. This was despite the fact that the political fate of this ruler was highly unenviable: he reigned for just over two months³, attempted to deal with the conspiring amirs who had previously deposed two of his brothers, and fell victim to a conspiracy himself. As a result, he was forced to flee to al-Karak, where he endured a siege lasting several years, after which he was decapitated.

Nevertheless, as-Salih Ismail [1342–1345], who succeeded al-Nasir Ahmad, received even higher praise from Ibn Duqmaq (a sentiment shared by other Mamluk historians): ‘Among the sons of al-Nasir, there was none equal to him in religiosity, goodness, nobility, and beneficence. He organized lessons for the four qadis at the madrasa of his grandfather al-Mansur Qalawun, [located] Bayn al-Qasrayn [Between the Two Palaces]. He increased the waqfs of the al-Nasiri [congregational mosque] in the Citadel. [He was persistent in doing good, may the Lord Almighty have mercy upon him]’. The malik himself died of an illness.

Ibn Duqmaq provides an extensive evaluation regarding malik al-Nasir Hasan [1347–1351; 1354–1361]: ‘Malik al-Nasir Hasan was a generous malik – resolute, handsome, awe-inspiring, and brave; he revered the commandments of religion and authoritative counsel. However, he loved to amass wealth and was stingy with it. He also possessed a strong desire for women... His objective was the advancement of the awlad al-nas, and he elevated many of them during his days. In his time, there were nine commanders of a thousand from among the awlad al-nas, namely: ‘Umar b. Arghun al-na’ib, Asanbugha al-Abu-Bakri, Muhammad b. al-Muhsini, Ahmad b. al-Malik, Musa b. Arqatay, Muhammad b. Targhay, Muhammad b. Bahadar, the chief of the watch (al-khawand), and Musa b. al-Azkashi. He appointed many members of the military band (tabalkhana) and commanders of ten (amirs of ten) as amirs. He demanded respect for the awlad al-nas from al-Sham to Egypt. He appointed Ibn al-Kashtamari as the na’ib of Aleppo and Ibn Sabih as the na’ib of Safed.

³ Such is the account according to Ibn Duqmaq’s text. In modern historiography, the reign of al-Nasir Ahmad is considered somewhat longer, lasting approximately six months. Conversely, other Mamluk historians, such as Ibn Taghribirdi and al-Maqrizi, do not share Ibn Duqmaq’s enthusiasm regarding any outstanding personal qualities of al-Nasir Ahmad.

May the Lord Almighty have mercy upon him and forgive him, for he used to say: 'Never in my life have I heard anyone say that anyone from among the awlad al-nas is plotting against the sultan'.

In contrast to the rather abstract previous characterizations, the chronicler highlights the political underpinnings behind the deposition and assassination of al-Nasir Hasan – namely, the malik's attempts to rely on the awlad al-nas as a counterweight to the amirs and their factions. Nevertheless, although a certain degree of sympathy for such a policy can be discerned in Ibn Duqmaq's tone, the malik himself is still presented as not entirely devoid of flaws.

The chronicler also provides a positive characterization of malik al-Ashraf Sha'ban [1363–1377], the record holder for the longest reign among the descendants of al-Nasir Muhammad: 'On Monday, the fifth of Dhu al-Qa'da, they killed the martyr-sultan (al-sultan al-shahid)⁴ malik al-Ashraf Sha'ban. They strangled him, placed him in a basket, and threw him into a well. Then, a few days later, they extracted him and buried him in al-Qayman near Sayyida Nafisa. Afterward, his servant moved him by night to his father's tomb, may the Lord Almighty have mercy upon him. He was among the best of his era. A more pleasant malik than he had never been seen.

He was – may the Lord have mercy upon him – gentle, kind, clement, and affectionate toward the people of virtue; he was close to the ulama and the poor, observant of Sharia matters, and beneficent toward his relatives. There was nothing in him for which he could be censured, with the sole exception of his love for amassing wealth'.

Thus, out of the 24 sultans among the 'Turkic maliks', Ibn Duqmaq provides personal characterizations for nine (more than a third). Crucially, four of these (nearly half) bear no relation to the Qalawunids. Among them, al-Zahir Baybars received an enthusiastic review – by this time, a popular folk image of him as a hero had already begun to take shape, ultimately culminating in the creation of the folk epic 'The Life of al-Zahir Baybars' ('Sira(t) al-Zahir Baybars'). Of the four remaining maliks, two directly preceded Barquq's rise to power and were assassinated as a result of conspiracies.

It can be assumed that a ruler's personal characteristics were not viewed by Ibn Duqmaq as significant for his right to rule, but rather served as a historical exemplar of how one ought to act. For the chronicler, it was more critical to demonstrate that even a virtuous ruler (such as Sha'ban) could be as-

sassinated due to civil strife (fitna), whereas a blood-thirsty one (like Aybak) could maintain power. By doing so, Ibn Duqmaq is not so much justifying Barquq as he is illustrating a central maxim: the value of order supersedes the value of righteousness.

The practical mechanism of a malik's deposition, as described by Ibn Duqmaq, is equally compelling. Naturally, the degree of reliability of these descriptions is open to debate, given that the chronicler was neither a witness to nor a participant in the conspiracies or coups. Among the successors of al-Nasir Muhammad following his death in 1341, ten (out of twelve) were deposed: al-Mansur Abu Bakr, al-Ashraf Kujuk, al-Nasir Ahmad, al-Kamil Sha'ban, al-Muzaffar Hajji, al-Nasir Hasan (during both his first and second reigns), as-Salih Salih, al-Mansur Muhammad, al-Ashraf Sha'ban, and as-Salih Hajji (in both of his reigns).

The mechanism of conspiracy and deposition is described by Ibn Duqmaq as simultaneously quite simple and reminiscent of an adventure novel: a few amirs conspire, arrange something akin to an ambush, and assassinate the sultan's most influential amirs – and, in a number of cases, the sultan himself. Subsequently, a gathering of amirs takes place, during which the conspirators force through the candidacy of 'their' sultan and distribute offices among themselves. In certain instances, clashes between Mamluk factions could persist without resulting in the deposition of the sultan. Ibn Duqmaq does not provide any specific grounds for the new ruler's legitimacy, and they appear to be of no consequence to him. The sole outward manifestation of legitimacy becomes the ceremonial procession through Cairo led by the new sultan.

Conclusion

Thus, the following conclusions can be drawn:

Compared to the Early Bahri period – and despite the objective difficulties that accompanied the formation of the Mamluk state – domestic political instability escalated significantly during the Late Bahri era. This was driven by a multitude of factors, not all of which are fully reflected within the pages of Ibn Duqmaq's work. Nonetheless, the most critical among them include:

The fragmentation of the amirs corpus, characterized by an increase in the number of amirs and their more diverse ethno-tribal origins;

The constraint of the resource base, primarily regarding the capacity for iqta distribution;

An overall reduction in military campaigns, which stemmed from the stabilization of the geo-

⁴ This is the first Qalawunid to be designated as a martyr (shahid) in Ibn Duqmaq's text.

political situation in the Middle East following the expulsion of the Crusaders and the decline of the Ilkhanate;

The diminishing stabilizing role of intermarriage as a mechanism for cross-factional alliances;

The virtual disappearance of traditional Turkic elements of power transmission;

A generational rupture.

All these phenomena represented a further development of the tendencies, particularly within the amirs milieu, that had already begun to manifest during the reign of al-Mansur Qalawun (see Filipov, 2021).

Furthermore, the significance of formal, outward elements of legitimacy declined substantially. In practice, relative value was retained only by descent from al-Mansur Qalawun – wherein the sultan was viewed rather as a temporary compromise figure, incapable of independently altering the domestic balance of power between the factions or significantly affecting cross-factional struggles. In other words, the new sultan symbolized an already established, transient supremacy of a particular faction, rather than serving as the source of its elevation. Beyond this lineage, the only remaining marker of authority was the organization of the ceremonial procession through Cairo led by the new sovereign.

The amirs' corpus became significantly diluted, and the importance of the council of 'senior amirs' as a source of authority diminished; concurrently, an element of unpredictability was introduced due to the actions of minor amirs and even rank-and-file mamluks.

The personal qualities of the sultans are of secondary importance to Ibn Duqmaq and carry virtually no weight regarding the legitimacy of power. Any form of institutional authority is preferable to anarchy – a point that the chronicler explicitly emphasizes.

The fragmentation of factions and the pattern of horizontal succession described by Ibn Duqmaq serve as a classical illustration of the decline of group solidarity (*asabiyya*) according to Ibn Khaldun. When kinship ties weaken, solidarity is maintained solely by corporate interest (hence, the amirs select a weak puppet ruler). Al-Nasir Hasan's attempt to rely on the *awlad al-nas* was inherently doomed because these individuals lacked their own 'asabiyya' (factional solidarity) – they were isolated actors. In describing this, Ibn Duqmaq implicitly demonstrates that the only real power remaining lies within the amirs houses – many of which formed and dissolved practically before one's eyes – rather than with bloodline heirs.

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