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Al-Jazarī gives a few more details regarding these executions. Apparently the town was under some sort of lockdown (*mahbūsīn fī al-balad*) and no one was allowed to leave the town except those who performed necessary functions, in addition to the Bedouins, perhaps the auxiliaries who had been summoned earlier. Tension and suspicion of Mughaltāy's actions must have been high given the confiscations and other punitive measures. On Friday the 20th of Rajab Mughaltāy executed 30 individuals outside the city gates, just before the Friday prayers. The news of this calamity spread quickly to the mosque and all the congregants began to flee in panic, fearing that they were to be attacked next. In their panic, many fled without their shoes and other property. Some merchants lost the gold coins that they had in their possession. It was a chaotic scene that was described as the "end of days" (*wa kānat ka-qiyāmah qad qāmat*). The tense atmosphere was eased somewhat when, according to al-Jazarī, Tāj al-Dīn, the sultan's *wakīl*, arrived and began to calm the people down and allowed them to move about.<sup>38</sup>

##### 5. MISCELLANEOUS ACTIONS

There were other acts that only al-Nuwayrī and al-Maqrīzī report. Al-Nuwayrī says that the storehouse of the archers (Ibn Ruwāḥah's men) was emptied of its contents. He adds that Mughaltāy arrested nearly 90 men, slaves and freemen, who were pressed into chain gangs and were later used for construction work.<sup>39</sup> Al-Maqrīzī says that Mughaltāy counted the suits of armor usually stored in the town to be used in its defense in case of a foreign attack and found that there were six thousand pieces. He had them stored in a warehouse and sealed it.<sup>40</sup>

##### 6. THE MAMLUK PRISONERS

Only al-Nuwayrī and al-Maqrīzī report on the fate of the Mamluk prisoners at this time, and their lists are nearly identical.<sup>41</sup> According to al-Nuwayrī, these

<sup>37</sup> Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, 33:234; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 285.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Jazarī, *Hawādith*, 2:188–89.

<sup>39</sup> Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, 33:234

<sup>40</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 286.

<sup>41</sup> These Mamluks were arrested and released several times starting in 710, after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad came to power for the third time. Some of them were involved in the conspiracy of Baybars al-Jashnikir against him; others were involved in later conspiracies or seem to have abused their authority. See Abū al-Maḥāsīn Ibn Taghribirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Cairo, 1963), 8:232 ff., 9:12–15; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, 32:165, 169, 175, 196, 199, 220–21. See also Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate 1250–1382* (Carbondale, IL, 1986), 106–8.

prisoners were packed off to Cairo with a contingent to guard them, and everyone arrived on Sunday the 22nd of Rajab, 12 days after they were sent off. Al-Maqrīzī says that they arrived on the 18th of Rajab. These prisoners include:

- Sayf al-Dīn Baktamur al-Abū Bakrī (whose three sons had been arrested earlier). Al-Abū Bakrī was eventually sent to al-Karak to be imprisoned there.<sup>42</sup>
- Sayf al-Dīn Tamur al-Sāqī, former governor of Tripoli. He was also packed off to al-Karak, but may have been transferred back to Alexandria some time later.
- ʿAlam al-Dīn Sanjar al-Jāwili. He was imprisoned in the Lions' Tower in the Cairo Citadel.
- Sayf al-Dīn Bahādur al-Maghribī. He was also imprisoned in the Lions' Tower.
- Sayf al-Dīn Tughluq.
- Ghānim ibn Atlas Khān.
- Sayf al-Dīn Qutlubak al-Miʿlāʾī, known also as al-Awshāqī.
- ʿIzz al-Dīn Aydamur al-Yūnisī.
- Sayf al-Dīn Kajkan.
- Fakhr al-Dīn Ayāz, formerly governor of Qalʿat al-Rūm, also called Qalʿat al-Muslimīn.

The last six commanders were thrown into the dungeons in the Cairo Citadel, but Fakhr al-Dīn Ayāz was later freed due to his advanced age and frailty.

Al-Maqrīzī adds a few more names to those who were thrown in the dungeons. These were Sayf al-Dīn Balāṭ al-Jūkandār, Sayf al-Dīn Burulghī al-Ṣaghīr, Ḥusām al-Dīn Lajīn Zīrbāj al-ʿUmarī, Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-ʿAlamī, and Sayf al-Dīn Ṭushtumur, brother of Batkhās (or Banhās) al-Manṣūrī. According to al-Nuwayrī, however, these men were held back in Alexandria's prison. Indeed, al-Jazarī says in the context of the events of 735 (8 years after the rebellion) that he received a letter from his colleague in Alexandria, Najm al-Dīn ibn al-Miḥaffdār, saying that 13 Mamluk commanders, among whom the above disputed names were mentioned, were transferred to Cairo, where they were set free.<sup>43</sup>

Mughaltāy and his company returned to Cairo at the end of Rajab loaded with gold. He took up residence in the vizierate hall in the Citadel, which was newly

<sup>42</sup>According to Ibn Taghrībirdī, Baktamur died a year later in the Citadel prison; see: *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, 9:274.

<sup>43</sup>The lists appear in al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, 33:235–36, and in al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 286. Al-Jazarī reports on their freeing in *Ḥawāidith*, 3:764.



built opposite the Dār al-Inshāʾ (chancellery). Other officials came along that day and sat according to their rank in places that had been prescribed for them, and proceeded to execute the affairs of the state. According to al-Jazarī, the sultan Muḥammad did not take any of the confiscated money. Rather, he distributed it among his loyal commanders.<sup>44</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The penchant of some Mamluk chroniclers to copy from one another, to summarize lengthy accounts according to their own interests, and to often reduce complex events to simple and brief descriptions poses a potential source of confusion and misunderstanding. The writing of history becomes, in part, a process of deconstruction and reconstruction. We are fortunate that bits and pieces of information can still be found to allow us a closer look at society, to recreate a fuller account of events under investigation, as we have learned from the above, and to correct false impressions that may have been constructed earlier. The three accounts, put together, give us a glimpse at a moment in the life of Alexandria under Mamluk rule, a moment rich with detail when the townspeople were up in arms against the state. These accounts, infused with realism, breathe life into that moment of social action. At first glance, this action could be described as a riot, brawl, or some similar term implying that the action was haphazard and based on a flimsy rationale. But upon further investigation, thanks to the merchants' reports related by al-Jazarī, we find that this social action, an uprising of sorts, was based instead on concrete economic grievances against a specific state policy. Rather than being haphazard or spontaneous, this rebellion reveals a degree of awareness which implies conscious and deliberate, rather than passive, participation. This was also a sustained social action that went on for a period of two months before the state brought its full weight to bear and crushed the uprising.

The state employed what seems to have been a disproportionately severe set of punitive measures that included the arrest and execution of many people, in addition to financial exactions that heavily burdened the economy and the people's livelihood. This was no punishment for a brawl, unless the brawl is seen as only the cover for the response to this heavy-handed appropriation of surplus wealth for the state's own ends (the government was then nearly bankrupt). Moreover, this was no isolated incident. Indeed, this attack on Alexandria could be considered the watershed that allowed al-Nashw, the sultan's new *wakīl*, to continue a feverish confiscation policy from 1332 to 1339 that damaged several sectors of the

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<sup>44</sup>Al-Jazarī, *Hawādith*, 2:189.



economy, not to mention those who were flogged to death in an effort to extract money from them.<sup>45</sup>

The Mamluk state, after the end of the Crusades and the disappearance of the Mongol threat, developed an apparent sense of insecurity. We have seen that the central government's immediate reaction was to treat the event as a conspiracy, as indicated by the arrest of the sons of al-Abū Bakrī. Conspiracies against the reigning sultan were in fact not unusual; indeed, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad had a long history of facing such conspiracies. He also became the subject of an assassination attempt a few years later, but he survived the assassin's dagger.<sup>46</sup> The Mamluks, having lost—or one might say fulfilled—their initial *raison d'être* as a military elite that defended the lands of Islam under their rule (largely the Arab Middle East), later shifted their energy inward and turned against each other, causing political instability at a time when greater powers were arising around them.<sup>47</sup> Attacks against the textile producers and the Kārimī merchants, among other productive sectors, would eventually undermine their whole economy. The third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad represented at once the pinnacle of peace and the point at which the Mamluk system of government became redundant.<sup>48</sup> This must be one of the reasons that contributed to the eventual demise of the Mamluk system of governance.

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<sup>45</sup>Almost every year in that period one or another sector of the market was attacked. For an accounting of what was extracted see Levanoni, *Turning Point*, 150–54.

<sup>46</sup>Al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith*, 3:673.

<sup>47</sup>For an interesting analysis of how political violence served the Mamluk system, see Daniel Beaumont, "Political Violence and Ideology in Mamluk Society," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 8, no. 1 (2000): 201–25.

<sup>48</sup>This was raised by Linda Northrup, "The Bahri Mamluk Sultanate," 262, and it is the main point of Levanoni's *Turning Point*.

