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Rotting Ships and Razed Harbors: The Naval Policy of the Mamluks*

> When the people of Beirut noticed [the fleet], they evacuated their wives, children, and possessions from the city, so that Beirut was emptied of its inhabitants. Neither the governor *(mutawallī)* of Beirut nor his troops were there, just the soldiers of the regional amirs of the Gharb. . . . The Franks landed at a place known as al-Ṣanbaṭīya in the west of the city. . . . They took possession of the city, plundered, and burned our house and the market near the harbor. Some courageous Muslims banded together and fought with individual Franks in the lanes, killing some and losing three Muslims in these skirmishes. . . . The Franks remained in Beirut till shortly before the afternoon prayer *(al-aṣr)* then returned to their ships . . . and headed for Sidon . . . where they again left their boats near the town. . . . Meanwhile the governor of Damascus, Shaykh, who would later become Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh . . . arrived in Sidon with his troops and pushed the Franks back. . . . Then the governor of Damascus ordered the governor of Beirut to cut off the heads of the Franks killed in Beirut . . . and send them to Damascus, then to Egypt.[1]

As related in this passage, the local inhabitants of Beirut and the other coastal cities were helpless against the constant attacks of the Frankish corsairs on their towns. This situation was not inevitable but was the result of Mamluk policy. This eyewitness account by the nobleman Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá of the attack of a joint Genoese-French fleet on Beirut and Sidon in the year 1403 illustrates three crucial aspects of the Mamluk defensive posture in Syro-Palestine: there was no regular Mamluk fleet to prevent a Frankish attack on the Syro-Palestinian coast; Beirut at that time was not fortified to halt a Frankish attack; only local troops were

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[1]Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá (d. after 1436), *Tārīkh Bayrūt: Akhbār al-Salaf min Dhurrīyat Buḥtur ibn 'Alī Amīr al-Gharb bi-Bayrūt*, ed. Francis Hours and Kamal Salibi (Beirut, 1969), 32-34.

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stationed on the coast and the Franks were therefore free to plunder the harbor towns until the regular Mamluk army arrived from Damascus.

This article will review the three most important components of Mamluk naval policy and assess the effectiveness of that policy in securing the coast. This three-part review will be followed by a discussion of why the Mamluks never initiated a lasting program to build and maintain a fleet.

The main aim of the Mamluks after the expulsion of the Crusaders from the Syro-Palestinian coast in 1291 was to prevent their return and to that end they destroyed the harbors there. This ″scorched earth″ policy was designed to prevent the Crusaders from capturing a fortified town on the coast and using it as a base for further operations in Syria. This razing of the harbors was combined with the transfer of the line of defense further inland from the coast, where fortifications were built and troops garrisoned. These troops could deploy to the coast within days if an attack by Frankish forces took place.

The second component of Mamluk naval policy was the building of ad hoc fleets. These were the only manifestations of Mamluk naval activity. The naval squadrons were designed only to transport troops to a destination, not to wage battle in naval encounters. These ships were galleys which depended on oarsmen and thus had a limited range. Because of weather conditions, they were unable to operate year-round and therefore their use was seasonal. A recurring feature of the Mamluk ad hoc fleets was that they did not survive from one reign to the next. Once the sultan who had built the ships died, his successors were so occupied by the ensuing power struggle that they left the boats of their predecessor to rot. This lack of continuity was the main reason no regular fleet was maintained and no lasting naval program ever came into being under the Mamluks.

The third pillar of Mamluk naval policy was their attempt to involve European powers, through alliances and treaties, in the defense of the Mamluk Empire. In the beginning of their reign the Mamluks concluded treaties with the Crusader states and the kingdom of Aragon. In the second half of the fourteenth century the Venetians had emerged as the main trading partner and ally of the Mamluks. But the Venetians could not successfully prevent other European freebooters from constantly attacking the Mamluk coast.

Generally, Mamluk naval policy contributed to the success of the goal of preventing the return of the Crusaders. In doing so they neglected the needs of the local populations on the coast, who as a consequence lived in dilapidated towns and were under the constant threat of Frankish pirate attacks. The question remains why the Mamluks chose this particular naval policy in order to defend their coasts and did not opt for a more aggressive approach at sea like the Ottoman Empire.

THE RAZING OF COASTAL CITIES

> The conquest [of Acre in 1291] was followed by the fall of Sidon, Beirut, and ʻAthlīth in the same year. With this conquest the whole coast was liberated, and when these towns were captured they were totally razed out of fear that the Franks could reconquer them. They have stayed in Muslim hands until now.[2]

With these words the Mamluk historian al-Qalqashandī hailed the successful defense of the coast as proven by the results. This defensive strategy of destroying the coastal cities was no Mamluk invention. It hearkens back to the example set by the Ayyubid sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin) (1171-93). On several occasions his fleets were defeated by the Franks, and his biographer al-Kātib ʻImād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī had much to say about these maritime disasters. He explained that something like this was bound to happen because the rulers of Egypt had preferred to employ only worthless riffraff rather than recruit good sailors.[3]

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had experienced a serious setback when he could not break the blockade of the Crusader ships around Acre in the year 1191. The Crusaders therefore were able to reconquer Acre, which Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had taken from them in 1187.[4] Salāḥ al-Dīn was so disappointed by that failure that he decided to destroy Ascalon when the English King Richard I Lionheart (1189-99) was advancing on it. He preferred to destroy this coastal town rather than let it fall into the hands of his enemy.[5]

When the Mamluks seized power they emulated the practice Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn employed at Ascalon by destroying and razing all the harbors of the Syro-Palestinian coast reconquered during the following years. After the Crusaders were repelled, the towns of the coast were never again fortified by the Mamluks. The worst destruction of coastal towns took place in Palestine because of the geographical

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[2]Aḥmad ibn ʻAlī al-Qalqashandī (d. 1418), *Ṣubḥ al-Aʻshá fī Ṣināʻat al-Inshā*ʾ (Cairo, 1914), 4:178.

[3]ʻImād al-Dīn al-Kātib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1201), *Al-Fatḥ al-Qussī fī al-Fatḥ al-Qudsī,* ed. Muḥammad Maḥmūd Ṣubḥ, (n. p., 1965), 161-62; David Ayalon, ″The Mamluks and Naval Power: A Phase of the Struggle between Islam and Christian Europe,″ *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 1, no. 8 (1967): 4; reprinted in Ayalon, *Studies on the Mamluks of Egypt (1250-1517)* (London, 1977), VI, 1-12.

[4]Hans Eberhard Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge* (Stuttgart, 1989), 124, 131-34; Aḥmad ibn ʻAlī al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442), *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Maʻrifat Duwal al-Mulūk,* ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah (Cairo, 1934), 1:1:104-5; idem, *A History of the Ayyūbid Sultans of Egypt*, trans. with introduction and notes by R. J. C. Broadhurst (Boston, 1980), 90-93.

[5]Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 1:1:106; idem, *A History of the Ayyūbid Sultans of Egypt*, 93; Moshe Sharon, *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae* (Leiden, 1997), 1:139.

proximity of Jerusalem, the potential target of any new Crusade. Beirut and Tripoli were relatively favored by their location further away from the Holy City. Beirut would become the most important trading city on the coast, and Tripoli under the Mamluks played an important role as a center of provincial administration.[6]

The Syro-Palestinian coast was systematically razed from Ascalon in the south to the harbor of Antioch, St. Simeon (al-Suwaidā'), in the north. The only exception to this pattern was Tripoli, which fell in 1289 to the Mamluks. It was totally destroyed but then rebuilt in a new location three kilometers inland, at the foot of Mount Lebanon. The new location of Tripoli was chosen for strategic reasons. At the foothills the Mamluks could fight Frankish attackers already present in the plain between Tripoli and the shore. Contemporary observers did not like the new location of the city. Ibn Taghrībirdī said it was built in a place where foul winds reigned and the town generally had an unhealthy atmosphere.[7]

The location of the new Tripoli was part of the Mamluk strategy to move the defense lines away from the coast to locations further inland. All the major fortresses on the shore disappeared. They were replaced by smaller towns and a few walls with small garrisons. These fortifications were only shadows of the former Crusader castles. Even Beirut, the only remaining real harbor on the Syro-Palestinian coast, was stripped of its walls and only had some fortifications near the harbor to blunt the initial impact of a Frankish attack.

Such a policy meant that local notables like the Druze family of the Buhturids of the Gharb and the so-called Turcomans of the Kisrawān were responsible for regional defense.[8] These local notables had the task of delaying Frankish attackers until the regular Mamluk troops could arrive from Damascus. Communications with Damascus were conducted by means of pigeons during the day and fire signals at night.[9]

As it usually took some days before reinforcements reached Beirut, the town had often already been pillaged when the troops finally arrived. Thus the Mamluk system of destroying coastal cities and building a defense line inland from al-Bīrah in the north to al-Karak proved to be successful, when we consider that no new Frankish invasion could gain a foothold in Mamluk territory, but unsuccessful in terms of personal security for the local inhabitants. For them the initiation of a fleet-building program would have been a better long-term option than destroying

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[6]On the political development and the social and economic history of the Syro-Palestinian coast in Mamluk times, see parts 2 and 3 of the author's dissertation, "Verbranntes Ufer."

[7]Abū al-Maḥāsin Ibn Taghrībirdī (d. 1470), *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah,* ed. Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa-al-Irshād al-Qawmī (Cairo, 1938), 7:322.

[8]Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt,* 29, 70-72.

[9]Ibid., 35.

their cities. Very little of the vast wealth generated by the Levant trade stayed in the Syro-Palestinian coast, which remained poor.

In contrast to the Syro-Palestinian cities, Egyptian coastal cities were not razed, probably because previous attempts by the Crusaders to land in the delta had been successfully repulsed by the Muslims. The Mamluks had faith in their ability to defend the Egyptian coast and therefore did not destroy the cities there, although they too suffered from neglect.

As a consequence of the total devastation of the Syro-Palestinian coast, these towns recovered only slowly, and did not flourish during the Mamluk period. The military interest of the Mamluks was directed toward their eastern frontier where they expected an attack from the powerful Ilkhans. There the Mamluks built their fortresses directly on the frontier. The Mamluk sultan Baybars I (1260-77) described the contrasting military policies in the west and in the east as follows:

> One part (of the Muslim armies) uproots Frankish fortresses and destroys (their) castles, while (another) part rebuilds what the Tatars destroyed in the East and increases the height of their ramparts (compared with what they were).[10]

The devastation of the Syro-Palestinian littoral and the transfer of the defense line was very effective in preventing the return of the Franks. This was the Mamluk credo which never changed. Only minor fortification works were undertaken by the Mamluks. The victims of this policy, as mentioned previously, were the local inhabitants of the coast who lived in dilapidated towns and were under constant threat of a Frankish attack.

While it is clear that the destruction of the coastal cities was the cornerstone of Mamluk defense policy along the Syro-Palestinian coast, there is some evidence of Mamluk naval activity throughout the two hundred and fifty years of their rule. This evidence will be examined below. From this it can be concluded that the Mamluks tried, at least from time to time, to fight on the sea.[11]

ATTEMPTS TO WAGE WAR ON THE SEA

The great naval powers in the Mediterranean at the time of the Mamluks were the Venetians, Genoese, Catalans, and the Hospitaller Knights of Rhodes. Later in the fifteenth century, the emerging Ottoman fleet would manage to change the balance in favor of the Muslims. However, the few Mamluk naval endeavors that

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[10]Quoted in Ayalon, ″The Mamluks and Naval Power,″ 12.

[11]For a more detailed description of the following events, see part 1 of the author′s dissertation, ″Verbranntes Ufer.″

were undertaken were directed mainly against Cyprus in an attempt to stop pirate activity against Mamluk shores.

Baybars I undertook the building of a fleet but the performance of the Mamluk navy bordered on the comic. In 1270 twelve enemy vessels entered the harbor of Alexandria and sacked a merchant ship. During this episode the newly-constructed Mamluk vessels were not deployed because the admiral was visiting the sultan in Cairo.[12] In 1271 this fleet was dispatched against Cyprus, presumably with the intention of stopping the flow of supplies to the Crusader states along the Syro-Palestinian coast from there.[13] This took place while the Cypriot ruler, Hugh III of Lusignan, was accompanying the English Prince Edward on a military expedition in Palestine.[14] When Baybars learned of this, he ordered his fleet into action, hoping to benefit from the absence of the Cypriot ruler from the island.[15] The Mamluk fleet, disguised as Christian ships and flying flags displaying the Christian cross, was not up to the task at hand. The fleet was dashed on the reefs when approaching the harbor of Limassol (al-Nimsūn) in Shawwāl 669/May-June 1271. The local inhabitants completed the destruction of the ships and took custody of the surviving Mamluk sailors.[16] Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir, eschewing other explanations for this inept performance, attributes the destruction of the fleet to the wrath of God because the ships had displayed Christian symbols.[17] Although this first Mamluk naval expedition had ended in a fiasco, Frankish supremacy on the sea did not prevent Baybars from continuing his military advance in Palestine.[18]

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[12]Peter Thorau, *Sultan Baibars I. von Ägypten: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Vorderen Orients im 13. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 1987), 246.

[13]P. M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (London-New York, 1997), 95-96; Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge,* 246.

[14]Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 1:2:592; Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir (d. 1292), *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir,* ed. ʻAbd al-ʻAzīz al-Khuwayṭir (Riyadh, 1976), 383; Peter Thorau, *Sultan Baibars I.,* 251; Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge,* 247.

[15]Quṭb al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī (d. 1326), *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān fī Tārīkh al-Aʻyān* (Hyderabad 1955), 2:453. According to Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir it was planned that the Mamluk attack would force Hugh to go back to Cyprus (see Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir, *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir,* 386). It is unclear whether the Mamluks intended to conquer the island or only to loot. Thorau argues the fleet did not contain enough ships or men for a possible conquest of the island (see Thorau, *Sultan Baibars I.,* 253).

[16]Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir, *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir,* 386-87; Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-ʻAynī (d. 1451), *ʻIqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo, 1988), 2:73-74; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 1:2:594; idem, *Al-Mawāʻiẓ wa-al-Iʻtibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār,* ed. Muḥammad Zaynhum and Madīḥah al-Sharqāwī (Cairo, 1998), 3:18; Thorau, *Sultan Baibars I.,* 253.

[17]Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir, (d. 1292), *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir,* 387.

[18]Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge,* 247.

Undaunted, Baybars built a new fleet in Cairo, the number of ships exceeding the number destroyed at Cyprus.[19] This fleet, however, apparently never set sail, as no fighting by these vessels is mentioned in the sources.

The next Mamluk ship-building project was undertaken after the fall of Acre in 1291 and the end of the Crusaders in Palestine, at the initiative of the Mamluk sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl (1290-93), in the year 692/1293. Sixty well-equipped ships were constructed and high-ranking Mamluk officers were made part of the crew. After the boats were finished, a review on the Nile was staged. For the spectators special lodgings were built on the island of al-Rawḍah and outside of Cairo. Each boat had, besides a tower and fortress for defense purposes, a ram and special equipment to throw naphtha. Allegedly, when the Franks heard of this fleet, they immediately sent envoys who sued for peace.[20] This report obviously is greatly exaggerated, and there is no evidence that this new navy was ever engaged in any serious naval encounter. It is more likely that these vessels were left to decay when rebellious amirs killed Sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl in Muḥarram 693/December 1293.

The first known success achieved by Mamluk ships was the conquest of the small island of Arwād just off the shore of Ṭarṭūs (Anṭarsūs). Arwād had remained in the hands of the Crusaders while the rest of their territory had been lost. The island was finally taken in 702/1302. Even though Arwād lay just off the coast, the local governor needed help and asked for ships to come all the way from Egypt,[21] clearly indicating that there were no Mamluk ships cruising the Syrian coast.

The year 1366 saw the collapse of yet another fleet-building project of the Mamluks. This project was initiated in response to the attack on Alexandria in 1365 by the Cypriot King Peter I of Lusignan (1359-69). Peter, who was also titular king of Jerusalem, was one of the last Frankish rulers to try to revive the Crusades. Between 1362 and 1365 he went to Europe to seek help for his planned excursion against the Mamluks and to recruit troops for this expedition.[22] In spite of receiving little support from Europe he attacked Alexandria. He landed in Muḥarram 767/October 1365 with his fleet of Cypriot ships and some European

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[19]Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir, *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir,* 387; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 1:2:594.

[20]Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 3:18-19.

[21]ʻIsmāʻīl ibn ʻUmar Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah fī al-Tārīkh,* ed. Aḥmad Abū Mulḥim (Beirut, 1987), 7:14:23; Ismāʻīl ibn ʻAlī Abū l-Fidāʼ (d. 1331), *Al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar* (Cairo, n.d.), 3:47; Muḥammad Kurd ʻAlī, *Kitāb Khiṭaṭ al-Shām* (Damascus, 1925), 2:142.

[22] P. W. Edbury, ″The Crusading Policy of King Peter I of Cyprus, 1359-1369″ in *The Eastern Mediterranean Lands in the Period of the Crusades,* ed. P. M. Holt (Warminster, 1977), 90.

boats.[23] Although he may have intended to remain in Alexandria and exchange the city for Jerusalem, he was forced to abandon the totally-plundered city because he could not expect to hold it against the main Mamluk forces arriving from Cairo.[24]

Although the troops of the Cypriots stayed just a few days in Alexandria, this event showed clearly the inability of the Mamluks to defend against attacks from the sea. A relatively small fleet of Franks had managed to occupy and sack the most important Mamluk harbor without any real resistance. In response the commander-in-chief *(atābak)* Yalbughā al-'Umarī ordered an expeditionary fleet to be built in order to avenge the Cypriot assault on Alexandria.[25] The governor of Damascus, Baydamur al-Khwārizmī, announced at the end of 1365 the assembling of craftsmen in a wood near Beirut to build ships.[26] Baydamur then went personally to Beirut to supervise the construction work, while pains were taken to hide the building site from the Cypriots.[27] This ambitious project was doomed when Yalbughā al-'Umarī was killed by Mamluk rivals at the end of 1366. With him his navy also died.[28]

> When Yalbughā al-'Umarī died on Sunday, 10 Rabī' II 768/15 December 1366, work on the ships stopped. Only two ships were brought to the sea. Their names were Sanqar and Qarājā, named after two prominent amirs of the time. Baydamur hurried to build them and equipped them with masts and rudders. They remained at a place near Beirut where they were left to rot in the same way as the rest of the fleet, which was not brought down from al-Masṭabah to the sea at Beirut. A lot of money had been spent on the project but no one benefited from it . The only useful thing remaining was the iron, which the local people took from the rotting ships.[29]

In Egypt at least some of the ships had made it into the water. In Rabī' I 768/November 1366 a review of this fleet was held in Cairo, where it allegedly frightened the Catalan envoys. Music was played and the sky was lighted by

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[23]P. W. Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191-1374* (Cambridge, 1991), 166.

[24]Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 3:1:105-7; Leontios Makhairas (d. after 1432), *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus*, ed. and trans. R. M. Dawkins (Oxford, 1932), 1: § 171-73.

[25]Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah,* 7:14:329.

[26]Ibid., 330, 334, 335.

[27]Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt,* 30.

[28]Holt, *The Age of the Crusades,* 127.

[29]Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt,* 30.

naphtha bombs. Nevertheless, this fleet was never put into service after the death of its builder Yalbughā al-'Umarī.[30]

In the following years the Cypriots attacked several Mamluk coastal installations. A peace treaty was signed in 1370 only after Peter I of Lusignan was killed by his nobles, who were unhappy with the expenses of his war.[31] This peace agreement was also due to Genoese and Venetian pressure on the kingdom of Cyprus, because of the disruption in trade occasioned by these hostilities. The Venetians especially emerged after this as the main trading partners of the Mamluks, whereas the Genoese took a more hostile approach. Genoese pirates became a constant nuisance for the Mamluks thereafter. Cyprus had overextended its forces and as a result had lost its leading role in maritime trade to the Italian seafaring nations. The impotence of the kingdom of Cyprus was fully demonstrated when Genoa conquered Famagusta, the most important harbor of the island, in 1373.[32]

The lessons of the skirmishes with the Cypriots were inescapable for the Mamluks. They had been unable to defend their coastal territory from the raids of a seemingly insignificant power and had utterly failed in their attempt to carry the battle to the shores of Cyprus. What they needed was a disciplined and well-outfitted fleet capable of performing these roles in defense of their kingdom.

Some fifteen-odd years later, the Cypriot King Janus (1398-1432) supported Catalan corsairs in their pirate activities, and henceforth, the Catalans supplanted the Genoese as the main sea-borne threat to the Mamluks.[33] These pirate attacks intensified after the Catalan King Alfonso V (1416-58) came to power and pursued an aggressive policy in the eastern Mediterranean as king of Catalonia, Sicily, and Naples.[34] In response to this threat and to rumors of a new Crusade under Alfonso V, Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy (1422-38) initiated several successful expeditions against Cyprus. In 1424 he sent a small fleet to Famagusta, which was cordially received by the Genoese governor, who seems to have chosen to remain neutral in this particular Mamluk-Cypriot conflict. From Famagusta the Mamluk expedition

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[30]Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 3:1:129-130; Muḥammad ibn Qāsim al-Nuwayrī al-Iskandarānī (d. after 1374), *Kitāb al-Ilmām bi-al-I'lām fīmā Jarat bi-hi al-Aḥkām wa-al-Umūr al-Maqḍīyah fī Waq'at al-Iskandarīyah* (Hyderabad, 1968), 3:231-34; Werner Krebs, *Innen- und Aussenpolitik Ägyptens, 741-784/1341-1382* (Hamburg, 1980), 100-103.

[31]Krebs, *Innen- und Aussenpolitik Ägyptens,* 324.

[32]Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades,* 179.

[33]Aḥmad Darrāj, *L'Egypte sous le règne de Barsbay (825-841/1422-1438)* (Damascus, 1961), 241.

[34]For Alfonso V see Alan Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous, King of Aragon, Naples and Sicily, 1396-1458* (Oxford, 1990).

proceeded to Limassol, where they sacked the town.[35] Encouraged by this success, Barsbāy planned a larger expedition.[36] In the arsenals of Būlāq near Cairo new ships were built. In the following year a grand total of forty ships were gathered in Tripoli, representing the most impressive Mamluk fleet to date. This fleet departed Tripoli in Ramaḍān 828/July 1425 and sailed for Cyprus, once again availing themselves of the neutrality and hospitality of the Genoese governor of Famagusta. Near Larnaka the Mamluk fleet engaged and defeated twelve Cypriot ships under the command of the brother of the Cypriot king. This was the first Mamluk victory in a naval battle. The Mamluks then sacked the fortress of Limassol, but departed for Egypt in Shawwāl 828/August 1425 after rumors reached them that naval help from Europe was on its way to Cyprus.[37]

Janus, fearing a new Mamluk attack the following year, attempted to rally support from European allies, but with little success. Venice stood with the Mamluks, and even Alfonso V demanded money and then sent only a token force.[38] Janus's fears proved to be well-founded, and an even larger Mamluk fleet landed troops on the island who then marched on Nicosia.[39] In the ensuing battle King Janus was captured and his palace put to the torch.[40] The victorious fleet then returned to Egypt, where it had to be anchored at several coastal towns because no Egyptian harbor had the capacity to accommodate the entire fleet.[41] Janus was compelled to pay a 200,000 dinar ransom and agree to an annual tribute. He also had to

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[35]Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah,* trans. by William Popper as *History of Egypt 1382-1469* (Berkeley, 1954), 4:18-19; Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt,* 242; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 4:2:668; Makhairas, *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus,* 1:§ 652.

[36]Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 4:2: 684; Aḥmad ibn 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 1449), *Inbā' al-Ghumr bi-Abnā' al-'Umr,* ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1972), 3:346; Subhi Labib, *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens im Spätmittelalter (1171-1517)* (Wiesbaden, 1965), 353.

[37]Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt,* 242-47; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 4:21, 25-28; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 4:2:679, 694; Makhairas, *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus,* 1:§ 654-58; Darrāj, *L'Egypte sous le règne de Barsbay,* 246.

[38]Darrāj, *L'Egypte sous le règne de Barsbay,* 247-52.

[39]Sāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt,* 249; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-Ghumr,* 3:366; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 4:2:720; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 4:33-34.

[40]Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt,* 250-51; Darrāj, *L'Egypte sous le règne de Barsbay,* 256; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-Ghumr,* 3:368; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 4:2:722; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 4:37; Makhairas, *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus,* 1:§ 672-96.

[41]Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt,* 251; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-Ghumr,* 3:369; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 4:40.

promise to stop pirate activity originating from his island directed at Mamluk shores.[42]

At this juncture it would seem that the Mamluks could have changed the balance of power in the eastern Mediterranean had they occupied Cyprus. Barsbāy, however, seems to have been content that Cyprus had become a Mamluk vassal and promised to halt piracy. Although these expeditions against Cyprus were the highlight of Mamluk naval activity, they still did not reach a very high standard. The testimony of the Venetian merchant Piloti, who resided in Egypt for lengthy periods between 1396 and 1438, that the Mamluks did not have enough rudders to equip their galleys, and that they were compelled to transport troops to Cyprus on Nile barges, is certainly telling.[43] Indeed, there are only a few passing references to Barsbāy's fleet later in the sources.

Meanwhile, a new center of Frankish pirate activity developed at Rhodes, and the task of responding to this threat fell to Sultan Jaqmaq (1438-53), who dispatched a fleet of fifteen vessels from Būlāq in 1440. The fleet sailed via Cyprus to Rhodes, where they succeeded only in plundering a sugarmill. A subsequent naval encounter with the Hospitallers ended without a clear result and the Mamluk fleet, frustrated, returned to Egypt.[44] Jaqmaq waited two years before attempting a new expedition against Rhodes. In 1442 he ordered the construction of new ships in Cairo, Tripoli and Beirut,[45] and this fleet sailed in the direction of Rhodes in 1443, where an attack was launched against the nearby island of Castolorizo. Castolorizo was sacked and 200 captives taken, but before an attack on Rhodes could take place bad weather forced the fleet back to Egypt. Although the sultan was disappointed, the people considered this campaign more successful than the first.[46] Jaqmaq launched a third campaign in 1444, the fleet arriving at Rhodes in August, where troops were landed and the fortress besieged. This assault was repelled by the Hospitallers and the Mamluk force retreated.[47] In commenting on

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[42]Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt,* 252; Makhairas, *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus,* 1:§ 701.

[43]Emmanuel Piloti (d. after 1438), *L'Egypte au commencement du quinzième siècle d'après le traité d'Emmanuel Piloti de Crète (Incipit 1420),* ed. Pierre Herman Dopp (Cairo, 1950), 108-9.

[44]Hassanein Rabie, "Mamlūk Campaigns Against Rhodes (A.D. 1440-1444)" in *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times*, ed. C. E. Bosworth (Princeton, 1989), 284; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 5:81-82; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 4:3:1205.

[45]Ibn Iyās (d. ca. 1524), *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā'i' al-Duhūr,* ed. Mohamed Mostafa (Wiesbaden, 1972), 2:233; Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497), *Wajīz al-Kalām fī Dhayl 'alá Duwal al-Islām*, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf (Beirut, 1995), 2:583.

[46]Rabie, "Mamlūk Campaigns Against Rhodes," 284-85; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 5:95; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 2:238.

[47]Rabie, "Mamlūk Campaigns Against Rhodes," 285; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 2:243; Ibn

this defeat, Ibn Iyās says that God did not want Jaqmaq to enjoy the same success as his predecessor Barsbāy.[48] The Mamluks posed no subsequent threat to Rhodes, which eventually fell to the Ottomans in 1522.

The Mamluk overlordship of Cyprus led to their involvement in its internal affairs when King John (1432-58) died and the succession to his throne was disputed. His daughter Charlotte, with the support of Cypriot noblemen, was installed as queen (1458-64),[49] even though her rule was challenged by John's illegitimate son, Jacob, who sought the intervention of the Mamluks on his behalf.[50] He presented himself as the rightful heir since he was male and respected Mamluk suzerainty. While this argument won over some of the Mamluks, Ibn Taghrībirdī comments that, because he was a bastard, the laws of the Franks did not permit him to claim the throne.[51] The Mamluks nevertheless intervened on his behalf, al-Ashraf Īnāl sending a message claiming the island on behalf of Jacob.[52] Some factions of the Mamluks, however, disputed the intervention on grounds that Charlotte also recognized Mamluk supremacy and paid the tribute. While the sultan wavered, Jacob seems to have gained the support of powerful amirs through his generous spending in Cairo. These amirs insisted that Īnāl should install Jacob as king[53] and to this end a fleet was once again constructed and passed in review on the Nile before setting sail for Cyprus in autumn, 1460.[54] With the help of this Mamluk force Jacob conquered Nicosia, the capitol, although Charlotte escaped to the coastal city of Kyrenia, where she was besieged by her half brother.

Inexplicably, most of the Mamluk force supporting Jacob suddenly returned to Egypt, whether due to concerns about bad weather,[55] or more likely due to reports relating to the health of the sultan. When the inevitable struggle to place a new sultan on the throne began, no leading amir wanted to be away from Cairo. Shortly thereafter Īnāl died, and the small Mamluk force remaining on the island under Jānibak al-Ablaq was not sufficient to influence the outcome of the succession dispute.[56] The situation in Cyprus remained in limbo even though the new sultan,

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Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 5:93-95.

[48]Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 2:243.

[49]Sir George Hill, *A History of Cyprus* (Cambridge, 1948), 3:548.

[50]Ibid., 553; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 6:87.

[51]Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 6:87.

[52]Ibid., 88.

[53]Ibid., 100.

[54]Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 2:361-62; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 6:87; idem, *Ḥawādith al-Duhūr fī Madá al-Ayyām wa-al-Shuhūr,* ed. William Popper (Berkeley, 1942), 342-43.

[55]Hill, *A History of Cyprus,* 3:561-63.

[56]Ibid., 564; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 6:104.

al-Ẓāhir Khushqadam, sent additional Mamluk contingents to the island in support of Jacob in 1461 and again in 1463. In each case these troops returned without having accomplished their objective, much to the consternation of the sultan. According to Ibn Taghrībirdī, Khushqadam was unable to prevent these troops from returning to Egypt, even though in 1462 he issued an order forbidding the entrance into Mamluk harbors of any ship returning from Cyprus.[57]

Ultimately Jacob prevailed, even managing to conquer Famagusta, which had been in the hands of the Genoese for nearly one hundred years.[58] Shortly thereafter Jacob killed the Mamluk amir Jānibak, even though Jānibak had fought by his side. Jacob appeased Khushqadam's anger about this murder with large sums of money.[59] This ended the presence of Mamluk troops on the island. In the autumn of 1464 Jacob finally became lord of the whole of Cyprus when he conquered Kyrenia, the last stronghold of his half sister. Jacob II was the first king of Cyprus to rule over the entire island in a hundred years. However, the rule of the Lusignans over Cyprus would soon end. Jacob II had married the Venetian noblewoman Katherine Cornaro and when Jacob III (1473-74) died after only one year in power, she became queen and then abdicated in 1489, leaving Cyprus to the Venetians.[60] The island would later fall to the Ottomans, who were able to secure their conquest with a powerful navy, something the Mamluks lacked.

The feat of Vasco da Gama in sailing around the Cape of Good Hope in 1498 resulted in a Portuguese presence near the east African coast which presented a threat to Mamluk and Venetian trade in the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. In fact, the Portuguese had produced a naval revolution with a fleet of ocean-going, cannon-heavy sailing ships possessing great range, mobility, and fire power and capable of operating the year around far from home. Neither the Mamluks nor the Ottomans could compete on the open seas with them. The Portuguese presence had a great impact on the revenues the Mamluks derived from the spice trade, and Mamluk merchants increasingly complained that the Portuguese captured Muslim trading ships in the Indian Ocean.[61] The Mamluks attempted to counter the Portuguese by striking an alliance with the rulers of Gujarat in Northwest India;

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[57]Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 7:42, 46, 51, 57-58; idem, *Ḥawādith al-Duhūr,* 409, 434-37; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 2:385.

[58]Hill, *A History of Cyprus,* 3:590; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 7:60.

[59]Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, 3:591-92; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 7:60-61.

[60]Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge,* 217.

[61]Marino Sanuto (d. ca. 1533), *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto (1496-1533),* ed. Guglielmo Berchet (Venice, 1881), 6:246, 249; Palmira Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery* (New York, 1994), 112.

the Portuguese seaman Lopo-Soares reports a passing encounter with a fleet of the Mamluk-Gujarat alliance near Malabar in 1504.[62] The Portuguese also posed a threat to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina and it was for this reason that Sultan Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī dispatched several vessels in the direction of India in 1505, although they seem to have had no effect on Portuguese activities.[63] The impotence of the Mamluk response to these Portuguese incursions may be gauged by the fact that al-Ghawrī had to resort to threats that he would destroy the grave of Jesus and other Christian places of pilgrimage if Portuguese actions in the Indian Ocean did not stop.[64] The Portuguese clearly considered these idle threats and the Portuguese King Manuel I (1495-1521) soothed the nerves of the Pope by pointing out the Mamluks were too interested in the money derived from Christian pilgrims to do anything which would interrupt this steady flow of revenue.[65]

During the waning days of the Mamluk Sultanate the Mamluks enlisted help from both the Ottomans and the Venetians in their attempts to counter Portuguese naval activities, which, among other things, sought to divert the spice trade away from its old routes through the Gulf and the Red Sea.[66] In spite of the strained relations resulting from the Mamluk-Ottoman war in Anatolia from 1485 to 1491, there is clear evidence that from 1507 on, the Ottomans provided the Mamluks with war materials such as wood and copper, and also sent marine soldiers.[67] According to Portuguese sources, the Venetians assisted the Mamluks by providing boat-building experts and cannons.[68] Such help from the Venetians is very probable because the Levant trade, now clearly threatened by the Portuguese, was a major source of income for them. With Venetian assistance, the Mamluks now intensified the building of ships at Suez.[69] At the same time Qānṣawh created a small flotilla in the Mediterranean to facilitate the transfer of important war materials from

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[62]Genevieve Bouchon, ″Le Premier Voyage de Lopo Soarres en Inde 1504-1505,″ *Mare Luso-Indicum* 3 (1976): 67-68.

[63]Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 4:84-85, 95-96.

[64]Virginia de Castro e Almeida, ed., *Chroniques de Garcia de Resende, João de Barros, Damião de Goes, Gaspar Correa, Fernão Lopes de Castanheda,* Les grands navigateurs et colons portugais du XVe et du XVIe siècles, vol. 5 (Paris, 1940), 33-36; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower,* 113; S. M. Imamuddin, ″Maritime Trade under the Mamluks of Egypt (644-923/1250-1517),″ *Hamdard Islamicus* 3, no. 4 (1980): 73.

[65]*Chroniques de Garcia de Resende,* 36-37; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower,* 113.

[66]Andrew C. Hess, ″The Ottoman Conquest of Egypt (1517) and the Beginning of the Sixteenth-Century World War,″ *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4 (1973):75.

[67]Sanuto, *I Diarii*, 7:12-13, 128, 152; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower,* 114.

[68]*Chroniques de Garcia de Resende,* 158-59.

[69]Sanuto, *I Diarii*, 10:110-11; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower,* 115.

Asia Minor to Egypt. These ships were later lost in September 1510, when they were sunk by ships of the Hospitallers of Rhodes.[70]

The fleet resulting from this new collaboration with the Ottomans and the Venetians went to sea in 912/1507, destined for India under the joint command of the Mamluk Ḥusayn al-Kūrdī and the Ottoman Salmān Ra'īs.[71] The fleet was initially victorious in an encounter with the Portuguese at Chaul in January 1508,[72] but in a return engagement the Portuguese destroyed a great number of the Mamluk ships at Diu on the northwest coast of India.[73] The manifest inability of the Mamluks to guarantee the security of maritime trade in the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea finally moved the Indians to threaten collaboration with the Portuguese. A delegation carried this threat to Cairo in 1510. Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī tried to appease them, but it was another full five years before a new expedition could be mounted to the Red Sea.[74]

In the spring of 1514 the sultan had personally gone to Suez to observe the construction of his new fleet. There he found that the command of the fleet was in the hands of the Ottoman captain Salmān, who had at his disposal two thousand Ottoman troops.[75] Although rumors abounded that Sultan Selīm I (1512-20), having just registered a tremendous victory over the Safavids of Iran in August 1514, might next attack the Mamluks,[76] the joint Mamluk-Ottoman fleet—consisting of twenty ships outfitted with cannons—sailed for India in the summer of 1515.[77]

The story of the end of the Mamluk Sultanate is well known, and was played out while this fleet was at sea. Perhaps the Ottomans, during this period of collaboration, had discovered the true state of Mamluk military preparedness. Whatever the case, the Ottoman army shortly defeated the Mamluks in the field at Marj Dābiq, north of Aleppo, on 25 Rajab/24 August 1516,[78] Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī

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[70]Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 4:191-92; Sanuto, *I Diarii*, 10:432, 636, 799; 11:76, 105, 227-28, 394; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower,* 116.

[71]Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower,* 115.

[72]Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 4:142. The news of the Mamluk naval success led to three days of celebrations in Cairo.

[73]*Chroniques de Garcia de Resende,* 186-91; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower,* 115; Jean Louis Bacqué-Grammont and Anne Kroell, *Mamlouks, Ottomans et Portugais en Mer Rouge: l'Affaire de Djedda en 1517* (Cairo, 1988), 2. The news of the total Mamluk defeat let to the despair of the Mamluk Sultan Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī (see Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 4:156).

[74]Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 4:182, 185; Sanuto, *I Diarii*, 11:65, 75-76, 105, 479; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower,* 116.

[75]Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 4:362-65.

[76]Ibid., 446.

[77]Ibid., 467.

[78]Ibid., 5:85.

losing his life in defense of his kingdom. The Ottomans then took Cairo the very next year, hanging the last Mamluk sultan Ṭūmān Bāy (1516-17) at the Bāb al-Zuwaylah gate.[79] When the Mamluk-Ottoman naval forces returned in August 1517, the Ottoman captain Salmān had thrown his Mamluk co-commander into the sea once he had heard of the Ottoman victory.[80] This expedition had never made it to India, although Salmān had launched an unsuccessful attack against Aden.[81] He did repulse a Portuguese attack on Jiddah in April 1517, after which the Portuguese departed from the Red Sea.[82]

In summarizing Mamluk attempts to wage sea-borne warfare, the following observations may be made. There was never a regular fleet operating in Mamluk waters, but rather fleets were built on an ad hoc basis for specific expeditions, and when the expedition was over, the ships were left to rot. This happened after the expeditions against Cyprus under Barsbāy, and again against Rhodes under Jaqmaq. There was no continuity to programs of ship building and naval preparedness from one sultan to the next, and such attempts as there were ceased with the death of the sultan who initiated them, as was the case with Baybars I, al-Ashraf Khalīl, and Yalbughā al-'Umarī. The only sustained naval activity during the entire period of the Mamluk Sultanate was that which took place in the Indian Ocean and Red Sea, lasting more than ten years. Most naval operations were carried out in close proximity to the Mamluk coast, the main focus being Cyprus. The attacks against Rhodes and activities in the Red Sea were exceptions. Mamluk naval expeditions were reactions to specific acts of aggression against Mamluk coastal towns or merchant activities. Acts of piracy against Mamluk shores continued throughout the entire period of the sultanate, in spite of Mamluk attempts to put a stop to this activity. For the whole of the Mamluk era there is no evidence of a state-sponsored trading fleet, but only of a few vessels owned by merchants. Apparently, no Mamluk ship was ever seen in a European harbor. This second component of Mamluk naval policy, the waging of sea-borne warfare, had only one great success: the capture of the Cypriot King Janus in 1426. All other expeditions ended in failure.

NAVAL DEFENSE THROUGH TREATY

Another facet of Mamluk naval policy was their attempt to secure their naval defenses through alliances and treaties with European powers. Two phases can be

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[79]Ibid., 5:172.

[80]Ibid., 5:199; David Ayalon, *Gunpowder and Firearms in the Mamluk Kingdom* (London, 1956), 82.

[81]Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 5:81.

[82]Bacqué-Grammont, *Mamlouks, Ottomans et Portugais en Mer Rouge,* 28-29.

distinguished in this effort. The first lasted until 1291 and concluded with the final expulsion of the Crusaders. The diplomatic thrust of treaties concluded during this period was to insure Mamluk rule of the Holy Land. The majority of these treaties were concluded with the Crusader states, which found it necessary and expedient to accept certain compromises due to heavy Mamluk pressure. One early treaty, dating from 669/1271 and concluded between Baybars I and the Hospitallers,[83] required the Hospitallers to stop any foreign incursion into Mamluk territory, whether by land or sea, save one by a large force headed by a European king.[84] Similarly, Sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn concluded a treaty in 680/1281 with Bohemond VII of Tripoli, which extracted from Bohemond a promise that he would not aid any enemy of the Mamluks who attacked them.[85] An agreement struck between Qalāwūn and the Kingdom of Jerusalem in 682/1283 went even further. It required the authorities in Acre to give the Mamluks two months′ advance warning of any landing of an overseas force on Mamluk shores.[86] A similar treaty of Qalāwūn's was concluded with Tyre in 684/1285, wherein the Europeans pledged to secure the Mamluk state against foreign invaders and to withhold assistance from other Franks attempting to harm the Mamluks.[87] It should be noted that, in spite of these treaties, both Tyre and Acre fell to Mamluk forces in 1291. In addition to the Crusader states, the Kingdom of Lesser Armenia was forced to enter into a similar pact at the end of the fifteenth century. [88]

The greatest success of this policy of securing naval defense through diplomacy was the Catalan-Mamluk treaty of 689/1290, an agreement reached between Alfonso III (1285-91) and Qalāwūn. The Catalans became an emerging power in the eastern Mediterranean after occupying Sicily in 1282. Searching for new allies, the Catalans approached the Mamluks.[89] In the resulting treaty they pledged they were prepared to fight in defense of the Mamluk Empire on the sea and proclaimed their desire to be friends with all the friends of the Mamluks. The treaty is explicit in its mention of the pope, other Frankish rulers, Venice, Genoa, and the Crusaders:

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[83]P. M. Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy (1260-1290): Treaties of Baybars and Qalāwūn with Christian Rulers* (Leiden, 1995), 49.

[84]Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shá,* 14:50; Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy,* 55; Urbain Vermeulen, ″Le traité d′armistice relatif à al-Marqab conclu entre Baybars et les Hospitaliers (1. Ramadan 669/13. Avril 1271),″ *Orientalia Loveniensia Periodica* 22 (1991): 185-93.

[85]Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 1:3:977; Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy,* 65.

[86]Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir, *Tashrīf al-Ayyām wa-al-'Uṣūr fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Manṣūr,* ed. Murād Kamīl (Cairo, 1961), 41-42; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shá,* 14:59-60; Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy,* 84-85.

[87]Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir, *Tashrīf al-Ayyām,* 109; Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy,* 116.

[88]Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir, *Tashrīf al-Ayyām,* 102; Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy,* 103.

[89]Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy,* 129-31.

if any of these intended harm to the Mamluks, the Catalan king would prevent it. He would sequester the enemy's galleys in order to prevent them from attacking the Mamluk coast and harbors. If one of the Crusader states should break its treaty commitments to the Mamluks, the Catalans pledged not to provide troops or weapons to that state. They would never conspire with the pope or others against the Mamluks, and if they should learn of such a conspiracy, they would be under obligation to inform the Mamluks.[90]

This treaty was renewed in 692/1293 between al-Ashraf Khalīl and Jacob II (1291-1327).[91] Most Europeans were shocked that such a treaty would be concluded by a European power with the Mamluks after they had taken Acre in 1291. Pope Nicholas IV (1288-92) had, in fact, already announced a total embargo on trade with the Mamluks.[92] And in fact, the Catalans concluded peace with the Holy See in 1302, after which they joined the trade embargo.[93] In the end, the Catalans never had to demonstrate whether or not they would truly have provided a naval defense for the Mamluks. After 1292 the Mamluks controlled the entire Syro-Palestinian littoral, but since their naval inferiority remained, they continued to try to bolster their defenses against piracy through treaties.

The intent of Mamluk policy during the second phase was to prevent the possible return of the Crusaders to positions from which they had been driven and to combat Frankish piracy on Mamluk shores. For a time immediately after the fall of Acre and the resulting papal ban on trade with the Mamluks, there could be no commercial treaties between Europe and the Mamluk state. Observance of the embargo was fairly strict during the first half of the thirteenth century, but even then it was not completely effective. During this period what remained of the Levant trade passed through Cyprus, European merchandise being transported to the island from where it was transshipped on small Cypriot boats to the Mamluk coast. By the second half of the fourteenth century the embargo began to loosen, due in part to the desire of the Italian seafaring nations to trade with the Mamluks and the possibility of purchasing exemptions from the papal ban. This arrangement proved to be lucrative for the popes, and Italian merchants availed themselves of the opportunity to purchase exemptions allowing them one or even more trips to

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[90]Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir, *Tashrīf al-Ayyām,* 159-60; Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy,* 134-35.

[91]Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʻshá*, 14:67-68; Maximiliano A. Alarcón y Santón and Ramón García de Linares, *Los documentos árabes diplomáticos del Archivo de la Corona de Aragón* (Madrid, 1940), 341-42.

[92]Gherardo Ortalli, ″Venice and Papal Bans on Trade with the Levant: The Role of the Jurist″ in *Intercultural Contacts in the Medieval Mediterranean: Studies in Honour of David Jacoby,* ed. Benjamin Arbel (London, 1996), 242.

[93]Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1983), 18.

the Muslim Levant.[94] When the Venetians concluded a new trade agreement in 1345, they noted that they had not been in Mamluk territory for twenty-three years.[95]

The Italian maritime powers replaced Cyprus in the Levant trade after the Cypriot attack on Alexandria in 1365. Subsequently, Venice became the main trading partner and ally of the Mamluks, with whom they maintained harmonious relations. Genoese and Catalan pirates, however, continued to harass the Mamluks.[96] Venetian support for the Mamluks against Frankish corsairs was demonstrated during the Cypriot-Mamluk war in 1366, when they ordered an embargo on the export of weapons and military support for Cyprus, despite the protests of Pope Urban V.[97] Another instance of Venetian support for the Mamluks took place in 1403, when they warned the Mamluks of an imminent Genoese attack on the Syro-Palestinian coast. The commander of the Genoese fleet, the French Marshal Boucicaut,[98] learned of the betrayal when he captured a Venetian ship near Beirut, whose captain confessed to having warned the coastal towns.[99] In an act of revenge, the Genoese looted a Venetian spice repository in Beirut.[100]

The Mamluks and Cypriots concluded a treaty in 1414, the Cypriots pledging to cease pirate activities and to return all Muslim prisoners who had not been baptized.[101] This peace was fleeting, however, and in 1425 Barsbāy dispatched another expedition against the island. During this operation both the Genoese and the Catalans agreed to remain apart from the conflict in return for a Mamluk agreement to favorable trade relations.[102] The Genoese governor of Famagusta, acting in accord with this new relationship, allowed the Mamluk expeditionary fleet to

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[94]Ortalli, ″Venice and Papal Bans on Trade with the Levant,″ 242-48; Ashtor, *Levant Trade,* 17-18.

[95]*Diplomatarium Veneto-Levantinum sive Acta et diplomata res venetas, graecas atque Levantis, illustrantia,* ed. G. M. Thomas and R. Predelli (Venice, 1880), 1:291; Ortalli, ″Venice and Papal Bans on Trade with the Levant,″ 248.

[96]Eliyahu Ashtor, ″The Venetian Supremacy in Levantine Trade: Monopoly or Pre-Colonialism?,″ *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 3 (1974): 11-16.

[97]Hill, *A History of Cyprus,* 2:342.

[98]At that time Genoa had fallen under French influence.

[99]Jean Le Maingre de Boucicaut, ″Livre des faicts″ in *Nouvelle collection des mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de France*, series 1, vol. 2, ed. Joseph Fr. Michaud and Jean-Joseph-François Poujoulat (Paris, 1850), 631-32; Joseph Delaville Le Roulx, *La France en Orient au xive siècle* (Paris, 1886), 1:438.

[100]Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt,* 32-34.

[101]Makhairas, *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus,* 1:§ 636, 646.

[102]Ashtor, *Levant Trade,* 289.

anchor in his harbor.[103] This signaled a change from the aggressive policy of the Genoese toward the Mamluks that had characterized this relationship at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth century. Catalan piracy, however, remained a significant irritant to the Mamluks during the fifteenth century, even though the Catalan King Alfonso V and Sultan Barsbāy had concluded a peace treaty.[104] Ashtor thinks Alfonso V agreed to peace in the hope of achieving better conditions for trade, and when these did not materialize, he unleashed his pirates in the quest for booty.[105] On the other hand, the Mamluks were successful in pacifying Cyprus and the Cypriots were compelled to cooperate. The Mamluks were able to use the island as an intermediate port in 1440 and 1443 on the way to and from Rhodes.[106]

The Venetians continued through the fifteenth century the policy of cooperation with the Mamluks, which, though not a formal alliance, was seen by both sides to be mutually advantageous. The Venetians continued to benefit from favorable trade relations with the Mamluks and took care to secure Mamluk interests when possible, as, for example, in 1444, when they participated in a Crusader alliance against the Ottomans, but ordered their captains not to attack the Mamluks or Mamluk possessions during this anti-Ottoman campaign.[107] Twenty years later the Venetians demanded the release of Muslim merchants who had been seized by the Hospitallers of Rhodes while on board a Venetian vessel. This show of force secured the release of the merchants,[108] and bolstered the Venetian role in the transport of Mamluk merchants and their goods between Alexandria and Beirut. Mamluk-Venetian relations drew even closer in 1489, when the last Cypriot queen abdicated in favor of the Venetians. When Sultan Qāytbāy expressed some displeasure at this development and the fact he had not been consulted before the fact, he was mollified by assurances that a Venetian government and fleet in Cyprus would be all the more effective in providing protection against pirates, due to closer proximity, and that the yearly tribute of 8000 ducats would be paid by the Venetians as it had been by the Cypriots.[109]

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[103]Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 4:20, 26; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 4:2:671-72, 694.

[104]Reginaldo Ruiz Orsati, ″Tratado de Paz entre Alfonso V de Aragon y el Sultan de Egipto, al-Mālik al-Ashraf Barsbāy,″ *Al-Andalus* 4 (1939): 342-44 (Arabic text), 365-68 (Spanish translation).

[105]Ashtor, *Levant Trade,* 301.

[106]Rabie, ″Mamlūk Campaigns Against Rhodes,″ 284-85; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 5:81-82, 95; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 4:3:1205; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 2:224, 238.

[107]Ashtor, *Levant Trade,* 292.

[108]Archivio di Stato, Venice, Senato-Secreta, 22, fol. 37b.; Ashtor, *Levant Trade,* 452-53.

[109]Hill, *The History of Cyprus*, 3:821-23.

The relationship, of course, had a few ups and downs. In 1512 Sultan Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī felt obliged to send a communication via a Venetian envoy complaining that the Venetians had become lax in patrolling for pirates and Cyprus had once again become a haven for freebooters. The Venetians responded that they wanted to fulfill their obligations but had been temporarily distracted by affairs in Europe.[110] Venice promised to redouble their efforts in order that the Mamluks would have no reason to complain.[111] This exchange is clear evidence of the fact that the Mamluks had placed at least a part of the responsibility for their naval defense in the hands of the Venetians. The Venetians also assisted the Mamluks in the construction of ships and cannons in response to the Portuguese appearance in the Red Sea at the beginning of the sixteenth century.[112]

Another aspect of the Mamluk policy of relying on others to provide their naval defenses was their employment of Maghribi mercenaries, probably recruited from territories controlled by the Hafsids, who, in contrast to the Mamluks, possessed considerable skills in equipping and manning ships.[113] A number of Maghribi mercenaries were involved in the unsuccessful defense of Alexandria against Peter I of Lusignan in 1365.[114] When a counter offensive was planned under the command of Yalbughā al-'Umarī in the following year, both Maghribi and Turcoman mercenaries were employed to man Mamluk vessels. The planned attack never took place, however, due to the death of al-'Umarī.[115] Contemporary observers noted the prowess of the Maghribis in naval defense. When an enemy ship was captured in the harbor of Alexandria in 1368, the Mamluk historian al-Nuwayrī suggested the use of Maghribi mercenaries to secure the harbor.[116]

Maghribi seamen were held in high regard throughout the Mamluk period. When the Mamluks constructed their Red Sea fleet in 1505 to fight the Portuguese,

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[110]The unfortunate events had been the military successes of the League of Cambrai, which was under the leadership of France and Germany, directed against Venice. The fighting led to territorial losses for Venice. Things looked better in 1511 when the League of Cambrai had cracked and the partners of the League started to fight each other.

[111]M. Reinaud, ″Traités de commerce entre la république de Venise et les derniers sultans mameloucs d'Egypte,″ *Journal Asiatique*, 2nd series, 4 (1829): 34-35.

[112]*Chroniques de Garcia de Resende,* 158-59.

[113]Hans-Rudolf Singer, ″Der Maghreb und die Pyrenäenhalbinsel bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters″ in *Geschichte der arabischen Welt,* ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Munich, 1991), 315.

[114]Krebs, *Innen- und Aussenpolitik Ägyptens,* 287.

[115]Ibid., 100.

[116]Al-Nuwayrī al-Iskandarānī, *Kitāb al-Ilmām,* 279-82, 393; Martina Müller-Wiener, *Eine Stadtgeschichte Alexandrias von 564/1169 bis in die Mitte des 9./15. Jahrhunderts: Verwaltung und innerstädtische Organisationsformen* (Berlin, 1992), 57-58; Krebs, *Innen- und Aussenpolitik Ägyptens,* 324-25.

the majority of the crews consisted of Turcomans, black slaves, and Maghribis.[117] The evidence for these Maghribi mercenaries is confined to Egypt. There is no evidence that they served along the Syro-Palestinian coast. The Turcoman naval mercenaries derived from the Turcoman principalities along the coast of Asia Minor, where they were active as corsairs. This activity gave rise to Venetian demands that the Mamluks prevent Turcoman piracy against Venetian vessels, to which the Mamluks agreed in a Mamluk-Venetian commercial treaty in 1415.[118] This promise to restrain the Turcomans does not seem to have been strictly enforced, however, because in 1471 we read about the Venetian senate complaining to the Mamluk sultan that the Mamluk governors in Syria were allowing Turcoman pirates into their harbors, where they were attacking Venetian vessels.[119] Finally, we also find mention of a Castilian, Pedro de la Randa, who fought as a naval mercenary for the Mamluks, but was in the end beheaded because he refused to become a Muslim.[120] To sum up, it seems that naval mercenaries were only occasionally employed by the Mamluks. This happened in cases of urgent need, such as the Mamluk-Cypriot War of 1365-70 and during the few seaborne military expeditions of the Mamluks.

When all other avenues failed, the Mamluks were not averse to buying security from attacks from the sea. According to the Venetian merchant Emmanuel Piloti, Sultan Faraj (1399-1405, 1405-12) dispatched an important spice merchant in 1403 with a large sum of money to Alexandria in order to bribe a Genoese fleet which had already looted Beirut and was threatening Alexandria. In this instance, fate was on the side of the Mamluks. The fleet had departed before the merchant arrived to pay the bribe, its crews having been decimated by the outbreak of a virulent disease.[121]

If I may use a currently topical term, the attempts of the Mamluks to "outsource" their naval defenses met with mixed success. The treaties with the Crusader states prior to 1291 allowed the Mamluks to gain total control over the Holy Land. The second phase of treaties and alliances, after the fall of Acre in 1291, achieved a limited success in that the Crusaders were unable to reestablish themselves in the Levant, but proved ineffective in preventing attacks by Frankish corsairs. Although the Venetians assisted the Mamluks on many occasions, they could not provide a

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[117]Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 4:84-85.

[118]*Diplomatarium Veneto-Levantinum,* no. 168, 2:312-13; Riccardo Predelli, *I Libri commemoriali della Republica di Venezia, Regesti*, no. 168 (Venice, 1883), 3:376.

[119]Ashtor, *Levant Trade,* 454.

[120]Pero Tafur, *Travels and Adventures 1435-1439*, ed. and trans. Malcolm Letts (London, 1926), 97-99.

[121]Piloti, *L´Egypte,* 90.

defense over the entire Mamluk coast, which was subjected to repeated corsair attacks. The deployment of naval mercenaries had only a very limited effect and was not carried out continuously or on a large scale. Meanwhile, the populations of the Mamluk coastal cities suffered from this inability of the Mamluks to protect them from continuing pirate attacks. The frustrations of the local population are illustrated by an incident in 1439, when a group of locals tried to take matters into their own hands. Declaring jihad, they boarded three vessels in Damietta and set sail to defend Beirut, but were sunk in Beirut harbor by four Frankish ships.[122]

WHY DID THE MAMLUK EMPIRE FAIL TO BECOME A NAVAL POWER?

The question of why the Mamluks did not create a regular fleet and thereby extend their influence and power in the eastern Mediterranean has been addressed by David Ayalon in his short study, "The Mamluks and Naval Power."[123] He cites two principal causes: a lack of natural resources, especially wood and iron, and their social and military preferences based on their tradition of mounted warfare. The ingrained disdain of these archers on horseback for other forms of combat not only worked against their ever becoming a naval power, but also extended to their reluctance to embrace and develop an infantry and its concomitant weaponry such as the cross bow and, later, firearms. He also cites the absence of a credible naval challenge outside the Mediterranean prior to the emergence of the Portuguese threat in the Indian Ocean. The Mamluks were prepared to accept naval inferiority in the Mediterranean so long as their trade with India was not at risk.[124]

The scarcity of wood has often been cited as a reason for the inferiority of Muslim ship building.[125] Such arguments may have led Ayalon to conclude that the Mamluks lacked sufficient wood for ship building on a large scale. Nevertheless, the Mamluks ruled over North Syria and parts of Cilicia, where there were ample forests. There were also considerable timber resources near Beirut and Tripoli. The Mamluks constructed large parts of their few transport fleets in Syria in proximity to these forests. Even Egypt had wood. The fleet that transported Jacob II to Cyprus to install him as king in 1460 was constructed in Egypt in a single year.[126] Wood could be found in the Delta and along the Nile. Fahmy has written

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[122]Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 4:3:1170-72.

[123] David Ayalon,"The Mamluks and Naval Power," 1-12.

[124]Ibid., 1.

[125]George F. Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times* (Princeton, 1951), 5; Ekkehard Eickhoff, *Seekrieg und Seepolitik zwischen Islam und Abendland: Das Mittelmeer unter byzantinischer und arabischer Hegemonie (650-1040)* (Berlin, 1966), 134, 155-56.

[126]Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 7:87, 102.

about a variety of trees which grew in Egypt in the Middle Ages.[127] Christides thinks the argument about the alleged scarcity of wood is highly questionable. According to him the amounts by which the forests in the Middle East are alleged to have diminished in the Middle Ages have been greatly exaggerated.[128]

Besides relying on their own timber resources, the Mamluks could also import wood from Asia Minor, if needed. They did this several times during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[129] The facts surrounding the alleged lack of iron suggest this argument too is fallacious. Iron was especially of value for shipbuilding in the Mediterranean because here the planks of the vessels were held together with iron nails, whereas "in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean they were stitched."[130] Iron was mined in the Mamluk Empire and both Ibn Baṭṭūṭah and al-Qalqashandī wrote about an iron mine near Beirut.[131] According to Ayalon, this mine did not produce enough iron and, moreover, it was the only one in all of Syria and Egypt at the time.[132] On the other hand, Fahmy writes about iron found in Egypt in the eighth century and made into nails for the construction of ships.[133] Even if it is not clear if there was still sufficient iron in Egypt in Mamluk times, it could have been imported from elsewhere within the Muslim realm, for example, from Asia Minor[134] or the Maghrib.[135] Moreover, there was always a possibility of importing iron from Europe, despite papal injunctions. In a Catalan-Mamluk treaty of 689/1290, for example, the Catalans promised to sell iron to the Mamluks.[136] Subsequently, after Catalan-Mamluk relations had deteriorated, the Venetians exported iron to the Mamluks.[137] If iron was in such short supply, it is hard to explain events like the one which took place near Beirut in 1366, when the local

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[127]Aly Mohamed Fahmy, *Muslim Naval Organisation* (London, 1950), 75-79.

[128]Vassilios Christides, *The Conquest of Crete by the Andalusians (ca. 824-961)* (Athens, 1984), 49.

[129]Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk,* 4:2:689; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr,* 2:356; 4:191-92; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469),* 6:88; Sanuto, *I Diarii,* 10:432, 636, 799; 11: 76, 105, 227-28, 394; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower,* 116; Ashtor, *Levant Trade,* 480.

[130]Fahmy, *Muslim Naval Organisation,* 80.

[131]Ibn Baṭṭūṭah (d. 1368), *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭah* (Beirut, 1964), 62; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shá,* 4:111.

[132]Ayalon, *Gunpowder and Firearms,* 102.

[133]Fahmy, *Muslim Naval Organisation,* 81-82.

[134]Ayalon, *Gunpowder and Firearms,* 102.

[135]Eickhoff, *Seekrieg und Seepolitik,* 124-25.

[136]Ibn 'Abd al-Ẓāhir, *Tashrīf al-Ayyām,* 161; Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy,* 136.

[137]Rolf Sprandel, ″Le commerce du fer en méditerranée orientale au moyen âge″ in *Sociétés et compagnies de commerce en Orient et dans l'océan Indien* (Actes du huitième colloque international d'histoire maritime, Beirut 5.-10. September 1966), ed. Michel Mollat (Paris, 1970), 389-92.

population was allowed to scavenge the abandoned fleet which had been constructed for the planned invasion of Cyprus, carrying away iron and other salvageable materials.[138] The locals clearly knew how to make use of it.[139]

We must agree with Ayalon, however, regarding the Mamluks' commitment to a social order based on mounted warfare and its concomitant training and exercises as predisposing the Mamluks to reject the idea of seafaring.[140] There was not only no prestige associated with waging war on the sea, but to address someone as *"yā usṭūlī"* (sailor) allegedly would send him into a rage, even though in earlier times seamen had been referred to as "warriors in the path of God."[141] Young mamluks were inculcated in the art and discipline of *furūsīyah* as a component of their formal education,[142] and with few exceptions, only members of the Mamluk military class were allowed to ride horses.[143] The bond between mamluks, their horses, and their social hierarchy was thus complete. It goes without saying that no part of their education or training broached the subject of seamanship or waging seaborne warfare.

The Mamluks were not unaware of their naval weakness. Baybars I, writing to the king of Cyprus after his naval forces had been defeated by the latter in 1271, notes that the horses of the Franks were their ships and the ships of the Mamluks were their horses, meaning that the Franks might have the upper hand on the sea with their ships, but on land where it really counted, the Mamluks had more success with their horses.[144] This weakness was commented on by some contemporary historians. Al-Maqrīzī contrasts the situation of the Mamluks with that of the Fatimids, who he claims had five thousand naval captains in Egypt in the eleventh century. He also notes that under Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn there existed a special secretariat for the fleet *(dīwān al-usṭūl),* which administered the construction of fleets and the payment of crews. But the later Ayyubids and the Mamluks turned their backs on this heritage.[145] Ayalon has shown that from more than a thousand

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[138]Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt,* 30.

[139]This has not changed until now. During the Lebanese civil war a great part of the rails of the trains between Beirut and Tripoli vanished without a trace.

[140]Ayalon, ″The Mamluks and Naval Power,″ 1.

[141]Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ,* 3:17-18.

[142]Ulrich Haarmann, ″Der arabische Osten im späten Mittelalter 1250-1517″ in *Geschichte der arabischen Welt*, ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Munich, 1991), 222-25.

[143]David Ayalon, ″The Muslim City and the Mamluk Military Aristocracy,″ *Princeton Near East Paper* 20 (1975): 25.

[144]Ibn ʻAbd al-Ẓāhir, *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir,* 376-77.

[145]Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 3:14, 17-18.

biographies from the Mamluk era, not a single one recounts the life of a naval commander.[146]

There was a considerable conservatism in the Mamluk Empire which resulted in a reluctance to embrace change. Ayalon's point that the Mamluks were uninterested in naval warfare due to the absence of a credible seaborne challenge outside the Mediterranean prior to the emergence of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean underlines this conservatism. They would accept their naval inferiority in the Mediterranean as long as their trade with India was not at risk. This conservatism emerged in other military areas as well, most notably in their reluctance to adopt firearms, well-illustrated by the overthrow of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (1496-98) when he attempted to form a military unit of black slaves with firearms.[147]

It is interesting to speculate on what might have been. Had the Mamluks not ceded the Mediterranean to the Europeans, might not they have profited to a much greater degree from trade? One can only guess at the possibilities that might have existed for Mamluk merchants in Europe. Had they understood that the idea of a new Crusade had become increasingly unpopular and unlikely, might not they have rebuilt their coastal towns? Had they not been wed to a social and military structure so imbued with an ethos dependent upon horses, might they not have challenged Europe for naval supremacy in the Mediterranean?

A single Mamluk officer has left us a rather amazing document. Muḥammad ibn Mengli wrote a treatise on naval warfare, ″Al-Aḥkām al-Mulūkīyah wa-al-Ḍawābit al-Nāmūsīyah fī Fann al-Qitāl fī al-Baḥr.″[148] He was a member of the *awlād al-nās,* his father having come to Egypt from Central Asia.[149] While his exact rank is unclear, he refers to himself as *naqīb al-jaysh* in Alexandria in 770/1368-69, and has been judged by a modern biographer to have been among the most important dignitaries in Alexandria at the time.[150] Ibn Mengli was aware of the work on naval warfare written by the Byzantine Emperor Leon VI (886-912), the ″Naumachia,″[151] and incorporates part of it in his own work.[152] Ibn Mengli

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[146]Ayalon, ″The Mamluks and Naval Power,″ 5.

[147]Holt, *The Age of the Crusades,* 198.

[148]Gerhard Zoppoth, ″Muḥammad ibn Mängli: Ein ägyptischer Offizier und Schriftsteller des 14. Jahrhunderts,″ *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 53 (1957): 289.

[149]Ibid., 293.

[150]Ibid., 296.

[151]Muḥammad Ibn Mengli (d. after 1378), ″Al-Aḥkām al-Mulūkīyah wa-al-Ḍawābit al-Nāmūsīyah fī Fann al-Qitāl fī al-Baḥr,″ Dār al-Kutub, Cairo, MS 23 Taymūr (microfilm, University of Chicago Library), fol. 71.

[152]Christides, *The Conquest of Crete*, 63; idem, ″Naval Warfare in the Eastern Mediterranean (6th-14th centuries): An Arabic Translation of Leo VI′s Naumachia,″ *Graeco-Arabica* 3 (1984): 138.

demonstrates a detailed knowledge of naval warfare in this work and even asserts that Muslim methods of waging naval warfare were superior to those of the Byzantines.[153] At the very least this is evidence that a high-ranking Mamluk officer had given serious thought to the theory of naval warfare.

Another possible source of inspiration for the Mamluks was Muslim naval experience in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.[154] This is most impressively illustrated at the end of the fifteenth century in the book *Kitāb al-Fawā'id fī Uṣūl al-Baḥr wa-al-Qawā'id* by Ibn Mājid al-Najdī. Ibn Mājid writes about the use of stars and compass in navigation and describes the particularities of seafaring in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.[155] There is no evidence, however, that experience gathered in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean was ever put to work in the Mediterranean by Mamluk seafarers, and perhaps because they were never challenged or stimulated, these mariners found themselves both technically and tactically wanting when the Portuguese suddenly appear in these "Muslim" waters.[156] What might have been if the Mamluks could have combined the theoretical knowledge of naval warfare of Ibn Mengli with the seafaring abilities of a Red Sea captain like Ibn Mājid?

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[153]Christides, "Naval Warfare," 139.

[154]G. R. Tibbetts, introduction to *Arab Navigation in the Indian Ocean Before the Coming of the Portuguese, Being a Translation of Kitāb al-Fawā'id fī uṣūl al-baḥr wal-qawā'id* by Ibn Mājid al-Najdī (d. before 1535), ed. and trans. G. R. Tibbets (London 1971), 1.

[155]Ibid., 28-37.

[156]Ayalon, "The Mamluks and Naval Power," 2.