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The Rise of Provincial Arab Ruling Families in Mamluk Egypt, 1350–1517

The fifteenth century was an age of Arab power in the Egyptian countryside.[1] During the final century of Mamluk rule, Arab or Berber groups acquired power and authority in most provinces of the Delta and Upper Egypt, and become more visible to us than in previous centuries, both in chronicles and in biographical dictionaries. Arab elite families were also the beneficiaries of more *iqṭāʿ* grants and acted as officials of the Mamluk state, in some places replacing the *kāshif*s or governors. Their prominence was noted by European pilgrims and merchants, who described them as the "lords of the countryside." Their status was then endorsed by the Ottoman conquerors, who formalized the key role of Arab and Berber ruling houses in provincial administration.

This rise in the power of provincial Arab elites is now well known, but it has not yet received a systematic study. While scholarship acknowledges that many Arab groups were engaged in sedentary cultivation and that Arab houses were co-opted into Mamluk bureaucracy, it still views them as chiefly pastoralist and opportunistic, "existing almost in parallel to Mamluk society."[2] Thus, the Arabs are seen as preying on the weakness of the Mamluk state, as opposed to settled agriculture, and as a cause of economic and political decline. This is also reflected in terminology: modern historiography uses the term "Bedouin," even though the fifteenth-century Arabic sources mostly call the Arab (and Berber) clansmen of the fifteenth century *ʿarab* or *ʿurbān* and almost never *badw*.

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[1] See a good recent summary of the secondary literature in Amina Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans: Urban Protest in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria* (New York, 2015), 48–51, mostly relying on Jean-Claude Garcin, "The Regime of the Circassian Mamluks," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 1, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge, 1998), 290–317; Stuart Borsch, *The Black Death in Egypt and England: A Comparative Study* (Austin, 2005), 51–53. On the Ottoman endorsement of Arab and Berber provincial power, see N. Michel, *L'Égypte des villages autour du seizième siècle* (Leuven, 2018) 45ff.

[2] Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans*, 48.

This essay makes three broad arguments that seek to better integrate the history of the Arab and Berber elites within wider trends in fifteenth-century Mamluk history. First, I argue here that the Arab families that came to power in the fifteenth century emerged from within the peasantry, either as the armed elements of village society or landless peasants who lost their tenancy rights. The spread of Arab identities among Egyptian peasants is well-attested for the Ayyubid and earlier Mamluk periods, as is shown in the Fayyum tax register of al-Nābulusī from 1245 and in the genealogical treatises of al-Ḥamdānī (d. ca. ~~1300~~) and al-ʿUmarī (d. 1349).[3] According to these Ayyubid and early Mamluk bureaucrats, Egyptian Muslim village communities almost always self-identified with Arab or Berber clans. This revised understanding of Arab identity in the Mamluk Egyptian context allows us to view the Arab provincial elites of the fifteenth century as arising within this milieu of village clans, effectively the shaykhs of territorial confederacies.

Second, I argue that the prominence of provincial Arab and Berber ruling families in the fifteenth century should be seen as coming on the heels of a series of earlier major Arab revolts against Mamluk rule, mainly—but not exclusively—in Upper Egypt, with mass peasant participation. Between 1250 and 1350, these armed uprisings by Egyptian Arab clansmen presented the Mamluk sultans with their most persistent domestic challenge. The first major Arab revolt was directed against al-Muʿizz Aybak, and led by the Sharīf Ḥiṣn al-Dīn Ibn Thaʿlab from his base in Dayrūṭ in Upper Egypt. The suppression of Ḥiṣn al-Dīn's rebellion was followed by smaller-scale conflicts, peaking in a major outburst of violence circa 1300, when government granaries were targeted and tax collection disrupted. The largest Arab rebellion of the Mamluk period, which took place in the aftermath of the first outbreak of the plague, was led by an Upper Egyptian Arab leader called al-Aḥdab ("the hunchback"). Although al-Aḥdab's rebellion was quelled in 1354, its leader was subsequently co-opted by the Mamluk state as a provincial administrator with responsibility for tax collection in parts of Upper Egypt, ushering in a new stage in the relationship between the Mamluk regime and the Arab elites of the Egyptian countryside.

Third, I argue that the rise of Arab elite families was a side effect of the decline of the *iqṭāʿ* regime in Egypt. The fifteenth century saw a sharp drop in the number

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[3] Yossef Rapoport, *Rural Economy and Tribal Society in Islamic Egypt: A Study of al-Nābulusī's* Villages of the Fayyum (Turnhout, 2018); Sarah Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen der Mamluken: Beduinen im politischen Leben Ägyptens im 8./14. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 2016).

of villages given out as *iqṭāʿ*, and a steep rise in the number of villages either endowed as *waqf* or handed over to the sultan's private fisc, the *Dīwān al-Mufrad*.[4] As long as the *iqṭāʿ* regime was in its heyday, between 1250 and 1350, the officers of the Mamluk army went out to the countryside to collect the land tax directly, bypassing the need for a large provincial bureaucracy and garrisons, but this structure was based on the ability of individual *iqṭāʿ*-holders to exert sufficient leverage vis-à-vis the peasant communities. After 1350, and especially from the beginning of the fifteenth century, that leverage was eroding and Mamluk power in large parts of the Egyptian countryside was increasingly limited.[5] Instead, the state often devolved provincial powers to Arab ruling families, in an admission of Mamluk inability to collect taxes in several provinces in Upper and Lower Egypt. Arab elites, brutally suppressed in the first century of Mamluk rule, were now indispensable for maintaining control and delivering agricultural surpluses.[6]

The following essay follows the rise of Arab and Berber provincial houses in Egypt from 1350 up to the end of Mamluk period. The aim is not a comprehensive history. The sources for the fifteenth century, both documentary and literary, are very rich and cannot be exhausted here. Rather, the aim is to trigger a paradigm shift by highlighting key trends and texts. The structure of the essay is as follows. The first section examines al-Aḥdab's uprising and its consequences. The following two sections discuss the rise of the Berber Hawwārah in Upper Egypt and the Arab ʿĀʾidh of the eastern Delta (al-Sharqīyah), the latter examined through the lens of

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[4] On this process, see Daisuke Igarashi, *Land Tenure, Fiscal Policy and Imperial Power in Medieval Syro-Egypt* (Chicago, 2015); Adam Sabra, "The Rise of a New Class? Land Tenure in Fifteenth-Century Egypt," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 8, no. 2 (2004).

[5] On this withdrawal from the perspective of the center, see Jo van Steenbergen, *Caliphate and Kingship in a Fifteenth-Century Literary History of Muslim Leadership and Pilgrimage: A Critical Edition, Annotated Translation, and Study of* al-D̲ahab al-~~M~~asbūk fī d̲ikr man ḥağğa min al-ḫulafāʾ wa-l-mulūk, Bibliotheca Maqriziana vol. 4. (Leiden, 2017), 21.

[6] Stuart Borsch has argued that the Mamluk military class responded by closing ranks against the villagers. As for the rise of the Arab tribes, he argued that these were nomads who benefited from more pasturage ~~areas~~ in areas that were no longer fit for cultivation. Part of the problem with this argument is that in Egypt, unlike in Europe, unirrigated lands do not provide good pasture, certainly not for horses and camels. See Borsch, "Thirty Years after Lopez, Miskimin, and Udovitch," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 8, no. 2 (2004): 191–201; idem, "Plague Depopulation and Irrigation Decay in Medieval Egypt," *The Medieval Globe* 1, no. 1 (2014): 125–56.

the St. Catherine documentary corpus.[7] The second part of the essay presents other evidence for the rise of Arab power from cadastral registers and from European accounts. The final section examines the impact of the cooptation of Arab and Berber elites into provincial administration on their relationship with the wider peasantry.

THE AL-AḤDAB UPRISING

In 1350, Upper Egypt was the focus of a full-scale Arab uprising, for the third time since the establishment of the Mamluk state. This revolt was led by Muḥammad ibn Wāṣil, nicknamed al-Aḥdab, of the previously unknown ʿArak tribal group. The rebellion was quashed only in 1354 or 1355, after five years of disobedience and in the face of a large military expedition from Cairo.[8] Al-Aḥdab's rebellion coincided with the outbreak of the plague, and undoubtedly exploited that moment of crisis: al-Maqrīzī pairs the plague and al-Aḥdab's rebellion as two calamities that afflicted the reign of Sultan Ḥasan.[9] The long-term consequences of this uprising for the history of Upper Egypt cannot be overstated. It represented the rise of new Arab elites at the expense of the groups that had dominated the area since the late Fatimid period. The rebellion also signaled the beginnings of an organic alliance at the local level between Arab provincial elites and Sufi saints. Ultimately, al-Aḥdab's

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[7] The St. Catherine documents are presented in Aziz Suryal Atiya, *The Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai: A Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts and Scrolls Microfilmed at the Library of the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai,* Publications of the American Foundation for the Study of Man, 1 (Baltimore, 1955). The documents of the St Catherine corpus that have been edited to date are available through the Arabic Papyrology Database website (https://www.apd.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/apd/project.jsp), both in Arabic and in translation. Microfilms of the documents are available from the Library of Congress (https://www.loc.gov) under the heading "Arabic Firmans."

[8] See the narrative of the events in Jean-Claude Garcin, "al-Aḥdab, Muḥammad b. Wāṣil," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 3rd ed., http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573–3912_ei3_COM_25005; idem, *Un centre musulman de la Haute-Egypte médiévale, Qūṣ* (Cairo, 1976), 381–85; Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen;* idem, "Rules of Communication and Politics between Bedouin and Mamluk Elites in Egypt: The Case of the al-Aḥdab Revolt, c.1353," *Eurasian Studies Journal* 9, nos. 1–2 (2011): 67–104.

[9] Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah (Cairo, 1934–58), 2:3:843. The late 1340s saw other *ʿurbān* disturbances in Upper Egypt, only briefly reported by al-Maqrīzī: see ibid., 2:731 (highway robbery by *ʿurbān* in Upper Egypt and the Fayyum), 2:752 (Mamluk expedition fails to capture the culprits, who had fled to the desert, and instead loots and kills the agriculturalists *[aṣḥāb al-zurūʿ]* left behind). See also Büssow-Schmitz, "Rules of Communication," 75–80.

rebellion was focused on establishing his authority to collect taxes on behalf of the Mamluk elites. Despite his military defeat, that aim was achieved. Al-Aḥdab was granted the responsibility of maintaining order and delivering taxes in parts of Upper Egypt and was remunerated by an *iqṭāʿ* taken from these local tax revenues.

It has been argued that al-Aḥdab's uprising was made possible because nomadic Bedouins ~~were~~ more resilient to the plague, making them relatively more numerous and powerful.[10] This demographic explanation is, I believe, unfounded. First, as pointed out by Büssow-Schmitz, Bedouin communities were no less impacted than other groups; in fact, both al-Buḥayrah and al-Sharqīyah, two provinces with significant mobile populations, had reports of very high mortalities.[11] The St. Catherine documents also show that the Sinai Arabs suffered a sustained period of dearth and shortages instigated by the plague.[12] Second, hypothesizing about Arab empowerment due to the differential demographic effects of the plague rests on an untenable equation of Arab identity and nomadic way of life. As a matter of fact, the rebelling Arabs, during al-Aḥdab's rebellion and during its Upper Egyptian precursors in the earlier Mamluk period, were mostly sedentary peasants.

We owe everything we know about this rebellion to al-Maqrīzī. The brief accounts by Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn Duqmāq, while written closer to the events they describe, do little more than confirm the mere existence of the rebellion.[13] Al-

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[10] Lawrence I. Conrad, "Die Pest und ihr soziales Umfeld im Nahen Osten des frühen Mittelalters," *Der Islam* 73, no. 1 (1996): 81–112; Borsch, *Black Death*, 53; Raymond Ruhaak, "An Analysis of What Fostered Resilience of the Irish Sea Gaels and the Bedouin of the Mamluk Frontier Leading up to the Black Death," in *Living with Nature and Things: Contributions to a New Social History of the Middle Islamic Periods,* ed. Bethany J. Walker and Abdelkader Al Ghouz (Bonn, 2020), 221–58.

[11] Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen*, 14–17.

[12] The years 1347–53 show an unprecedented wave of harassment by local Arabs, pressing the monks for petty provisions, as attested in several documents of the St Catherine corpus. See P.AtiyaHandlistSinai35 (= P.St.Catherine I 12); P.AtiyaHandlistSinai 37 (= P.St.Catherine I 13 A; re-edited and translated in P.SternMamlukPetitions 2 verso); P.AtiyaHandlistSinai 36 (= P.St.Catherine I 14); P.AtiyaHandlistSinai 30 (= P.St.Catherine I 15, re-edited and translated in P.SternMamlukPetitions). Here and throughout the article, references to the St Catherine documents follow the system of identification established by the Arabic Papyrology Database (https://www.apd.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/apd/project.jsp).

[13] Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿibar wa-dīwān al-mubtadaʾ wa-al-khabar fī ayyām al-ʿArab wa-al-ʿAjam wa-al-Barbar wa-man ʿāṣarahum min dhawī al-sulṭān al-akbar* (Beirut, 1956–61), 5:968; Ibn Duqmāq, *Al-Nafḥah al-miskīyah fī al-dawlah al-Turkīyah: min Kitāb al-jawhar al-thamīn fī siyar al-khulafāʾ wa-al-mulūk wa-al-salāṭīn (min sanat 637 ḥattá sanat 805 H.)*, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmurī (Beirut,

Maqrīzī, on the other hand, gives us an exceptionally detailed and informative account. He first narrates the events of al-Aḥdab's rebellion as brief notices interspersed within the annals of the years 749–54. He then provides a long, sustained narrative of Amir Shaykhū's military expedition aimed at suppressing the rebellion, which took place between Dhū al-Qaʿdah 754 and Muḥarram 755. This narrative begins with lamentation about the neglect of the affairs of Upper Egypt after the death of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, then expands on al-Aḥdab's increasing hold over the region of Asyut in the years leading to Shaykhū's expedition, and ends with three poems composed by members of the Mamluk elite that celebrate Shaykhū's military success. Al-Maqrīzī relied on a fourteenth-century source, probably from within the military elite. There are no eye-witnesses accounts and the material appears to be derived from the reports relayed back to Cairo at the time.[14]

Al-Maqrīzī traces the beginning of the revolt to Rajab 749, with fighting between the state-sponsored Banū Hilāl, supported by the Mamluk *kāshif* of Upper Egypt, and the ʿArak, a group not previously mentioned in any of our extant sources. This battle ended with the victory of the ʿArak, who entered the provincial capital of Asyut, and with the death of the Mamluk *kāshif*. Two years later, the ʿArak won another major battle against the Hilāl, in which a second Mamluk *kāshif* sent from Cairo was stripped of his possessions.[15] Al-Maqrīzī also reports inter-clan fighting in the Middle Egyptian regions of al-Bahnasāwīyah and al-Aṭfīḥīyah, leading to the deaths of many Arabs (*ʿurbān)*. The date of these clashes is not clear, although the leaders were executed by the Mamluks in 755.[16] Garcin insisted that the inter-tribal conflict in Upper Egypt was split along Qays and Yaman lines, with the Hilālī Qays siding with the government in Cairo, but al-Maqrīzī's narrative has no trace of such divisions, nor any evidence that the ʿArak considered themselves Yaman.[17]

1999), 173; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá (Wiesbaden, 1960–75), 1:1:550–51.

[14] The long narrative account is found in al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. Ziyādah, 2:3:911–15; idem, *Al-Sulūk li-maʿrifat duwal al-mulūk,* ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Qādir ʿAṭā (Beirut, 1997) 4:191–96.

[15] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 4:79, 121.

[16] Ibid., 191 (on the clashes), 195 (executions). Al-Maqrīzī compares the eruption of these clashes with the successful policies of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who used to plow the lands of disobedient Arabs with oxen and kill them.

[17] Garcin, *Un centre musulman,* 363, 372ff; idem, "al-Aḥdab"; Büssow-Schmitz, "Rules of Communication," 74.

The ʿArak uprising exposed the weakness of the Banū Hilāl, the state-sponsored *ʿurbān* of Upper Egypt, who were repeatedly defeated by al-Aḥdab's forces. After a Mamluk force attacked the ʿArak in Shawwāl 752/November–December 1351, causing the men to flee to the mountains, the Banū Hilāl were invited to take revenge on the defenseless ʿArak sites. The Hilālīs captured the women and looted grains, flour, small cattle, and water-skins. The sultan was thereafter informed that "the land is sown, its *ʿurbān* are in obedience, and its inhabitants have settled" (*al-bilād qad khuḍḍirat arāḍīhā wa-aṭāʿa ʿurbānuhā al-ʿuṣāh wa-tawaṭṭana ahluhā*).[18] The ʿArak retaliated by attacking the Hilālīs in the strategic town of Ṭimā, forcing the Mamluk authorities to establish a military presence there in the spring of 1352 so as to secure the harvest.[19] This seems to have convinced the Mamluk authorities that the Banū Hilāl were no longer of any value. During Amir Shaykhū's major expedition, he summoned four hundred Hilālī cavalry under the pretext of seeking their support, then executed them, seizing their horses and weapons.[20]

A key feature of al-Aḥdab's rebellion was its explicit association with large-scale tax collection. According to al-Maqrīzī, al-Aḥdab established himself as a local potentate, displaying rudimentary regalia and ruling over the peasantry (*nafadha amruhu fī al-fallāḥīn*).[21] This meant that taxation was subject to his approval. Whenever an *iqṭāʿ*-holder did not receive the land-tax from the village assigned to him, he would ask al-Aḥdab to write a note to the *fallāḥ* in question and to the people of his village (*balad*). Al-Aḥdab would then ensure that the soldier received his due. Beyond his interactions with individual *iqṭāʿ*-holders, al-Aḥdab presented himself to the *kāshif* and to the governor as their local fixer, promising to sort out any problems they had. Al-Maqrīzī places this account in the annals of 755, but it may have been an aspect of al-Aḥdab's career even before the hostilities began.[22]

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[18] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:149 (for Shawwāl 752/November–December 1351); ed. Ziyādah, 2:3:855.

[19] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:153 (for 753H). In later decades, al-Aḥdab's son Abū Bakr (d. 1397) established a commercial *qayṣarīyah* in Ṭimā, demonstrating its economic importance (Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen,* 49).

[20] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:193.

[21] Ibid., 191 (for 755); See also Büssow-Schmitz, "Rules of Communication," 76ff.

[22] Al-Aḥdab was not the first Arab leader to offer *iqṭāʿ*-holders tax collection services. A certain Miqdām ibn Shammās al-Badawī operated in a similar fashion in Upper Egypt in the first decades of the fourteenth century. He was captured by Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, and then told to settle on new lands reclaimed from the desert through the Alexandria Canal. Miqdām brought these lands

By Shaʿbān–Shawwāl 754, *ʿurbān* associated with al-Aḥdab mounted an attack against local sugar presses owned by either the state or by senior amirs. Al-Maqrīzī reports that they attacked the presses near Mallawī, north of Asyut, and looted all the sugar products, from candy to molasses. They also destroyed the waterwheels, used for irrigating the sugar cane, and slaughtered the oxen used to drive the presses (*wa-mālū ʿalá al-maʿāṣir wa-al-sawāqī fa-nahabū ḥawāṣilahā min al-qunūd wa-al-sukkar wa-al-aʿsāl wa-dhabaḥū al-abqār*). This was an unusual act, and al-Maqrīzī mentions it twice in his narrative.[23] As the most lucrative rural investment in Upper Egypt, the presses were symbols of Mamluk power. In addition, they might have been diverting water away from the arable lands of nearby villages. Another attack on infrastructure targeted the dams of the province of al-Ashmūnayn.[24] Al-Maqrīzī also mentions other more standard targets: highway robbery and depriving Mamluk amirs and soldiers of their land tax revenues (*mughall*).[25]

When the *ʿurbān* of Upper Egypt gained knowledge of Amir Shaykhū's impending expedition in November 1353, many of al-Aḥdab's supporters fled southward to Nubia, while others hid in caves and hideouts prepared in advance. Al-Maqrīzī reports that some decided to go on pilgrimage, with the caravan to Mecca leaving around that time. Informants recognized a group of ten of them, and they were arrested and executed. Their property was confiscated and handed over to the Mamluk *amīr jandār*, "since they were his *fallāḥ*s" (*li-anna kānū fallāḥīhi*). As Muḥammad Ziyādah, the modern editor of the *Sulūk*, notes, this anecdote demonstrates that the *ʿarab* or *ʿurbān* of Egypt were peasants, and that their revolts were driven by economic issues and by the violence of the Mamluk *iqṭāʿ* regime.[26] In al-Bahnasāwīyah, the Mamluk forces tortured the women and children until they

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under cultivation and established waterwheels for permanent irrigation (Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Al-Durar al-kāminah fī aʿyān al-miʾah al-thāminah*, ed. Sālim al-Karnūkī (Hyderabad, 1929–31), 4:356–57). Ibn Ḥajar emphasizes his wealth and extraordinary number of slaves and progeny, as well as his control of agricultural lands. Miqdām was identified as a *badawī*, one of the *ʿurbān* of Upper Egypt. Yet his specific clan affiliation is not mentioned, suggesting that he did not belong to any existing elites. This is another similarity between Miqdām and al-Aḥdab, who also emerged among the previously undistinguished ʿArak.

[23] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. Ziyādah, 2:3:896, 911.

[24] Ibid., 896.

[25] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:191.

[26] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. Ziyādah, 2:3:899 and note; idem, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 4:183.

revealed the hiding places of the men. Here too, the context is surely that of sedentary villagers.[27]

Al-Aḥdab himself headed towards Aswan, leading a coalition of several Arab groups, some identified by name (Juhaynah and Kalb) and others by territory (Arabs of Manfalūṭ). Al-Aḥdab's men were accompanied by their families, their grains, and their cattle; they must have learned not to leave them behind at the mercy of the Mamluk soldiers. Al-Maqrīzī gives the number of al-Aḥdab's army at 10,000 cavalry and many more infantry; these numbers may well be exaggerated in order to amplify Shaykhū's eventual victory. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the Mamluks faced a serious challenge. The expeditionary force consisted of twelve senior amirs, of which the majority went to Upper Egypt (a few were sent to the Delta to suppress the Arabs there, who were acting independently of al-Aḥdab). Once Shaykhū arrived in Asyut, the reported size of al-Aḥdab's army made him send for reinforcements from Cairo. Five hundred cavalry were made available to him, but Shaykhū changed his mind, worried that such a move would raise the morale of the rebels.[28] Another indication of the size of al-Aḥdab's army is the booty Shaykhū brought back from Upper Egypt at the end of his campaign: 2,300 horses, 2,500 camels, 700 donkeys, and numerous small cattle, as well as 100 loads of spears, 80 loads of swords, and 30 loads of leather shields.[29]

The final showdown between al-Aḥdab and Shaykhū's army took place in a place called Wādī al-Ghizlān, probably near Aswan. The account of the battle itself appears somewhat embellished. Mamluk victory is explained by the dust (*ghibār*) raised by the attacking cavalry blinding the Arab forces; this is reminiscent of the dust that conventionally precedes battle scenes in the popular epic of Sīrat ʿAntar. Shaykhū also managed to attack the Arab infantry from the rear, where their families and goods were placed. By morning Shaykhū sent forces to collect the booty—cash and jewelry, waterskins, textiles, and cattle—and enslave the women and children, who were subsequently sold in the markets of Cairo. The Arab men who fled to the desert died of thirst or threw themselves from the mountaintops to avoid being captured. Those who hid in caves suffocated in smoke from fires lit by the Mamluk army at the entrances to their hideouts. Ibn Duqmāq reports that the

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[27] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:193.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Ibid., 195. Ibn Duqmāq reports the same figures for the loads of arms, and somewhat lower figures for the booty of riding animals: 1,700 horses, 500 camels, 700 donkeys (*Al-Nafḥah al-miskīyah,* 173).

amirs assembled the severed heads of executed *ʿurbān* into *masṭabah* platforms. Ibn Iyās, repeating the story half a century later, evokes a comparison with Hulegu's skull pyramids of Baghdad.[30] Al-Maqrīzī is slightly less dramatic, stating that the soldiers threw the bodies of the Arabs into a communal pit and raised the *masṭabah* over it with their insignia.[31]

Beyond the direct military confrontation, the Mamluk authorities turned the campaign into a country-wide effort to disarm village communities. In the Delta provinces of al-Sharqīyah, al-Gharbīyah, and al-Buḥayrah, Mamluk raids rounded up hundreds of captives and horses. It was optimistically announced that no horses were left with the *ʿurbān* in the Delta.[32] Following the victory over al-Aḥdab, Shaykhū's forces combed Upper Egypt for arms and horses. This led to further executions, with poles carrying the bodies of captured Arabs lining the banks of the Nile from Ṭimā to Minyat Ibn Khaṣīb, some 100 kilometers to the north of Asyut. Two thousand captives were taken, though only 1,200 made it to Cairo alive, and most of those died in jail over the coming months. Such mass executions led al-Maqrīzī to declare that no *badawī* remained in Upper Egypt.[33]

The use of the term *badawī* here is significant, as it is meant to distinguish fighting, mobile Arabs from the rest of the Arab peasantry. It is also reflected in the language of an order sent out to all provinces preventing any *badawī* or *fallāḥ* from riding a horse, with the sole exception of guards responsible for road security (*arbāb al-adrāk*). To prevent confusion, qadis and professional witnesses of the countryside were ordered to ride mules and cart-horses (*akādīsh*).[34] Headmen (*mashāyikh*) of the *ʿurbān* and road protectors (*arbāb al-adrāk*) were asked to identify whether those found with horses or swords were local residents; the locals were released while the rest remained in custody. At a second stage, all the confiscated horses were presented and any peasant (*fallāḥ*) who recognized his horse was compensated by

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[30] Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen*, 86–88; Ibn Duqmāq, *Al-Nafḥah al-miskīyah,* 173. Ibn Iyās reported that the Mamluks "cut off the heads of the Bedouin and the peasants (*fallāḥīn*) of the villages of Upper Egypt, using their skulls to build *maṣṭabah* monuments and minarets on the bank of the Nile like those built by Hulegu in Baghdad (*fa-lā zāla yaqṭaʿu min ruʾūs al-ʿurbān wa-al-fallāḥīn alladhīna bi-ḍiyāʿ al-ṣaʿīd ḥattá baná min ruʾūsihim maṣāṭib wa-maʾādhin ʿalá shāṭiʾ baḥr al-Nīl kamā faʿala Hūlākū bi-Baghdād*)" (Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, 1:1:550).

[31] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:193–94.

[32] Ibid., 193.

[33] Ibid., 195.

[34] Ibid.

deducting its sale price from his land tax. [35] As this account suggests, all ~~classes~~ of rural society ~~normally~~ owned horses; the only difference between a peasant and a *badawī* was the level of obedience to the central authorities.

Instead of suppressing Arab power, however, what actually emerged after the rebellion was a new Mamluk-Arab *modus vivendi,* in which al-Aḥdab was recognized as responsible for tax collection and security in the regions of Upper Egypt under his authority. In 755, al-Aḥdab appeared in Cairo accompanied by a Sufi saintly figure called Abū Qāsim al-Ṭaḥāwī, who interceded on al-Aḥdab's behalf with the amir Shaykhū, the de facto authority in Cairo at the time and commander of the expeditionary force that had defeated al-Aḥdab a year earlier. Through the mediation of al-Ṭaḥāwī, al-Aḥdab was given the responsibility for provincial security (*darak al-bilād*) and for collection of all grains and revenues (*yaltazimu bi-taḥṣīl jamīʿ ghilālihā wa-amwālihā*) in the lands under his authority. He undertook a personal guarantee for any show of disobedience in these lands and pledged to receive governors and *kāshif*s sent by the sultan.

After this agreement, al-Aḥdab was given robes of honor and an *iqṭāʿ*, and sent back to Upper Egypt to assume his newly confirmed duties.[36] According to Ibn Khaldūn's very brief note, al-Aḥdab received an *amān* in return for his promise that the Arabs would avoid riding horses and carrying weapons and would occupy themselves with cultivation (*wa-yuqbilū ʿalá al-filāḥah*).[37] Ibn Duqmāq simply says that al-Aḥdab was reinstated in his previous position.[38] Thus, after the frenzy of bloodshed against the rural population of Upper Egypt, al-Aḥdab had come back to his role as a local fixer for the Cairo government, overseeing the collection of taxes in return for a share of the local revenue.

The involvement of a Sufi shaykh as a companion of an Arab leader was a precedent which would become commonplace in the following centuries. Al-Ṭaḥāwī's saintly presence created common ground between the Mamluk amirs and

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[35] Ibid., 192, 195. According to the shorter account of Ibn Duqmāq, the decree specified that no *fallāḥ* should be riding a horse or purchase one (*Al-Nafḥah al-miskīyah,* 173). Tadmurī, the modern editor of the *Nafḥah*, read here *lā yarkibu faras wa-lā yashtarī qimāsh* ("not to ride horses or purchase textiles"), but the variant *wa-lā yashtarī farasan*, which is found in Ibn Duqmāq's *Al-Jawhar al-thamīn fī siyar al-mulūk wa-al-salāṭīn* (ed. Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAlī [Beirut, 1985], 2:204), makes more sense in this context. See Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen*, 65; idem, "Rules of Communication," 93.

[36] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:197.

[37] Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿibar*, 5:968.

[38] Ibn Duqmāq, *Al-Nafḥah al-miskīyah*, 173.

the rural rebel. On the one hand, he was seen as a saint of the “Arabs,” and he stayed in a Sufi lodge known as *zāwiyat al-ʿurbān* in the Qarafa cemetery (this lodge is not previously attested). Shaykhū then renovated the *zāwiyah*, so the Sufi enjoyed patronage from both sides.[39] Sufi saints spread in the Egyptian and Syrian countryside during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, simultaneously with the spread of Arab identities in the same regions. Now, with the cooptation of provincial elites, saints were interwoven into the structure of Arab ruling houses, forming a mutually beneficial alliance.

The Hawwārah in Upper Egypt

Al-Aḥdab’s revolt and his cooptation into the provincial administration were a harbinger of things to come. As the fourteenth century came to a close, and especially under the reign of al-Ẓāhir Barqūq, Arab provincial leaders assumed responsibility for tax collection and local security in return for extensive, localized *iqṭāʿ* grants. In Upper Egypt, the descendants of al-Aḥdab gave way to the Berber Hawwārah, who would go on to become the most successful provincial clan in the history of Islamic Egypt. By the 1410s, the Hawwārah leaders became the effective rulers of much of Upper Egypt, with official appointment from the Mamluk sultan. At the same time, Arab houses established themselves in the Delta provinces, becoming the de facto governors of the Sharqīyah, and major power brokers in Buḥayrah, Gharbīyah, and Minūfīyah, as well as in the hinterland of Gaza in Palestine.

Hawwārah dominance in Upper Egypt dates to 782, when a leading family migrated from Buḥayrah in the western Delta to Jirjā in Upper Egypt. The Hawwārah were present in Buḥayrah from 662, when Baybars provided Hawwārah groups with written permissions (*ḥujaj*) for the cultivation of the province.[40] Ibn Khaldūn reports, probably for the middle of the fourteenth century, that the

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[39] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk,* ed. ʿAṭā, 4:197; Büssow-Schmitz, “Rules of Communication,” 89.

[40] Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab* (Cairo, 1923–), 30:107; cited in al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 2:13. Baybars also sent a *muqaddam* of the Hawwārah to ~~compel~~ the Arabs of Barqa, further west, to pay taxes on their cattle and fields. In 672, a force led by Muḥammad al-Hawwārī defeated the Arabs of Barqa and compelled them to pay ~~taxes~~ (Abū Bakr ibn ʿAbd ʿAllāh ibn Aybak al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-durar wa-jāmiʿ al-ghurar*, vol. 8, ed. Ulrich Haarmann [Cairo, 1971], 173). Prior to the Mamluk period, groups of the Hawwārah are attested in Jabal Nafūsah (al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 1:186, for 574) and in the Fayyūm (Rapoport, *Rural Economy*, for 643/1245).

Hawwārah were one of several transhumant Berber groups cultivating lands in Buḥayrah (*wa-yuʿmirūna arḍahā bi-al-sukná wa-al-falḥ*) and paying land-tax on them (*wa-ʿalayhum maghārim al-falḥ*), while maintaining seasonal migration towards Barqa.[41] Their move to Upper Egypt coincided with Barqūq's ascent to the throne. Al-Maqrīzī states that the move was initiated by the sultan, who gave Ismāʿīl ibn Māzin al-Hawwārī the right to cultivate the desolate lands of Jirjā.[42] According to al-Qalqashandī, a contemporary observer of the same events, the Hawwārah were driven out of Buḥayrah by an Arab rebel called Badr ibn Sallām.[43]

The installation of the Hawwārah in Jirjā was part of novel Mamluk experimentation with provincial tax collection, whereby officials were given responsibility for delivering local taxes in return for a share in the revenue. In 781/1380, appointments to the governorships of al-Gharbīyah, al-Ashmūnayn, and al-Minūfīyah were made after the chosen Mamluk officials committed to pay a fixed sum (*māl iltazama bi-hi*) from the tax revenues.[44] At around the same time, a similar arrangement was offered to the aforementioned Badr ibn Sallām in Buḥayrah. Following his defeat at the hands of an army sent by the new sultan al-Ẓāhir Barqūq, Badr sought reconciliation, guaranteeing the security of the lands and the cultivation of land that had become desolate (*iltazama tadrīk al-bilād, ʿimārat mā kharaba minhā*). Like al-Aḥdab before him, Badr presented himself in the provincial

[41] Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿibar*, 6:10. The other groups mentioned are Muzātah, Zunārah, and a clan (*baṭn*) of Lawātah.

[42] Al-Maqrīzī, "Al-Bayān wa-al-iʿrāb ʿan mā fī arḍ Miṣr min al-aʿrāb," in al-Maqrīzī, *Rasāʾil al-Maqrīzī*, ed. Ramaḍān al-Badrī and Aḥmad Muṣṭafá Qāsim (Cairo, 1998), 148. Al-Maqrīzī's account of the settlement of the Hawwārah in Upper Egypt is found in a short insert, in al-Maqrīzī's handwriting, added to the original copy of the "Bayān." It is preserved at the end of Leiden MS Or. 560, a collection of opuscules by al-Maqrīzī copied by a scribe at al-Maqrīzī's request in 841/1438 (on this manuscript, see van Steenbergen, *Caliphate and Kingship*, 109–11).

[43] Al-Qalqashandī only reports that the Hawwārah came to dwell in Jirjā and its surroundings during the days of Barqūq, after the Zanārah wrested Buḥayrah away from them (Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Qalqashandī, *Nihāyat al-arab fī maʿrifat ansāb al-ʿarab*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī [Baghdad, 1958], no. 1635; idem, *Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshá fī ṣināʿat al-inshāʾ* [Cairo, 1913–18], 1:364). Al-Maqrīzī mentions that the Hawwārah's migration occurred after Badr's revolt, but makes no causal connection ("Bayān," 148).

[44] Garcin, *Un centre musulman,* 406; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. Ziyādah, 3:371–72. Al-Maqrīzī laments the inefficiencies of the system: when a new governor is appointed, all the property of the previous governor has to be confiscated.

capital of Damanhūr, and was granted a safe-conduct and a robe of honor.[45] The term used in these appointments, as well as in the previous settlement with al-Aḥdab, is *iltazama*; it anticipates the frequent use of the term *iltizām* in sixteenth-century Ottoman Egypt, where it referred to the responsibility of both provincial governors and Arab leaders (*šeyhülarab*) for the correct collection of taxes in their districts.[46]

The cadastral register of Ibn Duqmāq confirms that the Hawwārah held Jirjā as their *iqṭāʿ* by the end of the fourteenth century.[47] After receiving the lands of Jirjā, the leaders of the Hawwārah soon became the most powerful family in Upper Egypt, profiting from their control of village lands, and in particular from the production of sugar. Al-Maqrīzī states that Ismāʿīl ibn Māzin was already wealthy when he died in 787.[48] By 799, his position was taken up by his grandson Muḥammad ibn ʿUmar Abū al-Sunūn, who "excelled in the sowing of village lands, and the setting up of waterwheels for sugar-cane and sugar presses."[49] Whereas the *ʿurbān* loyal to al-Aḥdab had previously targeted the sugar presses as symbols of state power, less than fifty years later the Hawwārah were coopted into provincial administration as the lawful owners of these works.

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[45] Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr bi-anbāʾ al-ʿumr*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1969), 1:176–77; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 5:53. Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 1:213–14; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 5:88–90. He was then accused of supporting a failed coup led by the caliph (on the failed coup, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 1:275, 785; Banister, *The Abbasid Caliphate of Cairo, 1261–1517* [Edinburgh, 2021]). Badr was executed in 789, after escaping from jail in Alexandria (Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 1:333; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 5:201). For other references to Badr, see ibid., 5:95; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 1:232. On his identification as Zunārah, see al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 1:420.

[46] On *iltizām* in sixteenth-century Egypt, see Michel, *L'Égypte des villages*, 308ff.

[47] See Ibrāhīm Dasūqī Maḥmūd, *Al-Ḥiyāzah al-zirāʿīyah lil-ʿurbān fī al-rawk al-nāṣirī (715/1315) wa-atharuhā fī istiqrār al-qabāʾil al-ʿarabīyah bi-Miṣr* (University of Minyā, n.d.), 16 (https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=1Z5ERrIAAAAJ&hl=ar); Heinz Halm, *Ägypten nach den mamlukischen Lehensregistern* (Wiesbaden 1979–83), 1:80 with reference to Ibn Duqmāq, *Kitāb al-intiṣār li-wāsiṭat ʿiqd al-amṣār,* ed. Karl Vollers (Cairo, 1893), 27, and Ibn al-Jīʿān, *Al-Tuḥfah al-sanīyah bi-asmāʾ al-bilād al-Miṣrīyah,* ed. B. Moritz (Cairo, 1898), 189.

[48] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 5:202; see also Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Manhal al-ṣāfī wa-al-mustawfá baʿda al-wāfī*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo, 1984-), 2:460, where he is called shaykh and amir of the *ʿurbān* in Upper Egypt.

[49] Al-Maqrīzī, "Bayān," 148 (part of the same insert in al-Maqrīzī's hand added to Leiden MS Or. 560). For biographies of these leaders of the Hawwārah, see idem, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 5:397, 5:403; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-zāhirah fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Cairo, 1963–72), 12:156; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 1:526.

Economic success was accompanied by accumulation of political power. The Hawwārah's capital of Jirjā (Girga) replaced Qūṣ and Asyut as the most important town in Upper Egypt.[50] By the 1410s, Muḥammad Abū al-Sunūn and his brothers, known collectively as Awlād ʿUmar, had control over lands from Aswan in the south to the northern edges of al-Ashmūnayn. A second Hawwārah family, that of Banū Gharīb, controlled the province of al-Bahnasāwīyah in Middle Egypt. Al-Qalqashandī, writing during that decade of swift Hawwārah ascendancy, states that "the other *ʿurbān* of Upper Egypt bow to their will, side with them, and obey them."[51] As a result, many villagers came to identify themselves as Hawwārah. While al-Ḥamdānī knew of only four Hawwārah clans in the middle of the thirteenth century, al-Qalqashandī lists the names of about thirty different Hawwārah clans in Upper Egypt. The more powerful the Hawwārah grew, he explains, the more numerous they became.

Much of the fighting in Upper Egypt concentrated on the rivalry between the two leading Hawwārah families: Awlād ʿUmar and Banū Gharīb. The Mamluk provincial governors were relegated to the background and could only exert power if they allied themselves with one of these branches. In 791, the governor contrived with the Hawwārah to keep agricultural revenues in Upper Egypt.[52] The arrest of the leader of the Banū Gharīb family in al-Bahnasā in 798 caused his supporters to rise against the governor and kill him, and the new governor could only act with the support of the Awlād ʿUmar.[53] Soon afterward, the *kāshif* of Upper Egypt required the protection of the Awlād ʿUmar from an alliance of the Banū Gharīb with heirs of al-Aḥdab.[54]

Through the following decades, the Hawwārah monopolized power in Upper Egypt by eliminating other Arab elites. The descendants of al-Aḥdab were defeated in 802 by Muḥammad Abū al-Sunūn, despite having been given promises of support from Cairo. A government attempt to send a punitive force failed, since the amirs refused to go on campaign, underlining the degree to which the Mamluk state had

[50] See discussion of the rise of the Hawwārah in Garcin, *Un centre musulman,* 468–77.

[51] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 4:69 (also on the territorial division between Awlād ʿUmar and Awlād Gharīb).

[52] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 5:258; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 11:353.

[53] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 5:384, 388; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 1:512–13.

[54] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 5:435.

lost control over Upper Egypt.[55] The Hawwārah then annihilated the Awlād al-Kanz in Aswan in Muharram 815, taking their women and children captive. The Kanz had held power over Aswan since the early eleventh century, the last remnant of several Arab groups installed in Upper Egypt by the Fatimids. In previous centuries the Kanz had bounced back from defeats—by the Ayyubids in the 1170s, and later by a Mamluk attempt to impose their own governor in Aswan in 1365[56]—but not this time. The Hawwārah were there to stay and the Kanz completely disappear from our sources.

The Hawwārah's expansion effectively ended Mamluk rule in Upper Egypt. Two successive military campaigns in the harvest seasons of 821/1418 and 822/1419 no longer aimed to impose law and order but only to extract resources. The commander of the 1418 campaign, the amir Ibn Abī al-Faraj, imposed a tribute in cash, with some villages having to pay up to 2,000 dinars. This must have been in lieu of unpaid land tax. He also imposed a tribute of 25,000 dinars on the leaders of the Hawwārah. The booty he brought with him included, in addition to camels and horses, 6,000 oxen and 2,000 *qinṭār* of sugar.[57] The subsequent campaign the following year brought back 3,000 oxen, 9,000 water buffalo, sugar (both *qind* and *ʿasal*) and a large quantity of grains. The Hawwārah troops traveled to Aswan and then to the oases to avoid capture.[58] As al-Maqrīzī acknowledged, this was a state-sponsored raid that crippled the economy and deprived the peasantry of their working animals. Mamluk troops brought back thousands of male and female slaves, including many enslaved by the troops. The mass enslavement of peasants, also seen at the end of al-Aḥdab's rebellion, was possibly triggered by a decreasing supply of slaves from the Black Sea. Given the legal prohibitions against enslavement of

[55] Ibid., 6:19–20; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 12:198. Previously, the leaders of Banū al-Aḥdab and the Hawwārah came before the sultan to seek a state-approved settlement for Upper Egypt (al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 5:439).

[56] Al-Maqrīzī summarizes the history of the Banū Kanz in his *Kitāb al-mawāʿiẓ wa-al-iʿtibār bi-dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wa-al-āthār al-maʿrūf bi-al-khiṭaṭ al-Maqrīzīyah,* ed. Khalīl al-Manṣūr (Beirut, 1998), 1:366–67. He states that they regained complete control of Aswan after 790, and that no Mamluk governors were appointed there after 806. On the Mamluk deposition of the Kanz in 1365, see idem, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 4:294. See also P. M. Holt, "Kanz, Banu'l," *Encyclopaedia of Islam,* 2nd ed., http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3876; Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen*, 100–5.

[57] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 6:435.

[58] Ibid., 6:466, 470, 491; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 3:161, 167, 191. See also the discussion in Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans*, 51–54.

Muslims in general, and of subject Muslims in particular, this further indicates how much the Mamluks came to view Upper Egypt as enemy territory.[59]

As the Hawwārah's hold on Upper Egypt became entrenched, Hawwārah leaders routinely paid appointment fees in return for the official decrees they received from the central government in Cairo. In 844, the sultan appointed Ismāʿīl ibn Yūsuf as amir of the Hawwārah for a total payment of 70,000 dinars, of which 40,000 were a down payment. Ismāʿīl also promised the obedience of the Hawwārah that his predecessor had been unable to deliver.[60] Nonetheless, when Hawwārah leaders were snubbed or arrested, the Hawwārah and their supporters targeted grain warehouses and waterwheels.[61] As reported in the final pages of al-Maqrīzī's *Sulūk*, internal fighting among the Hawwārah continued as well.[62] They were without doubt the dominant military force in Upper Egypt. *Zubdat kashf al-mamālik*, composed in 857/1453, lists the Hawwārah as mobilizing 24,000 riders for royal campaigns, far more than any other Egyptian Arab or Berber group.[63]

Like al-Aḥdab before them, the Hawwārah were closely aligned with provincial Sufi or saintly figures. In 834, the "shaykh of the Sufis (*al-fuqarāʾ*)," a certain ʿAbd al-Dāʾim, came to intercede on behalf of Mūsá ibn ʿUmar, the shaykh of the Hawwārah.[64] Eight years later, a group of saints (*ṣulaḥāʾ*) accompanied Hawwārah leaders ~~Hawwārah~~ meeting the commander of a Mamluk raid into Upper Egypt.[65] The association with Sufi shaykhs must have granted the Hawwārah an element of legitimacy, both toward the Mamluk authorities and, perhaps more importantly, in the eyes of the local Muslim peasantry. Sufi shaykhs would become an integral part of Arab provincial power in the sixteenth century. At the same time, it should be noted that the Islamization of Upper Egypt was not complete. According to al-

[59] On the decreasing supply of Black Sea slaves in this period, see Hannah Barker, *That Most Precious Merchandise: The Mediterranean Trade in Black Sea Slaves, 1260–1500* (Philadelphia, 2019). For another example of Mamluks enslaving free people in Upper Egypt, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 3:271 (annals of 825, following infighting among the Hawwārah).

[60] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 7:460, 469. See Garcin, *Un centre musulman,* 488.

[61] See Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 3:459–60 (834); al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 7:408 (842).

[62] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā,~~,~~ 7:282–83 (838), 7:408, 413.

[63] Ghars al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Shāhīn al-Ẓāhirī, *Zoubdat kachf el-Mamâlik; tableau politique et administratif de l'Égypte, de la Syrie et du Ḥidjâz sous la domination des sultans mamloûks du XIIIe au XVe siècle*, ed. Paul Ravaisse (Paris, 1894), 103–6; idem, *La zubda kachf al-Mamālik de Khalīl az-Zāhirī*, ed. Jean Gaulmier (Beirut, 1950), 174.

[64] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr,* 3:459–60. The agreement was overseen by Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī.

[65] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 7:408; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 15:308.

Ẓāhirī, writing as late as the middle of the fifteenth century, Upper Egypt had over a thousand churches and monasteries, and the majority of the population was Christian.[66]

The Hawwārah provided the Mamluk central government in Cairo with provincial security and support for tax collection, and in return received formal rights to a significant share in the local revenues—significant enough for Hawwārah amirs to pay appointment fees of tens of thousands of dinars in the middle of the fifteenth century. Some of the Hawwārah's wealth came from sugar production and other agricultural investment. Another source of wealth was probably local *iqṭāʿ* holdings, although Ibn al-Jīʿān's cadastral survey of the 1480s shows very limited Arab *iqṭāʿ* holdings in Upper Egypt. According to this survey, even the Hawwārah powerbase of Jirjā was no longer listed as their *iqṭāʿ*.[67] This may, however, reflect an unusually low point in relations between Cairo and the Hawwārah. Inscriptions on the Friday mosque of Qūṣ refer to the temporary imposition of direct Mamluk rule in the 1480s, as well as to preparation of a cadastral survey; on the basis of these inscriptions, Garcin convincingly argued that Ibn al-Jīʿān's data did not represent the ordinary pattern of *iqṭāʿ* holdings in Upper Egypt over the course of the fifteenth century.[68] The Ottoman registers of the 1550s show that about 10% of the village fiscal units in the region of Qūṣ (ten out of 103) were directly in the hands of the Banū ʿUmar of the Hawwārah.[69] That was likely also the share of the local tax revenues to which the Hawwārah normally had rights during the fifteenth century.

The ʿĀʾidh of the Eastern Delta

Another well-attested example of an Arab provincial ruling house is the ʿĀʾidh, who rose to dominate the eastern Delta and the Sinai in the second half of the fourteenth century. The ʿĀʾidh Arabs had been present in the Sinai since the late Fatimid period, acting in the service of the local governor of al-Ṭūr and providing security to travelers on the road from Suez to Karak and ʿAqabah. In the final decades of the fourteenth century, however, the power of the shaykhs and amirs of the ʿĀʾidh

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[66] Al-Ẓāhirī, *Zoubdat kachf el-Mamâlik*, 33.

[67] Maḥmūd, *Al-Ḥiyāzah al-zirāʿīyah*, 49, citing Ibn al-Jīʿān, *Tuḥfah*, 149.

[68] As argued by Garcin, *Un centre musulman,* 493.

[69] Nicolas Michel, "Les rizaq iḥbāsiyya, terres agricoles en mainmorte dans l'Égypte mamelouke et ottoman: Étude sur les Dafātir al-aḥbās ottomans," *Annales Islamologiques* 30 (1996): 159. The numbers refer to villages in the provinces of Qūṣīyah, Asyūtīyah, and Ikhmīmīyah.

grew, and they took over most functions previously held by Mamluk governors. In 787/1385, the sultan appointed Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsá al-ʿĀʾidhī as the inspector of irrigation (*kāshif al-jusūr*) of al-Sharqīyah. Seven months later the same al-ʿĀʾidhī was promoted to the governorship of the province, although he was demoted from this position within a couple of years[70] and subsequently executed in 796/1394.[71] Nonetheless, the appointment of an Arab leader as provincial governor was unprecedented and was part of the experimentation with novel models of provincial administration seen throughout the 1380s. Alongside the settlement of the Hawwārah in Jirjā in Upper Egypt, the promotion of the ʿĀʾidh represented a countrywide policy of cooptation of Arab elites.

By the early fifteenth century, the ʿĀʾidh shaykhs of al-Sharqīyah acted as de facto governors, and were supported by an expanding and unprecedented *iqṭāʿ* allocation.[72] The shift was formally achieved in 805/1403, when the Mamluk regime stopped appointing its own governors.[73] From then on, as attested in the St. Catherine corpus, royal edicts were regularly addressed to the ʿĀʾidh shaykhs. The first decree of this kind is dated Rajab 805/January–February 1403, and is addressed to *mashāyikh al-ʿurbān al-ʿIsāwīyah*, that is, the descendants of ʿĪsá al-ʿĀʾidhī.[74] In this edict, the ʿĀʾidh shaykhs were instructed to prevent subordinate, local *ʿurbān* from grazing their animals in the vicinity of the monastery (incidentally, the earliest mention of animal husbandry in the St. Catherine corpus). Progressively, the ʿĀʾidh leaders acquired the kind of lofty titles previously reserved for the Mamluk military elite. In a royal decree of 870/1466, for example, *amīr ʿurbān* al-ʿĀʾidh in Sharqīyah is given honorary titles of *al-majlis al-sāmī* and *al-amīr al-ajall.* [75]

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[70] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 5:185, 212, 215; Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, 1:354.

[71] Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah,* ed. ʿAdnān Darwīsh (Damascus, 1994), 3:509, 511, 537; Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen*, 108.

[72] On the allocation of *iqṭāʿ* to Arabs of al-Sharqīyah, see also Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans*, 49–50.

[73] Wakako Kumakura, personal communication, June 2022. Professor Kumakura is currently finalizing a research paper on Arab provincial administration in fifteenth-century Egypt, titled "Irrigation and Tax Collection in Mamluk Egypt: Arab Tribes, Peasants and Sultans" (in Japanese).

[74] P.AtiyaHandlistSinai 47 = P.St.Catherine I 23. This edict also addresses government officials (*shādd* and *mutaṣarrifūn*) in the coast of al-Ṭūr.

[75] As found in royal decrees by Sultan Khushqadam (P.St.Catherine I 38 and 39). Stern's reading of al-Raqqah had been corrected to al-Sharqīyah by Richards (D. S. Richards, "St. Catherine's Monastery and the Bedouin: Archival Documents of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," in *Le Sinaï de la conquête arabe à nos jours*, ed. Jean-Michel Mouton (Cairo, 2001), 151.

The ʿĀʾidh in al-Sharqīyah were now responsible for the protection of the monks from other *ʿurbān*.[76] They did that by introducing Arab protection, or *khafārah*, as an instrument of local security. In 874/1469, following complaints against the *ʿurbān* of Awlād ʿAlī, the *ʿurbān* of al-Sharqīyah drafted a legal contract of protection with the monastery. This contract, dated January 1470, is the earliest of its type in the St. Catherine corpus. In it, two men of the Awlād ʿAlī, identified as protectors (*khufarāʾ*) in the region of al-Ṭūr, undertook to provide security to the monastery. They stood as guarantors for losses suffered by the monks and promised to reimburse the monastery for transgressions by any of their relatives. The concluding part of the document confirms that this legal obligation was undertaken at the instigation of the shaykh of the *ʿurbān* in al-Sharqīyah.[77] The position of formal protectors of the monastery then carried on until the end of the Mamluk period,[78] and is also mentioned by European travelers of the last decades of the fifteenth century.[79] Formal contracts of protection between monasteries and Arab clansmen are known from the early Fatimid period, but they disappear from our records in the intervening centuries, and their return in the late fifteenth century was linked to the emergence of an Arab provincial ruling class.

The Arabs of al-Sharqīyah were supported by generous *iqṭāʿ* allocations. As recorded by Ibn al-Jīʿān's cadastral survey of 1480, Arab groups held *iqṭāʿ* grants in nearly half the villages of the eastern Delta: 176 out of 382 villages. They were the sole *iqṭāʿ*-holders in about 60 villages, with a total surface area of 91,000 feddans. This represented a quadrupling of the number of villages held as *iqṭāʿ* by Arab leaders in al-Sharqīyah, as compared to the 1378 register. By 1480 the Arabs of al-Sharqīyah were the major landholding group in the province, but also received

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[76] Other decrees from the turn of the century protect the monks from transgressions by generic Arabs, or from troops known as *rāmikah* (P.AtiyaHandlist 29, 45 = P.St.Catherine I 21, 46 = P.St.Catherine I 22).

[77] P.AtiyaHandlist 79.

[78] For example, P.AtiyaHandlist 69 = P.St.Catherine I 37, dated 1469. On *darak* and *khafārah* in the early Ottoman period, see Michel, *L'Égypte des villages*, 149, 271. Two sixteenth-century documents refer to *khufarāʾ* in connection with *arbāb al-adrāk* (P. Vind.Arab. III 35, P. Vind. Arab. III 7).

[79] According to Adorno, the Bedouin took upon themselves not to destroy the monastery and to defend it from other Arabs, in return for bread which was given to them through a high gated window (Nicole Chareyron, *Pilgrims to Jerusalem in the Middle Ages,* tr. W. Donald Wilson [New York, 2005], 149–50). Obadiah Da Bertinoro (1487–90) reported that the Bedouin did not harm the monks because they had an arrangement with them and with the sultan (Elkan Nathan Adler, *Jewish Travellers in the Middle Ages: 19 Firsthand Accounts* [New York, 1987], 225).

more *iqṭāʿ* grants than any other Arab group in Egypt.[80] The register does not record the names of individual Arab families, but it seems likely that the ʿĀʾidh, acting as de facto provincial governors, were the main beneficiaries. The St. Catherine corpus shows that the rise in Arab *iqṭāʿ* also coincided with the disappearance of other *iqṭāʿ*-holders, who were formerly a powerful presence in the region of al-Tur. The last mention of non-Arab *iqṭāʿ*-holders in the corpus occurs in a decree dated 815/1413.[81]

In return for their *iqṭāʿ* grants, the ʿĀʾidh were given the responsibilities of guarding the roads and local security. The ʿĀʾidh were expected to use their resources for road safety and providing for travelers between Egypt and Syria.[82] Al-Qalqashandī explains that the *ʿurbān* of al-Sharqīyah, like those of Buḥayrah, received *iqṭāʿ* grants because of their role as route protectors (*arbāb al-adrāk*), and because they supplied horses for the postal stations.[83] In fact, the Mamluk postal system was no longer in use after 1400, reflecting the general withdrawal of the regime from the countryside.[84] In 921/1515, the shaykh of the ʿĀʾidh testified in the court of the *dawādār* in Cairo that he was responsible for the safety of the monks and their property when they were traveling to and from the monastery, as had been his predecessors who held the leadership (*mashyakhah*) of the *ʿurbān*. He was

[80] As much as 65–75% of Arab *iqṭāʿ* holdings in Egypt were concentrated in al-Sharqīyah. See Maḥmūd, *Al-Ḥiyāzah al-zirāʿīyah*; Garcin, "Note sur les rapportes entre bédouins et fallahs à l'époque mamluke," *Annales islamologiques/Ḥawlīyāt Islāmīyah* 14 (1978): 156–57 n. In the late fourteenth-century cadastral survey, where admittedly information is often incomplete, Arab *iqṭāʿ* holdings are mentioned in only 47 villages of al-Sharqīyah.

[81] See a major inspection conducted by a certain Sayf al-Dīn al-Radādī, the *iqṭāʿ*-holder in al-Tur, in 700/1301 (P.AtiyaHandlist 933 = P.St.Catherine II 4 and 934 = P.St.Catherine II 56–58). For the last document in which *iqṭāʿ*-holders are mentioned, see P.AtiyaHandlist 49 = P.St.Catherine I 24.

[82] According to Ibn Khaldūn, the ʿĀʾidh of Judhām guarded the travelers between the Egyptian capital and ʿAqaba (*Kitāb al-ʿibar*, 6:8). On the services provided by the ʿĀʾidh in this period, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 1:367; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk* ed. ʿAṭā, 5:226; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 11:277 (Muḥammad al-ʿĀʾidhī as responsible for the provisions of a military campaign towards Syria, delivering 14,000 irdabbs of barley, 8,000 loads of hay, and 200 loads of timber); al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 6:273 (in 813, Shaʿbān ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsá al-ʿĀʾidhī guided the soon-to-be sultan al-Muʾayyad Shaykh from Upper Egypt toward Suez, al-Ṭūr, and through the desert road to Karak). See also ibid., 5:282, 5:353 (imprisonment of ʿĀʾidh leaders).

[83] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 3:457–58.

[84] Adam J. Silverstein, *Postal Systems in the Pre-Modern Islamic World* (Cambridge, 2007), 184.

also responsible for reimbursing the monks, out of his own pocket, for property that was stolen from them.[85]

Arbāb al-adrāk, or route protectors, acquired an increasingly important role in the administration of al-Sharqīyah, as well as other Egyptian provinces. Edicts sent to St. Catherine from 797 onward include the *arbāb al-adrāk* in their formal lists of addressees, alongside the leaders of the *ʿurbān*. Late fifteenth-century examples identify the Banū Sulaymān as the route protectors in al-Ṭūr.[86] This was true elsewhere, as narrative sources attest to the growing visibility of *arbāb al-adrāk* throughout the Egyptian countryside. They are mentioned as offering the sultan presents during a hunting excursion toward Upper Egypt, chasing a rebellious amir, and guarding the corpses of executed brigands in al-Gharbīyah.[87] The *arbāb al-adrāk* are invariably identified as Arabs or *ʿurbān*, and mostly seen in a positive light. When a Mamluk official killed "many leaders of the *ʿurbān* and *arbāb al-adrāk*" and took over their property, he "brought about the desolation of the land."[88]

Contemporary European pilgrims to the Sinai confirm the policing roles of local Arabs, who were previously mentioned only as guides. Since the second half of the fourteenth century, pilgrims had had to pay tolls to official and non-official Arab armed men on the route to Mt. Sinai and back to Gaza. Frescobaldi encountered the "official of the Lord of the Arabs," who checked their safe conduct documents.[89] His

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[85] P.AtiyaHandlist 94 (= P.St.Catherine II 13).

[86] P.AtiyaHandlist 45 = P.St.Catherine I 21 (797H); P.AtiyaHandlist 49 = = P.St.Catherine I 24 (815/1413); P.AtiyaHandlist 50 and 114 = P.St.Catherine I 25 (850/1446); P.AtiyaHandlist 69 = P.St.Catherine I 36 (873/1468); P.AtiyaHandlist 67 = P.St.Catherine I 46 (891/1486); P.AtiyaHandlist 72= = P.St.Catherine I 52 (895/1490). The ones addressed to Banū Sulaymān are P.AtiyaHandlist 76 = P.St.Catherine I 54 (898/1492); P.AtiyaHandlist 109 = P.St.Catherine II 9 (898/1492).

[87] See al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 4:339 (hunting excursion in the direction of Upper Egypt, 771); Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 14:170, and Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍawʾ al-lāmiʿ li-ahl al-qarn al-tāsiʿ* (Cairo, 1934–36), 10:167 (following a rebellious amir from Siryāqūs to Ṭīnah, 824); al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 7:119 (guarding corpses in al-Gharbīyah, 828); Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 15:185 (preventing rebels from reaching Qaṭyā, 837). On the positive role of the *arbāb al-adrāk* of Juhaynah on the pilgrimage route, see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 7:291 (838). On *arbāb al-adrāk* in the direction of Nubia, see al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 8:5 (referring to the 1360s).

[88] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 13:175 (812).

[89] Leonardo di Frescobaldi, "Pilgrimage of Lionardo di Niccolò Frescobaldi to the Holy Land," in *Visit to the Holy Places of Egypt, Sinai, Palestine and Syria in 1384,* trans. Theophilus Bellorini, Eugene Hoade, and Bellarmino Bagatti (Jerusalem, 1948), 65.

fellow traveler, Gucci, was robbed by a group of Saracens who claimed to be officials of the "grand interpreter of the Arabs."[90] A century later, Adorno met Sinai Arabs who demanded *gaphyr*, derived from Arabic *ghafārah*, protection payment.[91] Bertrandon de La Brocquière, who had fallen ill on the way to St. Catherine, was taken back to Gaza by one of the Arab guides. He was shown generosity and spent the night at an Arab camp with his money and provisions untouched.[92] European travelers still commented on the extreme poverty of the Sinai Arabs,[93] but the weakly, thieving, and treacherous Arabs of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were now often replaced with powerful, sometimes honorable, individuals.

Compared to the Berber Hawwārah of Upper Egypt, the Arab ʿĀʾidh in al-Sharqīyah offer a different model of fifteenth-century provincial elites. The ʿĀʾidh were not expected to make significant contributions for royal campaigns. When called upon to fight against Tamerlane, the combined forces of the ʿĀʾidh ʿĪsāwīyah and of another group, the Banū Wāʾil, numbered only 1,500 riders.[94] In *Zubdat kashf al-mamālik*, the ʿĀʾidh are said to have mustered only 1,000 riders, compared with 24,000 expected from the Hawwārah.[95] The Hawwārah were local landowners, deriving revenue from investments in sugar presses and waterwheels; the extent of their *iqṭāʿ* is unclear. The ʿĀʾidh, on the other hand, were mainly supported by *iqṭāʿ* and provided regional security in return; the number of troops they were able to

[90] Giorgio Gucci, "Pilgrimage of Giorgio Gucci to the Holy Land," in *Visit to the Holy Places of Egypt*, 121.

[91] Anselme Adorno, *Itinéraire d'Anselme Adorno en Terre sainte, 1470–1471*, ed. Jacques Heers and Georgette de Groer (Paris, 1978), 239–43.

[92] Bertrandon De La Brocquière, *A Mission to the Medieval Middle East: The Travels of Bertrandon de la Brocquière to Jerusalem and Constantinople*, ed. Robert Irwin (London, 2019), 129.3/357. Bertrandon also explains that the interpreter in Gaza negotiates safe passage with the Arabs, who enjoy the right of conducting the pilgrims. They were not always obedient to the sultan, and one must use their camels (ibid., 124.9/357).

[93] In 1290, the Maghribi traveler al-ʿAbdarī wrote that the Sinai Arabs are wretched people (*ṣaʿālīk*), pastoralists who subsist on plundering lonely travelers (*Riḥlat al-ʿAbdarī al-musammāh al-riḥlah al-Maghribīyah*, ed. Muḥammad al-Fāsī [Rabat, 1968], 153). In 1384, Frescobaldi described them as "almost nude and without arms," living with their animals in low tents or caves, and always asking for bread or biscuits (Frescobaldi, "Pilgrimage," 56–57, 59). Fabri described an armed but starving Bedouin standing at the gate to the monastery (Chareyron, *Pilgrims*, 149). See also Adorno, *Itinéraire*, 211–13; Chareyron, *Pilgrims*, 121–22.

[94] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 12:251.

[95] Al-Ẓāhirī, *Zoubdat kachf el-Mamâlik,* 103–6; idem, *La zubda* (1950), 174.

mount appears limited, and there is little evidence of the spread of ʿĀʾidh lineage throughout the eastern Delta. The Awlād ʿAlī of the Sinai, who appear frequently in the St. Catherine corpus in the final decades of the sultanate, once refer to themselves as ʿĀʾidh, but mostly do not.[96]

Arab Houses and the Decline of the *Iqṭāʿ* Regime

The rise of Arab ruling families was not limited to Upper Egypt or al-Sharqīyah. In other Delta provinces, the leaders of Arab groups were given the rank of *shaykh al-ʿArab* (or *amīr al-ʿArab)*, a title not widely used in Egypt before the middle of the fourteenth century.[97] Al-Qalqashandī reports such positions in al-Minūfīyah and al-Gharbīyah. He adds that the amirs of al-Minūfīyah are not amirs in the ordinary sense of military commanders, but rather in the sense of leadership over Arab clans (*wa-lakin imāratuhum fī maʿná mashyakhat al-ʿarab*).[98] Provincial Arab leaders were now important enough to earn a place in biographical dictionaries. Al-Sakhāwī provided entries for the *shaykh al-ʿArab* of al-Minūfīyah, two *shaykh al-ʿArab*s in al-Gharbīyah, and one of the *mashāyikh al-ʿurbān* in Buḥayrah.[99] By the end of the fifteenth century, Ibn Iyās reports such a position in al-Qalyūbīyah too.[100] Like the Hawwārah, these Arab houses allied themselves with Sufi saintly figures. The *shaykh al-ʿArab* of al-Minūfīyah was known for his respect and generosity toward Shaykh

[96] The explicit identification of Awlād ʿAlī as part of the ʿĀʾidh occurs in P.AtiyaHandlist 189 = P.RichardsBedouin 5, dated 901/1496. But this was 25 years after the Awlād ʿAlī had been first mentioned in the decrees and petitions from St. Catherine. During that period, they were mentioned seven times without ever been identified as a clan of the ʿĀʾidh (P.AtiyaHandlist 79 = P.St.Catherine I 37, 874/1469; P.AtiyaHandlist 58 = P.St.Catherine I 38, 875/1471; P.AtiyaHandlist 59 = P.St.Catherine I 40, 877/1472; P.AtiyaHandlist 67 = P.St.Catherine I 46, 891/1486; P.AtiyaHandlist 304 = P.RichardsBedouin 4, 891/1486; P.AtiyaHandlist 76, P.St.Catherine I 44, 898/1492. See also the unpublished Scroll 16, firmans 316, dated 902/1497. ~~The murder trial in which the Awlād ʿAlī were accused of murdering the abbot of St Catherine deserves a separate study.~~

[97] See Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen*, 135–37.

[98] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 4:71.

[99] Al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, 6:161 (Ibn Nuṣayr al-Dīn from al-Minūfīyah, d. 866/1462); 3:78 (Jamīl ibn Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf, *shaykh al-ʿArab* in villages of al-Gharbīyah, d. 865/1461); 2:34 (Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Sābiq, *shaykh al-ʿArab* in villages of al-Gharbīyah); 2:34 (Ismāʿīl ibn Zāyid, one of the shaykhs of the *ʿurbān* in al-Buḥayrah, executed 853).

[100] For the identification of leading regional families in the fifteenth-century delta, based on the chronicle of Ibn Iyās, see Garcin, "Note sur les rapportes," 157. These include Banū Abī al-Shawārib in al-Qalyūbīyah; Banū Baghdād in al-Gharbīyah; and Banū Ṣaqr of the Hilāl in al-Buḥayrah, whose capital was in al-Busāt, near Tarūjah. See also Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, 4:121, 5:453.

Madyan and his *zāwiyah*. Al-Sakhāwī was doubtful about his sincerity.[101] The alliance went both ways, since Sufis readily afforded their blessing to Arab ruling families.[102]

Arab provincial leaders in the central and western Delta paid fees in return for their appointments, which entitled them to some *iqṭāʿ* grants, although not at the scale of the Arab *iqṭāʿ*-holding in the eastern Delta. The *shaykh al-ʿArab* in al-Gharbīyah had to pay 30,000 dinars in return for his appointment, suggesting that he could expect to recoup this investment through access to a significant portion of local tax revenues.[103] The primarily financial dimension of these positions is highlighted by al-Qalqashandī, who says that the Arabs of al-Buḥayrah used to boast of the bravery of their amirs, but that in his time (the 1410s), they were led by a group of enormously wealthy *ʿurbān*.[104] As for *iqṭāʿ*, Arab clansmen held 20% of the villages of the western province of al-Buḥayrah. As in al-Sharqīyah, this was conceived as a reward for their role in guarding the main routes from Alexandria.[105] Arabs held about 10% of the cultivable land in the Delta provinces of al-Gharbīyah, Minūfīyah, and Daqahlīyah. Elsewhere, including in Upper Egypt, their share was marginal, although, as noted above, the *iqṭāʿ* holdings of the Hawwārah may have been underrepresented in this survey.[106] As shown by Lisa Blaydes, the villages held by the Arabs were smaller (on average less than 1,000 feddans) and of lesser value than the typical Egyptian village.[107]

Iqṭāʿ grants were most prominent in al-Sharqīyah and al-Buḥayrah, two provinces which came to be identified as having a significant *ʿurbān* population and lower soil quality. Al-Qalqashandī reports that there were hardly any orchards in al-Sharqīyah because of its proximity to marshlands and the "bedouin" nature of its

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[101] Al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, 6:161.

[102] Ibid., 2:114 (a biography of a Sufi scholar who afforded hospitality to one of shaykhs of the Arabs).

[103] Ibid., 2:34 (Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Sābiq. His year of death is left blank in the text. He was replaced by his half-brother Ibrāhīm ibn ʿUmar, to whom al-Sakhāwī dedicated a separate entry).

[104] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 4:71, 7:161.

[105] Ibid., 3:457

[106] See Maḥmūd, *Al-Ḥiyāzah al-zirāʿīyah*; Garcin "Note sur les rapportes," 156–57 n.; Lisa Blaydes, "Mamluks, Property Rights and Economic Development: Lessons from Medieval Egypt," *Politics and Society*, 47 no. 3 (2019). However, Michel's study of the 1528 Ottoman register showed that, alongside the eastern Delta, the *iqṭāʿ* of the *ʿurbān* was concentrated in Upper Egypt (*L'Égypte des villages*, 149).

[107] Blaydes, "Mamluks."

population (*illā anna al-basātīn fīhi qalīlah bal takādu an takūna maʿdūmah li-ittiṣālihi bi-al-sibākh wa-badāwat ghālib ahlihi*).[108] Orchardists were less likely to adopt Arab identities; this was indeed the case in other contexts known to us, such as Ayyubid Fayyum. In *Zubdat kashf al-mamālik*, written in the middle of the fifteenth century, al-Ẓāhirī states that the *ʿurbān* of al-Sharqīyah established many settlements in the steppe (*bādiyah*) areas of the marshes that were not suitable for cultivation, and that these villages were not registered in the records of the *dīwān*.[109] He also notes the dominance of *ʿurbān* among the population of al-Buḥayrah, mentioning reports of internal fights that led to the deaths of more than 3,000 men.[110] It is possible that the decline of the irrigation system following the Black Death caused an increase in the extent of marshlands in al-Sharqīyah, as argued by Borsch and others.[111] In these two provinces, low soil quality has become associated with *ʿurbān* identity and a large number of *iqṭāʿ* grants given to Arab leaders. Yet even in al-Sharqīyah and al-Buḥayrah the *ʿurbān* were a sedentary population, made distinct from other peasants by the type of land they settled on. Despite the statement by al-Ẓāhirī, al-Sharqīyah had hundreds of land tax paying villages by the end of the fifteenth century; only 18 of them had substandard soil completely unfit for cultivation.[112] Moreover, it is important to emphasize that the rise of Arab provincial houses was not limited to these two provinces; Arab leaders were in charge of the collection of agricultural revenues, not a product of the abandonment of agriculture.

Comparison of the cadastral registers of 1376 and 1480 shows that *iqṭāʿ* grants for Arab leaders rose across all Egyptian provinces. While in 1376 Arab rural elites held about 5% of all Egyptian *iqṭāʿ* holdings, their share doubled to 10% in 1480.[113] Overall, however, the greater amount of *iqṭāʿ* handed over to Arab groups was coming out of a smaller pool of *iqṭāʿ* grants, reflecting the general collapse of the *iqṭāʿ* regime during the fifteenth century. The Egyptian countryside went through a radical transformation during ~~the fifteenth century~~, involving a steep rise in the number of villages either endowed as *waqf* or handed over to the sultan's private fisc, the *Dīwān al-Mufrad*. The Ayyubid and early Mamluk model of allowing army

[108] Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 3:404.

[109] Al-Ẓāhirī, *La zubda*, 52; idem, *Zoubdat kachf el-Mamâlik*, 34.

[110] Al-Ẓāhirī, *La zubda*, 35–36.

[111] Borsch, "Plague Depopulation"; Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen*, 43; Maḥmūd, *Al-Ḥiyāzah al-zirāʿīyah*.

[112] Maḥmūd, *Al-Ḥiyāzah al-zirāʿīyah*, 31.

[113] For these estimates, see the calculations in ibid.; Blaydes, "Mamluks."

officers direct rights over tax collection in far-flung corners of the empire gave way to an alternative model where provincial, local elites had a much greater role to play.

The increasing role of Arab families in provincial administration was accompanied by the parallel rise of civilian, non-Arab tax farmers, known as *mutadarrikūn*. As shown by Daisuke Igarashi, the *mutadarrikūn* were merchants or scholars who were awarded contracts of tens of thousands of dinars for collection of taxes from prosperous Delta villages or towns. The localities known to have been handed over to *mutadarrikūn* are al-Manzalah, Fāriskūr, Jawjar, and Ziftā, all found in al-Daqahlīyah and al-Gharbīyah. These towns do not seem to overlap with the villages under the control of Arab elite families, and it seems likely that the unarmed *mutadarrikūn* were responsible for tax-collection in market villages and towns, while the Arabs were responsible for delivering the taxes in smaller, grain-producing settlements.[114] *Mashāyikh al-ʿurbān* and the *mutadarrakīn* are jointly mentioned as presenting tribute to Sultan Qāytbāy upon his accession to the throne in 873/1469.[115] These twin branches of the rural elites were mentioned together as present in al-Gharbīyah by the time of the Ottoman conquest.[116]

European Travelers on the "Arab Nation"

The increase in the power of Arab provincial elites did not go unnoticed by fifteenth-century European visitors, who were now much more likely to comment on the prestige attached to men of Arab stock. Adorno states that the Arabs were considered to be the most noble among Muslims since Muḥammad was one of them.[117] Fabri, twice stopped for toll payments on the short trip from Bethlehem to

[114] Daisuke Igarashi, "Who Were the *Mutadarrikūn*? Tax-Farming and Rural Society in Circassian Mamluk Egypt," EGYlandscape presentation, September 2019, Marburg. Here, the key text is al-Ẓāhirī, *Zoubdat kachf el-Mamâlik*, 130, listing localities and prices of tax-farming contracts. For biographies of individual *mutadarrik*s, see al-Sakhāwī, *Ḍawʾ*, 11:93–94 (tax-farming of al-Manzalah); 10:29 (Ziftā); Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 3:96 (Jawjar). For campaigns to extract money from *mutadarrik*s, see al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 7:75 (825, in al-Buḥayrah and al-Gharbīyah).

[115] Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, 3:33.

[116] Ibid., 5:437.

[117] On the Arab lineage of Muḥammad as a source of ethnic pride, see also the thirteenth-century Thietmar (Denys Pringle, *Pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land, 1187–1291* [Surrey, 2012], 130); and in the fifteenth century Adorno (*Itinéraire*, 95) and Felix Fabri (*The Wanderings of Felix Fabri,* trans. Aubrey Stewart, The Library of the Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, vols. 7–10 [London, 1897], 9:484).

Jerusalem, quotes the Arabs as saying that "they are the lords of the wilderness, and of all the places which are not enclosed by walls, covered by roofs, or fenced by ditches, and so forth."[118] Therefore, "they take no heed of safe-conducts, but extort toll from all those who pass through the desert."[119] He ends his account by comparing them to Schwabian nobles who would not admit any townsmen to their tournaments.[120] According to Adorno, the "Benetye" (Banū Ṭayyʾ) took no notice of sultanic protections, and only spared those travelers who were accompanied by a member of their own tribe.[121] Their claim to be masters of the open country overrode the authority of the sultan.

If Crusader-era European accounts had the Arabs "turning like reeds in the wind," later authors tended to see the Arabs as a useful thorn in the side of the sultanate. Mandeville, writing circa 1350, says that the Arabs would fight the sultan if they were aggrieved.[122] Ghillebert de Lannoy (ca. 1420) states that they were brave people who fought the sultan, although they tended mostly to fight each other.[123] Adorno believed that it was precisely their incessant infighting which made them pay no attention to the sultan.[124] Santo Brasca (1480) wrote that the Arabs fought the "Moors" and usually beat them through regular use of bows. [125] The use of bow and arrow by Arabs is also mentioned by Fabri and other travelers of the 1480s.[126] This departs from earlier authors who made much of the Arabs' exclusive reliance on spears and lances.

[118] Fabri, *Wanderings*, 9:479.

[119] Ibid., 9:64. See also Chareyron, *Pilgrims*, 124; Yehoshua Frenkel, "The Contribution of European Travel Literature to the Study of the Environmental History of the Levant (13th–15th centuries)," in *Living with Nature*, ed. Walker and Al Ghouz, 712.

[120] Fabri, *Wanderings*, 9:483. But there are also less favorable comparisons in the same passage. Fabri compares the Arabs to gypsies, and says that they come out of the wilderness to commit theft, sometimes forming troops to raid a village or a town, or "pitch their tents in green pastures, build themselves huts, and dwell there harming the people of the region by stealing all the cattle that comes their way" (9:482–83).

[121] Adorno, *Itinéraire*, 215.

[122] Chareyron, *Pilgrims,* 122.

[123] Ibid., 124.

[124] Adorno, *Itinéraire*, 95 (the context is the Arabs of Ifriqya).

[125] Chareyron, *Pilgrims,* 123.

[126] Ibid., 106; Fabri, *Wanderings*, 7:449–51.

Emmanuel Piloti, a merchant resident in Alexandria and writing in 1420, provides us with an observant perspective on the Arabs of his time.[127] Piloti divided the population of Egypt into three "nations": the Mamluk military elite, the local "Egyptians," and the Arabs who were the lords of the countryside. The three groups fought each other, like Guelfs and Ghibelins in Italy, as each had its own claim to hegemony over the land; the Arab claim was based on genealogy, as they said "that power and lordship should belong to them, for Muḥammad was Arab of their nation."[128]

Piloti was personally familiar with the Arabs who inhabited the lands between Cairo and Alexandria, and states that these Arabs provided Alexandria with grains and all manner of animal products, while they depended on the city for textiles, oil, honey, and soap.[129] The Arabs weighed on the sultan because they refused to pay him the tribute due from them, and the sultan was therefore forced to campaign every few years with the aim of capturing the Arab chiefs and demanding ransom for their release. Piloti emphasizes the ideological aspect of the Arab resistance, which he compares to the resistance of Bologna to the Church in Rome. The Arabs refused to pay tribute because the Mamluks were a blameworthy nation, slaves that were bought and sold with money taken from the Egyptian peasants, while the Arabs themselves had been in charge of the land since ancient times.[130] The Arabs publicly said that the lords of Cairo were infidel dogs, renegade Christians, and bought slaves.[131] In a flight of fantasy, Piloti then argues that "the Arab nation is the closest to the Christians out of all the pagans," and reports that certain Arabs told him how they were only waiting for the European Christians to take over Alexandria so they could join forces with them.[132]

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[127] Emmanuel Piloti, *L'Égypte au commencement du quinzième siècle, d'après le traité d'Emmanuel Piloti de Crète (Incipit 1420),* ed. P.-H. Dopp (Cairo, 1950), 56–61, fols. 11–20. This important text by Piloti is discussed in Büssow-Schmitz, *Die Beduinen*, 1–2.

[128] Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 33, fol. 11v. On the Arabs as lords (seigneurs) of the countryside and of large villages, see 56, fol. 18r.

[129] Ibid., 58–59.

[130] Ibid., 57.

[131] Ibid., 58.

[132] Ibid., 59.

Al-Asadī on Arabs and Peasants

The most insightful account of the co-optation of Arab elites into the Mamluk regime is found in *Al-Taysīr wa-al-iʿtibār wa-al-taḥrīr wa-al-ikhtibār fīmā yajibu min ḥusn al-tadbīr wa-al-taṣarruf wa-al-ikhtiyār*, composed by the otherwise unknown Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Asadī in 855/1451.[133] Al-Asadī composed the treatise in response to what he perceived as the maladministration of the Mamluk Sultanate, with particular focus on monetary reforms and on the decline of Egyptian agriculture, which he attributed to the neglect of irrigation, the oppression of the peasantry, and the ubiquity of bribery.

This neglect and oppression led, according to al-Asadī, to the transformation of peasants into *ʿurbān:* "Many of those disobedient *ʿurbān*, who are [now] steppe people of the open country, used to be tax-paying cultivators and peasants, inclined to willfully obey the rulers" (*kathīran min hādhihi al-ʿurbān al-ʿuṣāh, alladhīna hum ahl bawādī fī al-falāh, kānū ahl zarʿ wa-rafʿ wa-filāḥah maʿa al-inqiyād bi-ḥusn al-ṭāʿah lil-wulāh*).[134] The cause of this shift from law-abiding cultivators to disobedient *ʿurbān* was the neglect of irrigation works by the authorities. Destruction and incessant local fighting ensued (*al-tanāfus wa-al-taḥāsud thumma al-ḍirāb wa-al-ḥirāb*). The local governors took the side of those who had money and power and capacity to cultivate (*qudrah ʿalá al-ʿamal*). The weak, on the other hand, were forced to migrate away from the land: "Those who were afflicted with weakness and deficiency, endured much harm and suffering. When this situation continued, some of them of migrate from the land due to their meekness, and to the predominance of harm and disturbances" (*ʿalá man ḥaṣala fī ḥālihi ḍuʿf wa-ikhtilāl, wa-kathura iḥtimāl al-ḍayim wa-al-ṣabr wa-al-iḥtimāl, wa-tamādá ʿalá hadhā al-ḥāl, ilá an raḥala man raḥala min ḍuʿf al-quwwah wa-tasalluṭ al-adhá wa-dukhūl al-khalal*).

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[133] Al-Asadī, *Al-Taysīr wa-al-iʿtibār wa-al-taḥrīr wa-al-ikhtibār fīmā yajibu min ḥusn al-tadbīr wa-al-taṣarruf wa-al-ikhtiyār,* ed. ʿAbd al-Qādir Aḥmad Ṭulaymāt (Cairo, 1968). Al-Asadī's text has been studied by John L. Meloy, "The Privatization of Protection: Extortion and the State in the Circassian Mamluk Period," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 47, no. 2 (2004): 195–212, focusing on al-Asadī's description of *ḥimāyah,* and by Abdul Azim Islahi, "Al-Asadi and His Work al-Taysir: A Study of His Socio-Economic Ideas," MPRA Paper No. 80122, posted 11 July 2017 (https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/80122), focusing on al-Asadī's suggestions for monetary reforms. I am grateful to Daisuke Igarashi for bringing this passage to my attention.

[134] Al-Asadī, *Taysīr*, 93. The term *rafʿ* here means bringing crops to the floor, and more generally delivering agricultural taxes.

Eventually, the peasants forced from their lands were integrated into the *ʿurbān* who lived outside of the agricultural areas: "This has led to resentment by those who left the land (*al-rāḥilīn*), and to their disobedience; they agreed with the people of the steppe (*al-bawādī*) to rebel and disobey the community. For there is no doubt that life among the people of the steppe is tougher compared to sedentary life (*ahl al-ḥaḍar*), and the former cultivators (*ahl al-zarʿ wa-al-rafʿ*) remember the ease of civilized life (*al-ʿumrān*). Their want for sustenance for themselves, their families, and their animals was a source of constant harm for them."[135] Therefore, concludes al-Asadī, these landless migrant peasants had no choice (*lā budda*) but to gather their forces, and set out together to destroy, fight, and loot.

After explaining the motivations of the peasants-turned-*ʿurbān*, al-Asadī expands on the co-optation of Arab elites into the provincial administration. Faced with uprisings by those who were forced off the land, the authorities opened criminal trials against them and called up every person, both *badw* and *ḥaḍar*, to fight the rebels. The rebels were put under constant watch and regular expeditionary forces were sent against them. However, the success of the authorities was limited, because whenever the rebels felt they were beaten, they took refuge in the mountains and fortified themselves there. Failing to quell these rebellions, the state administrators decided to appoint amirs and *mutadarrik*s (here, either tax farmers or in the sense of *arbāb al-adrāk*, route protectors) throughout the land. The Mamluk authorities also decided to side with the *ʿurbān* that they found loyal and obedient and handed them stipends and *iqṭāʿ* grants in return for their obedience, for watching over the roads, and for their protection (*fa-lam yasaʿ ahl al-tadbīr fī al-dawlah illā an aqāmū umarāʾ wa-mutadarrikīn fī kull makān wa-mālū maʿa ahl al-ṭāʿah min al-ʿurbān wa-jaʿalū la-hum ʿalá qiyāmihim bi-al-ṭāʿah wājib al-idrāk wa-al-khafr al-arzāq wa-al-iqṭāʿāt fī al-dīwān*).[136]

As provincial power was delegated to Arab elites, says al-Asadī, Arabs and peasants parted ways. The enmity between the state-sponsored Arab elites and those who had to leave their lands (*al-rāḥilīn ʿan al-awṭān*) increased, and so did the internal fighting among the *ʿurbān*. He describes the peasants who were left on the land as being stuck between a rock and a hard place: "The *fallāḥ*s have become stuck (*qaff*^{an}) between two opposing forces, unable to satisfy both sides simultaneously—the people of the state (*ahl al-dawlah*) are in front of them,

[135] Ibid., 93–94.

[136] Ibid., 94.

demanding what they have and what they do not; while the belligerent Arabs (*al-ʿarab al-muḥāribūn*) are to the back, right and left." Under these conditions, many of the peasants abandon their lands (*tasaḥḥaba*), and even those who stayed could not practice agriculture. Anyone who could leave did so and joined other groups (*aqwām*); the only ones who stayed did it out of necessity. The final outcome, says al-Asadī, is that the countryside grew even more impoverished and depopulated.

Al-Asadī's account, written circa 1450, describes four stages of the relationship between the peasantry and the Mamluk state. First, peasants who were forced out of their lands, through the neglect of irrigation or the injustice of Mamluk officials, joined the ranks of the *ʿurbān* who lived outside of the agricultural areas. As we have seen with al-Ẓāhirī, the *ʿurbān* were now identified with villages of lower soil quality. Second, these former peasants expressed their frustration by waging guerrilla warfare against provincial Mamluk institutions, and provoking military responses from the regime. Third, the Mamluk authorities, realizing that they were unable to win against these mobile forces on their own, delegated provincial authority to loyal *ʿurbān* elites and rewarded them with generous *iqṭāʿ*s, hoping they would be able to quell the unrest. The result, however, was that the peasants left on the land were now subject to double pressure: by the tax collectors sent by the state and by the provincial Arab elites.

Al-Asadī's account gives the impression that those villagers who remained on the land did not see themselves as Arabs. There is good evidence, however, that Muslim peasantry continued to espouse Arab identities throughout the late Mamluk period. A good example comes from an autobiographical note by al-Qalqashandī (1355–1418), born in Qalqashandah in Qalyūbīyah, who self-identified with the Banū Badr of the Fazārah, together with his fellow villagers.[137] Ibn Khaldūn, writing at the end of the fourteenth century, states that clans of the Banū Hilāl, Banū Kilāb, and Banū Rabīʿah were found in Upper Egypt (*bi-nawāḥī al-Ṣaʿīd*). They rode horses and carried weapons, while at the same time cultivating the land and paying the land tax to the sultan (*yuʿmirūna al-arḍ bi-al-filāḥah… wa-yaqūmūna bi-al-kharāj*). He then

[137] Yossef Rapoport, "Al-Qalqashandī's Lost Tribes: Mamluk Genealogy, Identity and Administration," EGYLandscape Working Paper 4 (2021), https://www.egylandscape.org/papers/April2021_Rapoport/#al-qalqashandi%CC%84s-lost-tribes-mamluk-genealogy-identity-and-administration/.

notes that the internal fighting among them was acute, worse than the internal fighting among the Arab clans of the desert.[138]

Other examples of overlapping peasant and Arab identities in Upper Egypt date to the early decades of the fifteenth century. In 820, peasants and *ʿurbān* were lumped together as victims of unjust exactions. A few years later, the land tax of the peasants could only be delivered after overcoming the opposition of the Arabs.[139] An anecdote reported by Ibn Taghrībirdī in his annals of 822, when Upper Egypt was already dominated by the Hawwārah, exemplifies peasants' continued appropriation of lineage claims as a means of resistance:

> A trustworthy person from Upper Egypt told me: most of the cultivators (*muzāriʿīn*) in our village (*balad*) were Ashraf of ʿAlid descent, while the tax collector (*ʿāmil*) in the village was Christian. When the tax collector came, the peasants (*fallāḥūn*) used to come out to greet him, some of them greeting him as customary while others refraining, and some of the poor and needy, or those fearful of the landowner (*ṣāḥib*) of the village even kiss his hand and ask for easing the burden of the land-tax. But when al-Malik al-Muʾayyad [Shaykh] prevented the employment of Christians in tax collection, all of this ended.[140]

This diatribe against the Christian tax collector, a familiar trope in the history of Islamic Egypt, is accentuated by the Sharifian lineage claims of the villagers. The distressing image of Muslim peasants prostrating before a Christian tax collector is augmented by their noble descent. By this period, Arab identities had been established in in Upper Egypt for centuries, so that peasant claims of descent from the Prophet had become normalized in ways that were unimaginable under the Abbasids or the Fatimids.

Another indication ~~for~~ the continued clan identities in Egyptian villages is collective leadership by groups of headmen, a form of social organization attested throughout the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. Three edicts from the later decades of the fifteenth century address collective groups of headmen and peasants (*jamāʿat al-*

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[138] Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-ʿibar*, 6:10.

[139] Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, ed. ʿAṭā, 6:432 (820); Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbāʾ al-ghumr*, 3:239 (824).

[140] Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 14:83 (822).

mashāyikh wa-al-fallāḥīn) in Egyptian villages. One was sent in 875/1470 from the senior amir Khāyirbak to the headmen and peasants of the village of Ṭūbhār in the Fayyum; he ordered them to cultivate the land and to prepare the land tax and customary hospitality dues.[141] Another edict from the same period was sent to the headmen and peasants of Shaybat Shaqqārah in al-Sharqīyah.[142] The institution of the collective village headmen, which overlapped with the spread of Arab identities, endured until the end of the Mamluk era.

Thus, the co-optation of Arab and Berber ruling families into Mamluk provincial administration did not lead to the erasure of clan identities among the peasantry. Instead, a hierarchy of dominant and subservient clans emerged, one that reflected dynamics of power on the ground. When the Hawwārah took over Upper Egypt, the number of villages attaching themselves to them grew from four to nearly thirty, as reported by al-Qalqashandī. Over time, however, power came to be monopolized by individual houses, whose names distinguished them from the rest of the clans that identified with the larger Hawwārah confederacy. Fifteenth-century sources often speak of the Banū ʿUmar of Upper Egypt, or the Awlād ʿĪsá in the Sharqīyah, to separate them from other rural people who identified as Hawwārah or ʿĀʾidh. Muslim peasants in Egypt continued to share a genealogical worldview and an Arab or Berber identity, at least until the end of the Mamluk period.

Nonetheless, as al-Asadī observed, the increasing power of Arab ruling families created a tension with the mass of the peasantry over which they came to rule. Their co-optation into state administration also marked the end of the great Arab rebellions of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It was now the prerogative of the Hawwārah of Upper Egypt or the ʿĀʾidh of the Sharqīyah to collect tribute and impose law and order in the villages. While the Hawwārah continued to resist attempts by the Mamluk regime to infringe on their autonomy, there is little direct evidence of support by the wider population. As Garcin pointed out, fifteenth-century accounts of clashes between Arab groups and the Mamluk regime do not refer to the participation of peasants or to the targeting of land tax.[143] At the same time, unequivocal examples of Arab clansmen attacking peasants are very rare up to

[141] P.Vind.Arab. III, Nr 1.

[142] P.Vind.Arab. III, Nr 2, sent from Yashbak al-Muhammadī al-dawādār. P.Vind.Arab. III, Nr 3, sent from the same senior amir to the headmen and peasants in a village called al-Jumayzah, informs them that he now holds the *iqṭāʿ* of the village.

[143] Garcin, "Note sur les rapportes," 147–63.

the end of the Mamluk period. A fully drawn-out conflict, resulting in a massacre of peasants by Arabs, is reported from al-Sharqīyah only in 1516, immediately following the news of the Mamluk defeat by the Ottomans.[144]

CONCLUSION

The Ottoman conquest appears to have driven a wedge between Arab elites and the peasantry. The Ottomans formalized the role of the provincial Arab families, and granted them a share of local tax revenue in return for securing tax collection.[145] The Kanunname of 1525 recognized the role of Arab shaykhs in "promoting agriculture, collecting revenues, and maintaining order in the villages under their control by not harboring rebels or runaway slaves."[146] It also allowed the Hawwārah clan of the Banū ʿUmar to pass their position in Upper Egypt among the members of the clan, as long as they paid a customary accession fee.[147] The same privileges were accorded to the Arab leading families of al-Sharqīyah (no longer the ʿĀʾidh but rather the Banū Baqar[148]), al-Gharbīyah, and al-Buḥayrah. Appointments for the leadership of Arab clans in the provinces came directly from Istanbul, bypassing the governor of Egypt, who also had no authority to dismiss them. Thus, the Ottomans enshrined in law the semi-autonomous status of ~~these~~ Arab ruling houses over much of Upper Egypt and the western and eastern sections of the Delta—a culmination of processes that started in the aftermath of the Black Death and matured over the course of the fifteenth century.

The Arab provincial elites, accompanied by local Sufi shaykhs, could now become the immediate oppressors. The situation in the Egyptian Delta in the early Ottoman period is known to us through the extensive writings of the Sufi al-Shaʿrānī, as studied by Adam Sabra.[149] Al-Shaʿrānī was a life-long associate of the

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[144] Ibid., 162, citing Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ*, 5:82.

[145] On this, see Michel, *L'Égypte des villages*, 45ff; Adam Sabra, "Sufism and Practice of Politics in Early Ottoman Egypt" in *The Mamluk-Ottoman Transition: Continuity and Change in Egypt and Bilād al-Shām in the Sixteenth Century,* ed. Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen (Göttingen, 2022), 471–88.

[146] Sabra, "Sufism and Practice of Politics," 476, based on Ahmed Akgündüz, ed., *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri ve Hukuk Tahlilleri*, vol. 6 (Istanbul, 2006–), 113–15.

[147] Akgündüz, ed., *Osmanlı Kanunnâmeleri*, 6:115.

[148] On the Banū Baqar in al-Sharqīyah, see Sabra, "Sufism and Practice of Politics"; Garcin, "Note sur les rapportes," 159. They were based in Minyat Ghamr, and are first mentioned in 1472. They fought the ʿĀʾidh in 1506.

[149] Sabra, "Sufism and Practice of Politics."

Banū Baghdād clan in al-Minūfīyah, and his writings make clear that the Banū Baghdād held the right to the agricultural revenues of many local villages and complete autonomy in terms of enforcing this payment ~~from the cultivators~~. Al-Shaʿrānī tells of his attempts to rein in what he saw as ruthless practices of the Banū Baghdād towards local cultivators in the villages under their control. This influence was limited, and the Sufis needed the support of Arab leaders as much as the other way around. Al-Shaʿrānī quotes a member of the Banū Baghdād as saying about one of the Sufis: “He is a shaykh only because I accept his intercession. If I refused, no one would have faith in him or make him a shaykh.”[150]

In his magisterial study of the Egyptian countryside in the sixteenth century, Nicolas Michel found that peasant society was not tribal or segmentary, unlike the Arab clans who coexisted alongside them.[151] For Michel, the distinction made in the Ottoman kanunname between the peasants and the Arabs—the *fellah taifesi* on the one hand and the *ʿarab* or *ʿurbān* on the other—suggests that peasants did not possess clan organization and Arabian genealogy.[152] The kanunname specifically prohibits peasants, but not Arabs, from carrying arms (art. 86).[153] In this Ottoman blueprint for rural administration, *mashāyikh al-ʿurbān* have the most important responsibilities, alongside the official *kāshif*, and are subject to the most severe punishments in case of non-fulfilment; while the peasants and their headmen are rarely subject to punishments.[154] As in the Mamluk period, the burden of village taxes was divided into shares, with each share undertaken by a subgroup of peasants led by one of the headmen. Despite this continuity, Michel’s interrogation of the composition of individual peasant groups led him to conclude that peasant associations were not primarily based on clans.[155] This seems to indicate an erosion of village Arab and clan identities compared with the medieval period.

Provincial Arab houses continued to dominate Egyptian provinces until the end of the eighteenth century. In his study of the rural notables of the Ottoman Delta, based on Ottoman court records up to 1800, Riḍā Sharīf found enduring Arab elite families in the Delta, where official positions continued to be passed from father to

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[150] Al-Shaʿrānī, *Mukhtaṣar kitāb irshād al-mughfalīn min al-fuqahāʾ wa-al-fuqarāʾ ilá shurūṭ ṣuḥbat al-umarāʾ*, ed. Adam Sabra (Cairo, 2013), 130.

[151] Michel, *L’Égypte des villages*, 2.

[152] Ibid., 72.

[153] Ibid., 229ff.

[154] Ibid., 202.

[155] Ibid., 295–301.

son.[156] The Hawwārah maintained their primary role in the administration of Upper Egypt throughout the sixteenth century. The Ottoman governors took direct control of Upper Egypt in the seventeenth century, but the Hawwārah regained some of their power up to 1760.[157] Zeynab Abul-Magd argued that the Hawwārah were perceived as sharing common descent with the Muslim peasantry, and represented a "native regime," based on a social contract with their subjects.[158] Al-Shaʿrānī's writings, on the other hand, suggest that the gulf between Arab ruling families and Arab villagers ~~does appear to have~~ become accentuated in the sixteenth century. Arab shaykhs, accompanied by local Sufi shaykhs, were both kinsmen as well as immediate oppressors.

[156] Ibid., 296, n. 85, citing Riḍā Asʿad Sharīf, *Aʿyān al-rīf al-Miṣrī fī al-ʿaṣr al-ʿUthmānī* (Cairo, 2010), 451–52.

[157] Zeinab Abul-Magd, *Imagined Empires: A History of Revolt in Egypt* (Berkeley, 2013), 17 (based on Ahmed Cezzâr paşa, *Ottoman Egypt in the Eighteenth Century: The Nizâmnâme-i Misir of Cezzâr Ahmed Pasha*, ed. and trans. Stanford J. Shaw [Cambridge, Mass, 1962], 44).

[158] Abul-Magd, *Imagined Empires*, 19.