

## The Mamluk Sultanate

The Mamluk Sultanate ruled Egypt, Syria, and the Arabian hinterland along the Red Sea. Lasting from the deposition of the Ayyubid dynasty (c. 1250) to the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in 1517, this regime of slave-soldiers incorporated many of the political structures and cultural traditions of its Fatimid and Ayyubid predecessors. Yet, its system of governance and centralization of authority represented radical departures from the hierarchies of power that predated it. Providing a rich and comprehensive survey of events from the Sultanate's founding to the Ottoman occupation, this interdisciplinary book explores the Sultanate's identity and heritage after the Mongol conquests, the expedience of conspiratorial politics, and the close symbiosis of the military elite and civil bureaucracy. Carl F. Petry also considers the statecraft, foreign policy, economy, and cultural legacy of the Sultanate, and its interaction with polities throughout the central Islamic world and beyond. In doing so, Petry reveals how the Mamluk Sultanate can be regarded as a significant experiment in the history of state-building within the premodern Islamic world.

CARL F. PETRY is the Hamad Ibn Khalifa Al Thani Professor of Middle East Studies and Professor of History at Northwestern University. He is the author of *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (1982), *Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of al-Ashraf Qaytbay and Qansuh al-Ghawri in Egypt* (1993), *Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamluk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power* (1994), and *The Criminal Underworld in a Medieval Islamic Society: Narratives from Cairo and Damascus under the Mamluks* (2012), and is the editor of *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Islamic Egypt, 640–1517* (1998). His research has been supported by the J. S. Guggenheim Foundation, the Institute for Advanced Study, the American Research Center in Egypt, and the American Council of Learned Societies.



# The Mamluk Sultanate

## *A History*

---

Carl F. Petry

*Northwestern University*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-1-108-47104-6 — The Mamluk Sultanate  
Carl F. Petry  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
New Delhi – 110025, India  
103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108471046](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108471046)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108557382

© Carl F. Petry 2022

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2022

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data*

Names: Petry, Carl F., 1943- author.

Title: The Mamluk Sultanate : a history / Carl F. Petry, Northwestern University, Illinois.

Description: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2022. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021050093 (print) | LCCN 2021050094 (ebook) |

ISBN 9781108471046 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108456999 (paperback) |

ISBN 9781108557382 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Mamelukes—History. | Egypt—History—1250-1517. | Islamic Empire.  
Classification: LCC DT96 .P48 2022 (print) | LCC DT96 (ebook) | DDC 962/.02—dc23/  
eng/20220107

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021050093>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021050094>

ISBN 978-1-108-47104-6 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-45699-9 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

To Bruce D. Craig  
Steadfast Khushdash and  
Advocate for Mamluk Studies



## Contents

---

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>List of Maps</i>	xi
Introduction	1
1 Synopsis of Events	5
The Mamluk Institution	5
Ayyubid Origins (521/1127–647/1249)	7
From Junta to Sultanate: A Tumultuous Decade (647/1249–658/1260)	8
The Reign of al-Zahir Baybars al-Bunduqdari (658/1260–676/1277)	10
The Qalawunid Succession and Quasi-Dynasty (676/1277–709/1310)	12
The Third Reign of al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun (709/1310–741/1341)	17
The Qalawunid Lineage: Figureheads and Power Brokers (741/1341–784/1382)	20
Al-Zahir Barquq and Establishment of the “Circassian” Regime (784/1382–801/1399)	23
The Reigns of Faraj and Shaykh: Rivalry, Invasion, Reconsolidation (801/1399–825/1422)	27
The Reign of al-Ashraf Barsbay (825/1422–841/1438)	35
From Jaqmaq to Qayitbay: Upholding the Status Quo (842/1438–872/1468)	40
The Reigns of al-Ashraf Qayitbay and Successors (872/1468–906/1501)	44
The Reigns of Qansawh al-Ghawri, al-Ashraf Tuman Bay, and the Ottoman Conquest (906/1501–923/1517)	47
2 Ethos of the “Slave-Soldiers” Regime	53
Cadets in Training: Inculcating a Ruling Class	57
Organization, Ranks, and Titles	64
Offices and Conditions of Service	69
Legacy, “Conspiracy,” or Both?	73
3 The Mamluk Sultanate from a Global Perspective	80
Statecraft	83
The Syrian Littoral: Suzerainty versus Autonomy	84
Al-Hijaz: The Hasanid Sharifate between Mamluk Amirs and Clan Rivals	91
The East Anatolian Marches: Mamluk Suzerainty, Local Ferment	96
Challengers to Mamluk Suzerainty from Iran	100
The Ottomans: Contesting the Status Quo	107
	vii

viii	Contents	
	The Europeans: Transit, Commerce, Profit, and Piracy	110
	Africa beyond the Sultanate: Takrur, Abyssinia, and the Maghrib	117
	Retrospect	128
4	Vocational Classes: Bureaucrats, Magistrates, Scholastics, Clerics	129
	The Bureaucracy	129
	The Civil Judiciary	135
	Scholastic Practice	143
	Custodians of Religion	147
	Sufi Mystics	152
5	The Political Economy: Contexts of Innovation	154
	Agriculture and Husbandry	155
	Administration and Taxation	158
	Fiscal Dilemmas, Counteractive Remedies	165
	Interregional Commerce	172
	The European Presence: Competition and Cooption	176
	The Domestic Economy	178
	Privatized Assets, Clandestine Revenues	185
	Agents of Procurement	194
	Privatization of Charitable Trusts	196
	Addendum: Currency	200
6	Cultural Legacy: Patronage, Audience, Genres, Historiography	203
	Patronage and Authorship	203
	Change in Literary Culture and Growth of Audiences	213
	Poetry: Formal Canons, Popular Modes	216
	Prose: The Chancery Orbit, Popularization, and <i>Alf Layla wa-Layla</i>	220
	The Growth of Historiography	223
	Concluding Thoughts	240
7	The Rural Environment, Gendered Issues, Minority Communities, Sufi Practice	243
	The Rural Environment	243
	Gendered Issues	249
	Infractions Linked to Gender	257
	Communal Status of Minorities: Christians and Jews	259
	Religious Diversity and Sufi Practice	269
	Reflections	279
	<i>Notes</i>	283
	<i>Bibliography</i>	301
	<i>Index</i>	347



## Figures

---

1.1	Bridge with lion blazons built by Sultan Baybars	page 13
1.2	Sultan Qalawun hospital site	15
1.3	Battle in Wadi al-Khazindar	17
1.4	Mosque of Sultan al-Nasir Hasan ibn Qalawun	22
1.5	Funerary hospice and mausoleum built for Sultan al-Zahir Barquq by his son, al-Nasir Faraj	29
1.6	Interior of south dome in funerary hospice/mausoleum built for Sultan al-Zahir Barquq	30
1.7	Soldier in pursuit	32
1.8	Mosque of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh	34
1.9	Fountain ( <i>Sabīl</i> ) endowed by Sultan al-Ashraf Qayitbay in Jerusalem	46
1.10	Bab Zuwayla on south wall of medieval Cairo	51
2.1	Heraldic lion blazon of Sultan al-Zahir Baybars	56
2.2	Rider unseated from galloping horse	61
2.3	Riders in a team game cantering around the Maydan Pool	62
2.4	Mamluk and Bedouin lithograph	66
2.5	Helmet, ca. 1500–25	71
3.1	Citadel at Aleppo	86
3.2	Fortress of Sultan Qayitbay at entry to Alexandria Harbor	114
3.3	The main courtyard in Al-Azhar Mosque	120
3.4	View of Bab al-Nasr	122
4.1	Facade of the mausoleum of Sultan Qalawun	146
4.2	Qur'an manuscript folio	150
5.1	Catch basin irrigation farming in Edfu, Upper Egypt	155
5.2	Fayyum oasis at the western desert rim	156
5.3	Norias and aqueduct on the Orontes River, Hama	157
5.4	Hillside plowing in Lebanon	158
5.5	Bab al-Badistan, entry gate to market district, former Fatimid quarter in Cairo	179

x List of Figures

5.6 Scales with pulley and counterweight, from ms. eighth/ fourteenth c.	181
6.1 Sultan Qalawun mausoleum interior	205
6.2 Minbar in hospice ( <i>khānqāh</i> ) of Sultan Baybars II al-Jashankir	206
6.3 Sultan Qansawh al-Ghawri Complex ( <i>al-Ghūriyya</i> )	207
6.4 Mosque Lamp of Amir Qawsun al-Nasiri, ca. 730–35/1329–35	208
6.5 Citadel Mosque of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qalawun	209
6.6 Mausoleum of Sultan al-Ashraf Qayitbay in cemetery east of former Fatimid District	210
7.1 Water wheels near Fayyum oasis dam	247
7.2 Mosque of Ahmad al-Badawi in Tanta during his birthday ( <i>mawlid</i> ) celebrations, center of Ahmadiyya Badawiyya Sufi Order in Egypt	273

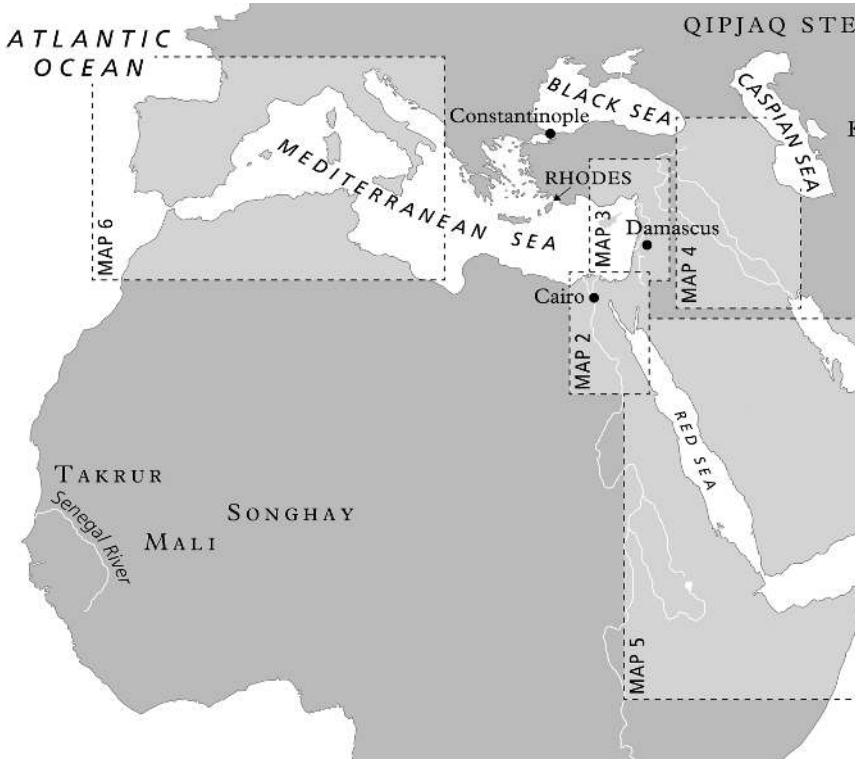
## Maps

---

1 Africa, Eurasia	<i>page</i> xiii
2 Egypt, Nile Valley	xiv
3 Syria, Eastern Anatolia, Cyprus	xv
4 Iraq, Western Iran	xvi
5 Arabian Peninsula, Northeast Africa	xvii
6 North Africa (Maghrib), Mediterranean Europe	xviii
7 Cairo and environs	xix

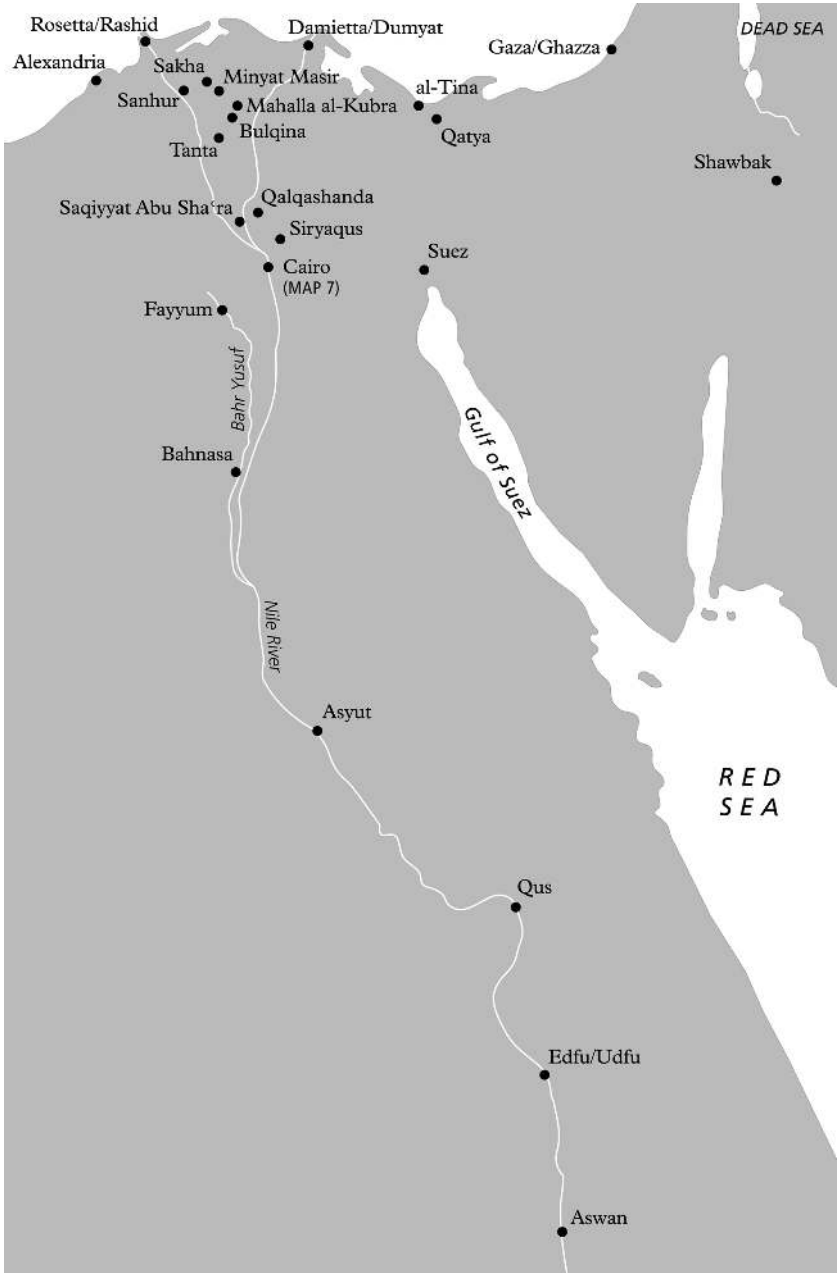
## Maps

---



1 Africa, Eurasia

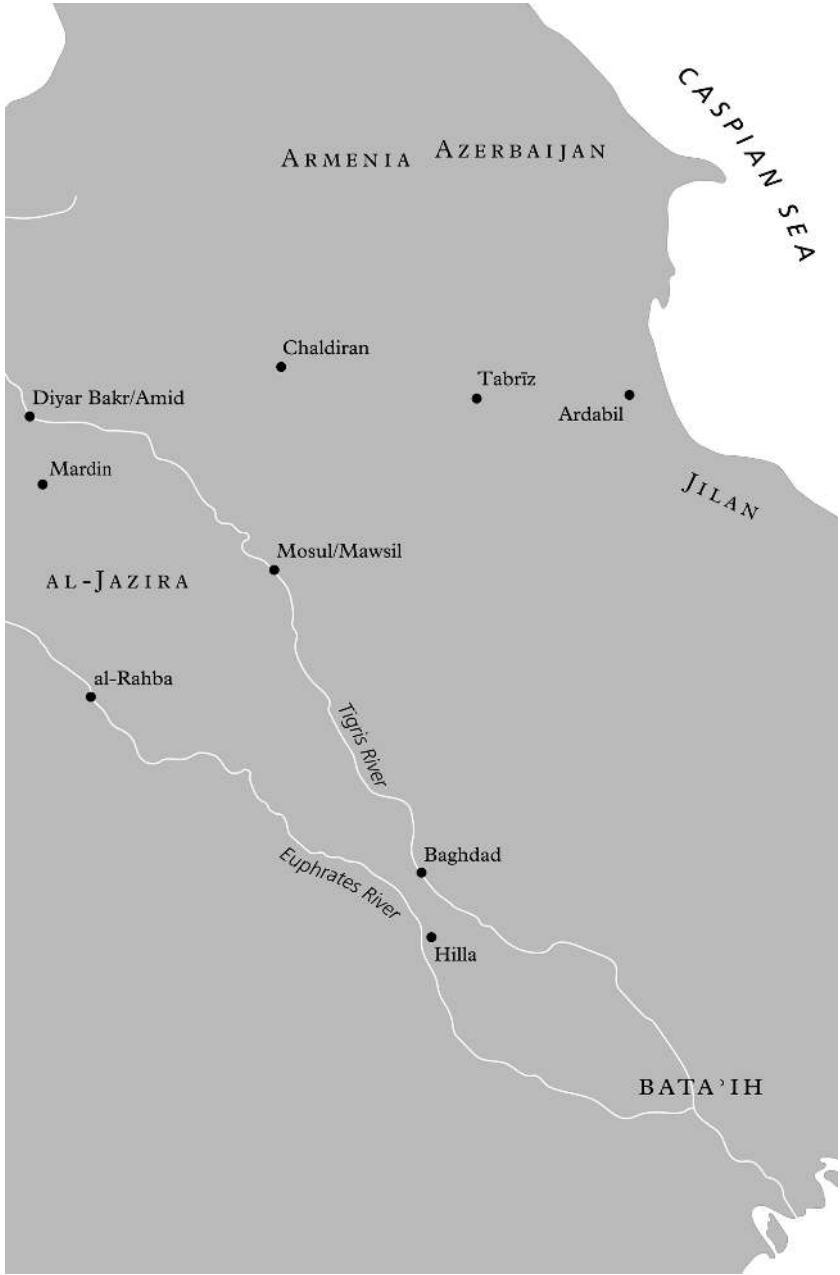
xiv List of Maps



2 Egypt, Nile Valley



3 Syria, Eastern Anatolia, Cyprus



4 Iraq, Western Iran

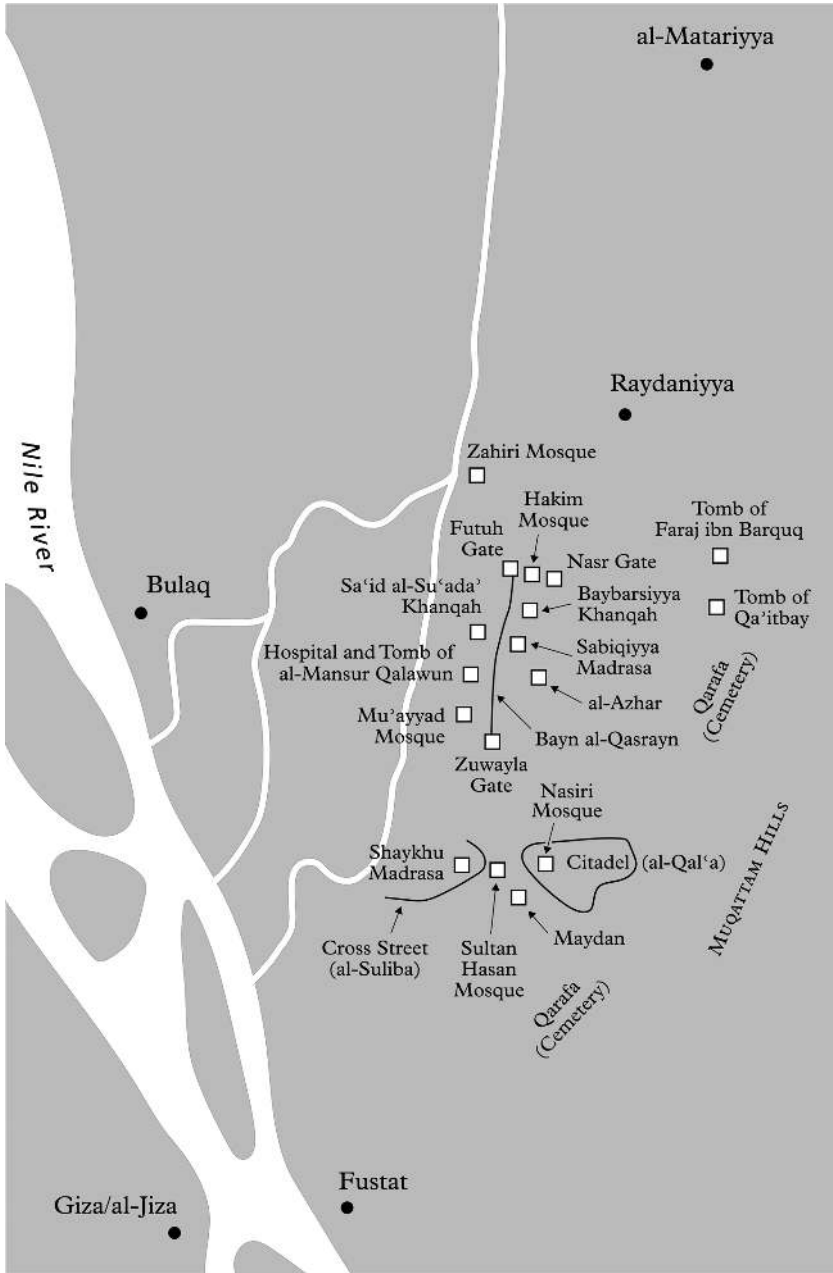




5 Arabian Peninsula, Northeast Africa



6 North Africa (Maghrib), Mediterranean Europe



7 Cairo and environs

