

## Where did the Mamluk sultan spend his vacation?

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### Abstract

The Mamluk sources recorded the various internal and external travels of sultans; mentioning that some of them were travels for military purposes, while others were follow up visits. Remarkably, the sources also recorded the travels that could be considered as vacation travels, which we can consider according to our present understanding as tourism.

The present study aims to investigate those non-military and non-political travels in order to reveal the preferred destinations of Mamluk sultans for vacation within Egypt. The study aims to clarify the reasons for the sultans' travels such as recreation, relaxation, hunting, recuperation of illness...etc. It will also disclose how often sultans travelled, what was the average length of their travels and who accompanied them during such travels. Moreover, the study will discuss the activities practiced during such travels for enjoyment and entertainment. The present study intends to focus on the social aspect of the lives of the Mamluk sultans during the travels which can tell a lot about their interests, activities, wealth and social relations with surroundings. It will also discuss the potential use of these destinations in tourism.

**Keywords:** Mamluk sultans- travel destinations- hunting- recreation- recuperation- vacation- suburbs of the capital- heritage.

### Introduction

The Mamluks who ruled Egypt from 648 A.H./1250 A.D. to 923 A.H./1517 A.D. managed to establish an extended powerful sultanate that was generally marked with stability and wealth. Regardless the times of wars against the Crusades and Mongols, the internal revolts of sultans' rivals or rebellious Mamluks and commotions as result of disasters and plagues, the Mamluks enjoyed long times of stability and prosperity. During such times the sultans managed to enjoy their times by travels, celebrations, practicing sports and other leisure activities. The Mamluk chronicles and sources which were keen to record the daily activities of the sultans, provided us with a wealth of data about the travels in particular as one of the indispensable activities carried out by the Mamluk sultans for various reasons. Excluding the military or political travels and pilgrimage, this research will present the other travels in pursuit to reveal the reasons for travel and the social implications they reveal.

Two main chronicles were extensively studied in search for data about the sultans' travels: *Al-Njūm al-Zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wal-Qāhira*<sup>1</sup> by Ibn Taghrī Bardī and *Badā' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā' al-Duhūr* by Ibn Iyās. The first is a detailed chronicles covering all the Islamic Era in Egypt with focus on the Mamluk period till the beginning of the reign of Qāytbāy and the second is also covering the Mamluk period but it is the only chronicles that covers the era of Qāytbāy till the fall of the Mamluk sultanate. The collected data from these sources, in addition to other sources, were analyzed to answer the research questions. Therefore, the research is divided into three main parts: the first discusses the travel destinations of the Mamluk sultans within Egypt and the frequency of visiting certain destinations in certain times. The second part explains the main reasons of travel or what we can call the "types of travels". The third part examines and analyzes the data to investigate the social practices within these travels such as the company of the sultan, the length of stay in such travels and the undisclosed reasons of some of them.

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<sup>1</sup> The author followed IJMES transliteration system for the Arabic words within the text.

### Travel destinations during the mamluk period

The data about the travels of the Mamluk sultans revealed that there were many destinations frequently visited by the sultans. We can classify them into five groups according to their locations:

#### 1. The northern suburbs of al-Qāhira (fig.1)

The capital: al-Qāhira, has expanded during the Mamluk period and many of its suburbs were urbanized by sultans or notable amirs; since this practice was always a highly profitable affaire<sup>2</sup>. Al-<sup>c</sup>Abāsa was one of the northern suburbs of the capital and it was considered a stop on the way to Birkat al-Ḥāj in the north-east of al-Qāhira<sup>3</sup>. This village was established as early as the Tulunid period and since then its name was not changed. It was considered the end of the agricultural land on the East and the beginning of the desert between Egypt and Syria, thus, it was marked with its abundance of fauna<sup>4</sup>.

Al-Ḥusayniyya and Al-Raydāniyya were two sites located to the north of Bāb al-Futūḥ and Bāb al-Naṣr. Al-Ḥusayniyya received its name from the tribal contingents of the Fatimid army which settled there<sup>5</sup>. This quarter was really urbanized when al-Zāhir Baybars built his mosque and palace in the area<sup>6</sup>. The quarter was also inhabited by a tribe of the Mongols during the reign of Katbughā. The site flourished as a recreation area; especially during the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. Eventually the site deteriorated due to famines, floods and distresses especially by the beginning of the fifteenth century; thus, its buildings were ruined and its lanes and streets were desolated<sup>7</sup>. According to sources, al-Ḥusayniyya was visited by Qāyṭbāy in 886 A.H./1481 A.D.<sup>8</sup>

Al-Raydāniyya was the north-eastern area located outside of Bāb al-Naṣr. It was named after the Fatimid amir Raydān al-Ṣaqlabī, a notable in the court of al-<sup>c</sup>Aziz Billah, who laid out the gardens in the area<sup>9</sup>. The northern suburbs of the capital were used since the Fatimid times; as there were a muṣalla for the congregational prayers of the feasts there, a manzara for the caliph in addition to vast gardens<sup>10</sup>. A hippodrome and khan for travellers were also added to the west of khalīj during the Ayyubid era, while more attention and constructions were added throughout the Mamluk period<sup>11</sup>. Al-Raydāniyya in particular was considered a hunting ground. Since the fourteenth century, the site housed a Bird Feeding Ground or “Maṭṭm al-Ṭair” where sultans were breeding and training birds of prey for hunting. The site was mentioned as early as the reign of

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<sup>2</sup> Williams, John Alden, “Urbanization and Monument Construction in Mamluk Cairo”, Muqarnas, vol.2, 1984, p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm al-Zāhira fi Mulūk Miṣr wal-Qāhira, 1963, vol. 8, p. 141.

<sup>4</sup> Ramzy, Muhammad, Al-Qāmūs al-Jughrāfi lil-Bilād al-Maṣriyya, Section II, part 1, General Egyptian Book Organization, 1994, pp. 69-70.

<sup>5</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, Ahmad ibn Ali, Al-Mawāʿiz wal-Iʿtibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wal-Āthār, Al-Dhakhāʾr Series, General Organization for Culture Centres, n.d., vol. II, p. 36; Behrens-Abouseif, Doris, “The North-eastern Extension of Cairo under the Mamluks”, Annales Islamologiques 17, IFAO, 1981, p. 160.

<sup>6</sup> Williams, “Urbanization”, p. 35.

<sup>7</sup> Sayed, Ayman Foad, Al-Qāhira: Khīṭaṭuhā wa Taṭawurhā al-ʿUmrānī, General Egyptian Book Organization, 2015, pp. 222-223.

<sup>8</sup> Ibn Iyās, Muhammad ibn Ahmad, Badāʿ al-Zuhūr fi Waqāʿ al-Duhūr, Al-Dhakhāʾr Series, General Organization for Culture Centres, n.d., part III, p. 189.

<sup>9</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, Al-Khiṭaṭ, part II, p. 139; Behrens-Abouseif, “The North-eastern Extension”, p. 160; Ramzy, Al-Qāmūs, II/1, p. 214; Stephane Pradines and Sher Rahmat Khan, “Fāṭimid Gardens: Archeological and Historical Perspectives”, Bulletin of SOAS, 79, 3, 2016, p. 486

<sup>10</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, Al-Khiṭaṭ, part III, pp. 481-482.

<sup>11</sup> Behrens-Abouseif, “The North-eastern Extension”, pp. 161-164.

al-Nāṣir Muḥammad<sup>12</sup>. By the fifteenth century it was also associated with a military protocol practiced by the Mamluk sultans which was bestowing the woollen robes among amirs<sup>13</sup>. The site was visited by Barqūq<sup>14</sup>, Barsbāy<sup>15</sup>, Khushqadam<sup>16</sup> and al-Ghawrī<sup>17</sup>.

**Khalīj al-Za<sup>c</sup>farān** was a canal, extracted from the Khalīj at al-Khandaq, and carried water to al-Maṭariyya<sup>18</sup>. The area became well-known as a place of excursion for the Circassian sultans and amirs who spent their leisure time there since the reign of al-Mu'ayyad Shykh. The sources revealed that it was visited by many sultans during the fifteenth and sixteenth century<sup>19</sup>.

**Al-Maṭariyya and <sup>c</sup>Ayn Shams** are two villages in the north outskirts of al-Qāhira. <sup>c</sup>Ayn Shams was famous for its ancient ruins and was used as hunting ground for the Fatimid caliphs<sup>20</sup>. Al-Maṭariyya was famous for its orchards and gardens in addition to ponds and canals especially Khalīj al-Za<sup>c</sup>farān. It was also considered a sacred place because it was visited by the Virgin Mary and a tree was connected to her there in addition to the orchard where the balsam trees grew. Such trees were the source of balsam oil which both the Muslims and Christians seem to have regarded as miraculous. The balsam oil was a royal Mamluk monopoly used by Mamluk sultans as precious gifts sent to Christian countries<sup>21</sup>. The area was on the caravan road to Sinai and was also a place for excursion, especially during the Circassian period, and was usually reached by Khalīj al-Za<sup>c</sup>farān<sup>22</sup>. The dome of Yashbak at al-Maṭariyya was more like a palace that was used by sultans for recreation and was described by travellers as an earthly paradise<sup>23</sup>.

**Birkat al-Ḥāj** was located at a distance of 22 km to the north-east of al-Qāhira. It was the gathering point for travelers for pilgrimage and trade in Syria and Hijāz. It was also a hunting and training field<sup>24</sup>.

## 2. The western suburbs of al-Qāhira (fig.1)

**Būlāq** was the area located on the northwest of al-Qāhira. The site was originally a group of small islands surrounded with pounds and by time the Nile water receded from the area and the islands were connected forming a vast area on the eastern bank of the Nile<sup>25</sup> that was covered with woven plants. The site was used by mamluks as a site of archery till it was urbanized by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in 713 A.H./ 1313 A.D. He encouraged his amirs to build in the area till it was urbanized and buildings were constructed along the Nile bank and near the new mosque of al-Nāṣir there. Construction continued till the area became a unique excursion and recreation site

<sup>12</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 9, p. 29, f.n. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Behrens-Abouseif, "The North-eastern Extension", pp. 167-168; Al-Shishtāwī, Muhammad, Mutanazhāt al-Qāhira fi al-<sup>c</sup>Aṣrīn al-Mamlukī wal-<sup>c</sup>Uthmānī, Dār al-Āfāq al-<sup>c</sup>Arabiyya, 1999, pp. 238- 241.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 12, p. 55.

<sup>15</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 14, p. 251.

<sup>16</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 16: 267; Ibn Iyās, Badā<sup>c</sup> al-Zuhūr, part II, p. 390, 400, 425, 434.

<sup>17</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā<sup>c</sup>, part IV, p. 229, 284, 354, 362.

<sup>18</sup> Behrens-Abouseif, "The North-eastern Extension", p. 160; al-Shishtāwī, Mutanazhāt, pp. 224-225.

<sup>19</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 14, p. 88; vol. 15, p. 96, 345; al-<sup>c</sup>Aynī, Badr al-Dīn, Al-Sayf al-Muhanad fi Syrat al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad, National Library Press, 1998, p. 341; Ibn Iyās, Badā<sup>c</sup>, part II, p. 118, 184, 442; part III, p. 27, 41, 68, 99, 121; part IV, p. 229.

<sup>20</sup> Stephane and Khan, "Fāṭimid Gardens", p. 487.

<sup>21</sup> Ramzy, Al-Qāmūs, II/1, p. 11; Behrens-Abouseif, "The North-eastern Extension", p. 158, 160; Williams, "Urbanization", p. 43; al-Shishtāwī, Mutanazhāt, pp. 242-243; Stephane and Khan, "Fāṭimid Gardens", p. 487.

<sup>22</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā<sup>c</sup>, part III, p. 53, 67, 134, 182, 187, 224, 341, 383, 400; part IV, p. 170, 177, 237, 246, 253, 281, 287, 297, 330, 335, 352, 359, 381, 395, 397.

<sup>23</sup> Ramzy, Al-Qāmūs, II/1, p.15; Williams, "Urbanization", p. 43.

<sup>24</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 9, p. 54; vol. 14, p. 74, 89; vol. 16, p. 297; Ibn Iyās, Badā<sup>c</sup>, part II, p. 137.

<sup>25</sup> Sayed, Al-Qāhira, p. 135.

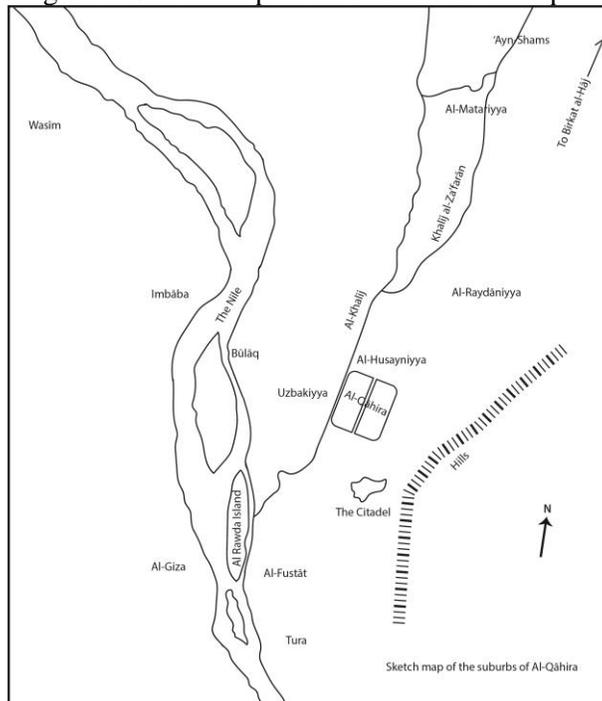
during the Circassian period starting from the reign of al-Mu'ayyad Shykh<sup>26</sup>. This site was a destination of recreation and recuperation of illness during the Circassian period<sup>27</sup>.

**Uzbakiyya** was another site located on the west of the capital. The site was originally a pond known as Baṭn al-Baqara between al-Ṭabālla and al-Lūq. It was an orchard during the Fatimid period and then deserted, but during the reign of al-Maqrīzī people gathered to picnic there<sup>28</sup>. The site was urbanized by Uzbek min Ṭuṭukh who transformed the area into an aristocratic destination for recreation. He started his project in 880 A.H./ 1476 A.D and completed it in 882 A.H./ 1478 A.D.; building halls, houses and maq'ad and digging a pond which brought its water from al-Khalīj al-Nāṣirī<sup>29</sup>. He held a huge celebration for Qāyṭbāy there when he completed his project<sup>30</sup>. Since then this destination was visited by sultans and amirs<sup>31</sup> and it attracted the attention of both historians and travellers who described the beauty of the site and the luxury of its buildings<sup>32</sup>.

**'Imbāba** was the area on the western bank of the Nile facing Būlāq and it was used during the Circassian period for recreation and hunting<sup>33</sup>. Another destination of the western suburbs was

**Wasīm** which is located to the north of 'Imbāba and now part of Gīza Governorate. The site was marked with its gardens but was also the border of the desert. It was chosen as grazing ground or "Marbaṭ al-Khayl" and was usually visited in spring<sup>34</sup>.

Figure 1: Sketch map of the suburbs of the capital



<sup>26</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, Al-Khiṭaṭ, part III, p. 131; al-Shishtāwī, Mutanazhāt, p. 45; Sayed, Al-Qāhira, pp. 234-239.

<sup>27</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 14, p. 74, 85, 94; vol. 16, p. 118; Ibn Iyās, Badā'c, part II, p. 48, 52, 54, 324; part IV, p. 243.

<sup>28</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, Al-Khiṭaṭ, part II, p. 163; al-Shishtāwī, Mutanazhāt, pp. 149-152.

<sup>29</sup> Sayed, Al-Qāhira, pp. 250-251.

<sup>30</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā'c, part III, p. 134.

<sup>31</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā'c, part III, p. 429.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Shishtāwī, Mutanazhāt, pp. 152-155.

<sup>33</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 14, p. 64; Ibn Iyās, Badā'c, part III, p. 92.

<sup>34</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 13, p. 128; vol. 14, p. 16, 93, 253; Ibn Iyās, Badā'c, part II, p. 17, 43, 86.

### 3. The southern suburbs of al-Qāhira (fig.1)

The third group of destinations represented the southern suburbs of al-Qāhira which included the desert of **al-Gīza** with the area near the pyramids and **Tura**. The former site was mainly used for hunting during the Bahari period and for hunting and excursion during the Circassian period<sup>35</sup>. The latter became known as a site for pleasure trips during the reign of Qāyṭbāy and al-Ghawrī<sup>36</sup>. **Al-Miqyās** could also be considered among the southern suburbs of the capital as it is on al-Rawda Island on its southern edge. The island was facing al-Fuṣṭāt and al-Gīza and since early times it was used as a picnic place for kings and rulers<sup>37</sup>. The Island gained importance when al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn built a castle there but after its destruction it became a site for building material. The island was well taken-care of during the Mamluk period<sup>38</sup> especially the Nilometer or al-Miqyās which was regularly visited by sultans or their deputy during the inundation festival. The outmost prosperity of the site was during the reign of al-Ghawrī who renovated al-Miqyās and built a palace in addition to gardens and orchards<sup>39</sup>. Therefore, al-Ghawrī was the sultan who visited the site the most<sup>40</sup>.

### 4. The destinations in Lower Egypt (the Delta) (fig.2)

**Siryāqws** is now a village in Qalyubiyya governorate. It was a site once used by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad for hunting, but he falls ill there and vowed if he was cured he would build a religious building there. Therefore, he ordered to build a khanqah for 100 ṣūfī, a mosque, a kitchen and bathroom in 713 A.H/ 1313 A.D. and the work was completed in 715 A.H./ 1315 A.D. Water was brought to the site through al-Khalīj al-Nāṣirī and that attracted people to build around the khanqah and urbanize the site<sup>41</sup>. Later the site became like a resort with palaces and gardens for the elite, thus, it became the most favourite site for hunting, relaxation, and recreation of sultans during the Mamluk period<sup>42</sup>. **Bahtit**, **Bahtīm** or **Bahtīm** was another small village that was mentioned by al-Maqrīzī in his *khiṭaṭ* when discussing the suburbs of al-Qāhira as **Bahtīm**<sup>43</sup>. Its name was changed to **Bahtīm** during the Ottoman period<sup>44</sup> and it is now in Qalyubiyya governorate. It was sometimes visited by sultans for hunting<sup>45</sup>.

**Al-Ṣālḥiyya**, **al-Dair** and **al-Manzala**; which are now in Sharqiyya governorate, were rarely visited by sultans<sup>46</sup>. **Al-Ṣālḥiyya** was originally established by al-Ṣālḥ Najm al-Dīn in 644 A.H./ 1246 A.D. to be a camp for his soldiers when they travel to Syria. It is called **al-Ṣālḥiyya al-Kubra** to distinguish it from other villages with the same name<sup>47</sup>. **Al-Manzala** was an old village

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<sup>35</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 8, p. 175; vol. 9, p. 34, 74, 93; vol. 11, p. 35, 58, 236, 240, 251; vol. 12, p. 48, 65; vol. 13, p. 100; vol. 14, p. 61, 91, 105; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ic*, part III, p. 68, 130, 143, 400; part IV, p. 290, 355.

<sup>36</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ic*, part III, p. 19, 33, 111; part IV, p. 142, 168, 215.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Khiṭaṭ*, part II, p. 183.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Khiṭaṭ*, part II, p. 184-185.

<sup>39</sup> Al-Shishtāwī, *Mutanazhāt*, pp. 52- 75.

<sup>40</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ic*, part IV, p. 248, 250, 269, 273, 276, 280, 281, 283, 290, 311, 328, 372, 393.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Khiṭaṭ*, part IV, p. 422; Ramzy, *Al-Qāmūs*, II/1, p. 32, 35.

<sup>42</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 9, p. 79; vol. 10, p. 94, 121, 128, 152, 168, 204, 217; vol. 11, p. 69, 236, 250; vol. 12, p. 68; vol. 13, p. 124; vol. 14, p. 60, 73; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ic*, part III, p. 21.

<sup>43</sup> Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Khiṭaṭ*, part II, p. 129.

<sup>44</sup> Ramzy, *Al-Qāmūs*, II/1, p. 12.

<sup>45</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 13, p. 126.

<sup>46</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 8, p. 176; vol. 14, p. 351.

<sup>47</sup> Ramzy, *Al-Qāmūs*, II/1, p. 112.

that was located near the lake and thus carried its name. It was marked with its fertile land and rich fauna<sup>48</sup>.

On the other hand, **Truja**, **al-Ṭurāna** and **Rashīd**; which are now in Biḥya governorate, were more frequently visited<sup>49</sup>. Truja was a small village near al-Ḥamāmāt village and they were both sites for hunting birds. Al-Ṭurāna was a well-known village that was considered the natural entrance to the desert; especially Wādi al-Naṭrwn area<sup>50</sup>. While Rashīd was a large ports that was among the largest cities of the northern coast of Egypt.

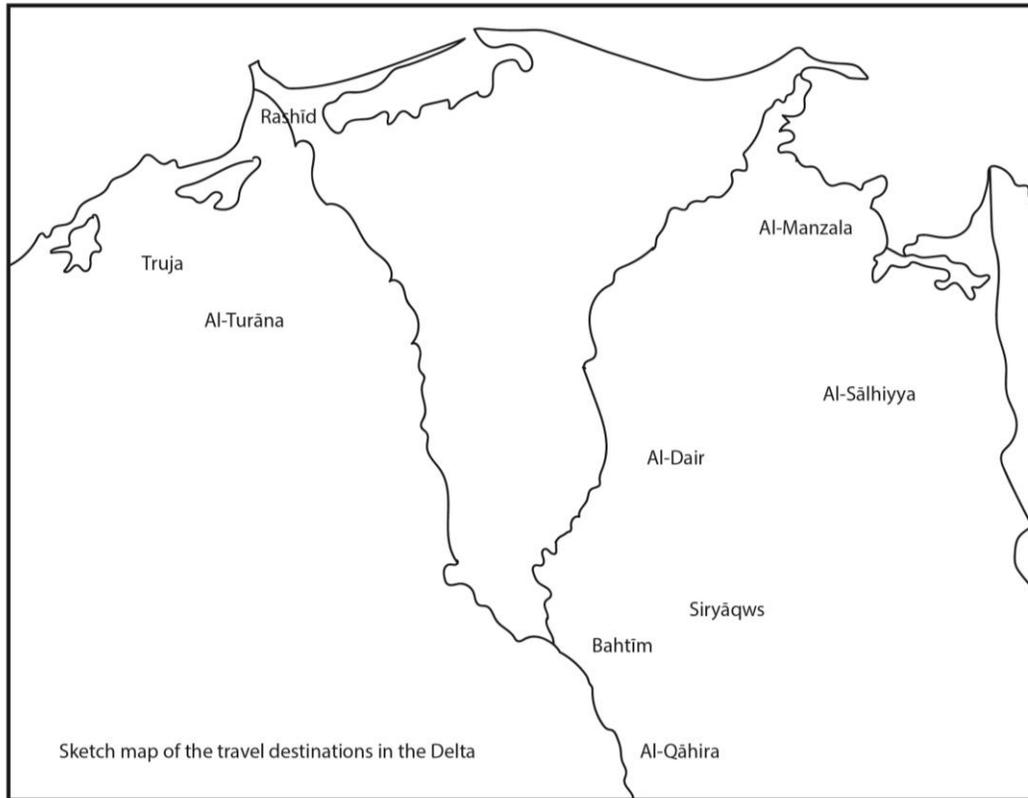


Figure 2: Sketch map of the travel destinations in the Delta

### 5. The destinations in Upper Egypt

**Al-Fayyūm** was visited by sultans especially Qāyṭbāy who visited it three times<sup>51</sup> and al-Ghawrī<sup>52</sup>. Such visits were long visits which enabled the sultans to enjoy their time hunting and relaxing in addition to doing some official duties. Sometimes the sources mentioned that the sultan visited **Upper Egypt** without explicit mention of a certain destination<sup>53</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> Ramzy, Al-Qāmūs, II/1, p. 203.

<sup>49</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 8, p. 16, 17; vol. 14, p. 25; Al-°Aynī, Al-Sayf al-Muhanad, p. 331; Ibn Iyās, Badā'°, part III, p. 75.

<sup>50</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 8, p. 17, f.n. 1, 2; al-Sayed, Ali, "Gharb al-Deltā fi Ā°yun al-Raḥāla al-Urubīn Āwākhir al-°šwur al-Wuṣṭā", Humanities Journal, Damanhur University, vol.13, 2003, p. 11.

<sup>51</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā'°, part III, p. 55, 115, 143.

<sup>52</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā'°, part IV, p. 290.

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 9, p. 78, 114.

## Reasons for travel

### Hunting and fishing

Hunting was the most prevalent reason for travel among Mamluk sultans<sup>54</sup>; as it matched the military upbringing of the sultans and equestrian training they regularly needed. Moreover, it provided them good qualities such as endurance, patience, self-control in addition to good competences such as physiognomy, clarity of mind and sharpness of sight<sup>55</sup>. Deserts or borders of the deserts were suitable sites for hunting due to the wide range of wildlife there. During the Bahari Mamluk period the favoured hunting destinations were al-Gīza near the pyramids, al-<sup>c</sup>Abāsa, Birkat al-Ḥāj and Siryāqūs. By the Circassian Mamluk period, new destinations were added such as al-Raydāniyya, al-Ṣālḥiyya, al-Diyr, al-Manzala, Ṭurā, Truja and al-Ṭurāna.

Generally, all types of animals and birds were hunted, and no specific mention of the animals was elucidated by chronicles. Only hunting the Kurkī bird was explicitly mentioned in many cases such as: al-Nāsir Muḥammad hunting it in Birkat al-Ḥāj in 715 A.H./ 1315 A.D.<sup>56</sup>, al-Mu'ayyad Shykh hunting it in al-Gīza in 820 A.H./ 1417 A.D.<sup>57</sup>, Barsbāy hunting it in al-Dair and al-Manzala in 833 A.H./ 1429 A.D.<sup>58</sup>, Khushqadam hunting it in Birkat al-Ḥāj in 871 A.H./ 1466 A.D.<sup>59</sup> and Qāyṭbāy hunting it in Birkat al-Khub in 876 A.H./ 1471 A.D. and 878 A.H./ 1473 A.D.<sup>60</sup>. It seems that hunting deer and wild animals was usually at al-Gīza<sup>61</sup>.

Despite the long shores on the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, the lakes and the Nile the Mamluk sultans didn't practice fishing as a sport or as a recreational activity. I came across only one mention of a sultan practicing fishing in Badā'<sup>c</sup> al-Zuhūr. It was in 880 A.H./1475 A.D. when Qāyṭbāy visited Damietta and he went to a place famous for fishing Būrī, he examined how to fish, and he returned so pleased<sup>62</sup>.

### Practicing sports

In fact, practicing sports was among the daily activities of mamluks regardless their ranks and sultans were keen to participate with their amirs and mamluks in practicing sports occasionally. In addition to the regular practice of sports in the various squares within the capital<sup>63</sup>, the sources mentioned some travels of the sultans that were mainly to practice sports such as archery, polo game and ball games. The first mention was in 747 A.H./ 1346 A.D. when al-Kāmil Sha<sup>c</sup>bān travelled to Siryāqūs and brought bastards who played with sticks and he played with them which was of course censured by amirs<sup>64</sup>. In other cases the sources mentioned that the sultan travelled for archery; a sport which required an open place for practicing. Barsbāy went to Birkat al-Ḥāj in 834 A.H./ 1430 A.D. and to Shibyn in 836 A.H./ 1432 A.D. and to unknown place in

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<sup>54</sup> The author felt no need to discuss the details related to hunting travels such as the weapons, tools and animals or bird of prey used for hunting, the official positions related to hunting, the practices during the travels...etc., since all these details were explicitly discussed in the detailed study of Nabil <sup>c</sup>Abd al-<sup>c</sup>Aziz, 1999. Also see Maged, Abd al-Mun <sup>c</sup>im, *Nuḏum Dawlat Salāṭīn al-Mamālīk wa Ruswmahum fi Miṣr*, part II, Egyptian Anglo Library, 1982, part II.

<sup>55</sup> <sup>c</sup>Abd al-<sup>c</sup>Aziz, *Riyādat al-Ṣayd fi <sup>c</sup>Aṣr Salāṭīn al-Mamālīk*, Egyptian Anglo Library, 1999, pp.12-13.

<sup>56</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 9, p. 54.

<sup>57</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 14, p. 61.

<sup>58</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 14, p. 351.

<sup>59</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 16, p. 297.

<sup>60</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'<sup>c</sup>*, part III, pp. 65, 92.

<sup>61</sup> Maged, *Nuḏum*, p. 133.

<sup>62</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'<sup>c</sup>*, part III, p. 111.

<sup>63</sup> For more details about using squares for practicing sports see: Al-Shishtāwī, Muhammad, *Mayādīn al-Qāhira fi al-<sup>c</sup>Aṣr al-Mamlukī, Dār al-Āfāq al-<sup>c</sup>Arabiyya*, 1999.

<sup>64</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 10, p. 128.

840 A.H./ 1436 A.D.<sup>65</sup>. Khushqadam travelled to practice archery at Birkat al-Khub in 871 A.H./ 1466 A.D.<sup>66</sup> while Qāyṭbāy travelled for the same reason to unknown places outside of the capital in 876 A.H./ 1471 A.D. and 879 A.H./ 1474 A.D.<sup>67</sup>. In such examples the sources usually mentioned that the sultan stayed for a day and a night.

Another unique sport was practised by Barqūq in his travels was chess as the sources mentioned that when he travelled to al-Raydāniyya in 796 A.H./ 1394 A.D. his mamluks carried 5 qinṭar of ivory and ebony for the chess he used to play<sup>68</sup>.

### Recuperation during or after illness

It seems that al-Rawda Island and Būlāq were the favoured destinations of sultans and their family members when ill. We learned that Khwand Baraka stayed for more than a month at al-Rawda Island in 774 A.H./ 1373 A.D. because she was ill. Her son, al-Āshraf Shaḥbān, visited her and stayed for two days in the island together with his amirs, then he left while she stayed there and eventually died<sup>69</sup>.

Al-Mu'ayyad Shykh also went to Būlāq in 822 A.H./ 1419 A.D. suffering of severe pain in legs and stayed in the house of Ibn al-Bārzī which was overlooking the Nile. He stayed there for several days till he recovered<sup>70</sup>. Also, when his son Ibrāhīm was ill in 823 A.H./ 1420 A.D. he went to Būlāq and stayed in the house of the judge Abd al-Bāsiṭ but he didn't recover and eventually died<sup>71</sup>. The sultan's infirmity increased after the death of his son; thus, he went again to Būlāq and after two days of his stay at the house of Ibn al-Bārzī he managed to swim in the Nile and people anticipated his recovery<sup>72</sup>. The same habit was practiced by Jaqmaq who also went to Būlāq for recovery in 848 A.H./1445 A.D.<sup>73</sup>. Ināl also went to Būlāq in 859 A.H./ 1455 A.D. to visit his wife Khwand Zaynab who was suffering indisposition because of pregnancy; thus, she went to Būlāq to recover there. When she recovered, a huge celebration was held in Būlāq and another at the Citadel<sup>74</sup>. It is clear that the beauty of nature, scenery of the Nile, freshness of air and quietness of the location all contributed to the choice of Būlāq as a perfect destination for recuperation.

### Religious travels

No mention of religious travels was witnessed in chronicles before the reign of Khushqadam and the practice was started by the sultan's wife not the sultan himself. It was a unique event when Khwand Shukrbāy visited the mausoleum of Ahmad al-Badawī in 866 A.H./1462 A.D. that Ibn Iyās commented on that saying "it never happened for any Khwand before"<sup>75</sup>. She repeated the visit the following year too<sup>76</sup>. It seems that this practice was not prevalent during the Mamluk period till the second half of the Circassian period. Sources recorded the visit of Qāyṭbāy to the mausoleum of Ibrāhīm al-Desūqī in 884 A.H./ 1479 A.D.<sup>77</sup> and to the mausoleum of Ahmad al-

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<sup>65</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ic*, part II, p. 137, 144, 173.

<sup>66</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ic*, part II, p. 444.

<sup>67</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ic*, part III, p. 66, 101.

<sup>68</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 12, p. 55.

<sup>69</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 11, p. 58.

<sup>70</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 14, p. 85.

<sup>71</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 14, p. 94.

<sup>72</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 14, p. 98.

<sup>73</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 15, p. 358.

<sup>74</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ic*, part II, p. 324.

<sup>75</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ic*, part II, p. 393; the event was also mentioned in: Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 16, p. 269.

<sup>76</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 16, p. 275; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ic*, part II, p. 403.

<sup>77</sup> Abd al-Tawab, Abd al-Rahman, Qāyṭbāy al-Maḥmoudī, General Egyptian Book Organization, 1978, p. 80

Badawī in 888 A.H./ 1483 A.D.<sup>78</sup>. Similarly, al-Ghawrī also paid various visits to the mausoleums of righteous religious-men or “al-shyūkh al-ṣālḥīn” as described by Ibn Iyās. Only in the first visit Ibn Iyās explained that the sultan visited the grave of ‘Abd Allah al-Minwfī in the desert in 915 A.H./ 1510 A.D.<sup>79</sup>. In the next two visits which were both in 918 A.H./ 1512 A.D. he briefly mentioned that the sultan visited the graves in the desert<sup>80</sup>.

### Relaxation and entertainment

Another popular and predominant reason for travel among Mamluk sultans was travelling for relaxation, recreation and entertainment. Destinations of beautiful scenery and quietness with orchards and gardens or destinations overlooking the Nile, Khalīj or lakes were favoured by sultans. Siryāqws and al-Ṭurāna were two destinations that were visited for both hunting and recreation during Bahari Mamluk period; since each was considered the end of the agricultural land and the beginning of dessert. Khalīj al-Za‘farān, al-Miqyās and al-Maṭariyya were the preferred destinations during Circassian Mamluk period.

Siryāqws; which contained palaces and orchards and was easily accessible, was a perfect destination for the sultan when he intended to spend short travels for both hunting and relaxation. It was also the most convenient when he accompanied his wives, concubines and slave-women. Al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā‘īl was used to accompany his mother in his travels to Siryāqws. Sources mentioned that she travelled with her lavish clothes accompanied with 200 women and servants in addition to the concubines of the sultan who enjoyed their time during such travels by playing the ball or racing on horses<sup>81</sup>. Sha‘bān also provided times for pleasure for his wives in Siryāqws and held the best tents for them in the orchards there<sup>82</sup>.

Only during the Circassian Period that sources mentioned events of ceremonies or concerts held for the sultans for pleasure during travels. The first mention was in 818 A.H./ 1416 A.D. when Ibrāhīm the son of al-Mu‘ayyad Shykh travelled to the north of Siryāqws to receive his father on his return from Syria. He invited 12 groups of Quran readers and chanters with good voices and they kept reading and singing all night while food and desserts were served<sup>83</sup>. In 875 A.H./ 1470 A.D. Qāyṭbāy stayed at al-Gīza for a week on his way to al-Fayyūm. During that week a concert was held every night by the famous singer Ibn Riḥāb accompanied by other singers and that travel was described as “days of great pleasure”<sup>84</sup>. Muḥammad ibn Qāyṭbāy also brought singers and shadow players to his camp at al-Gīza when he went there in 904 A.H./ 1498 A.D. He spent three days of opulence and exceeded the limits in profligacy, amusement and rejoicing<sup>85</sup>. The same practice was followed by al-Ghawrī in 915 A.H. /1510 A.D. when he visited al-Maṭariyya for entertainment on the second day of the feast and was accompanied by musicians and singers<sup>86</sup>. He also did the same when he spent two days at al-Gīza on his way to al-Fayyūm in 918 A.H./ 1513 A.D; as musicians and singers accompanied him in his travel<sup>87</sup>.

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<sup>78</sup> Abd al-Tawab, Qāyṭbāy, p. 85.

<sup>79</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā‘c, part IV, p. 168.

<sup>80</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā‘c, part IV, p. 253, 288.

<sup>81</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 10, p. 97.

<sup>82</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 10, p. 121.

<sup>83</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 14, pp. 38-39; al-‘Aynī, Al-Sayf al-Muhanad, p. 341.

<sup>84</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā‘c, part III, p. 55.

<sup>85</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā‘c, part III, pp. 400-401.

<sup>86</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā‘c, part IV, p. 170-171.

<sup>87</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā‘c, part IV, p. 290.

In addition to concerts, fireworks were also used for entertainments during travels. The earliest example of such practice was done by al-Mu'ayyad Shykh at 'Imbāba in 821 A.H. /1418 A.D. He ordered his amirs to bring oils which were poured in eggshells, peels of tangerines and pottery oil lamps and wicks were lit. These flares were set in the Nile after sunset and fireworks were fired creating a pleasant scene, therefore, people gathered on the Nile banks to watch it and the sultan was entertained<sup>88</sup>. A huge celebration with fireworks was also held by al-Ghawrī at al-Miqyās in 918 A.H./ 1512 A.D. In this travel the sultan stayed in his palace and invited amirs and mamluks with him but they stayed in tents on the Nile banks. Huge amounts of luxurious food were served in this travel. For celebration, oil lamps were hung inside the palace, on the windows of the palace and on the houses overlooking the Nile. Moreover, 50 boats were brought to the Nile, set in a line facing the palace and they carried fireworks that were fired together with the music played by musical bands. Not only the sultan, his amirs and mamluks were entertained but also people went to the Nile banks to enjoy the night. It was described as “unprecedented night that was not compared to any other night by any previous sultan”<sup>89</sup>.

Serving food in luxurious banquettes was an essential common factor in recreational and relaxation travels of Mamluk sultans. Of course, I don't need to list examples of travels in which banquettes were held because they are countless or explain the types of food served because it is needless to say that they were luxurious types in huge amounts. I just want to highlight that during the Bahari Mamluk period the sultan was always covering the cost of the affluent banquettes and only in exceptional cases the cost was covered by one of the amirs such as Mulktumr who was ordered to prepare a banquette because he was defeated in a game with the sultan. Thus; he held a *ṣimaṭ* at Siryāqws in 748 A.H./ 1347 A.D. which contained 500 sheep, 10 horses and basins of juice<sup>90</sup>. During the Circassian period, especially from the reign of al-Mu'ayyad Shykh, it became a tradition that the sultan was hosted by one of his amirs or judges who consequently covered the cost of the lavish banquettes during the sultan's travels of recreation. Certain figures were well-known for their wealth and were repeatedly mentioned for their hospitality to the ruling sultan. The most prominent were *Ibn al-Bārzī* during the reign of al-Mu'ayyad Shykh<sup>91</sup>, *Uzbek min Tuṭukh* and *Yashbak min Mahdī* during the reign of Qāytbāy<sup>92</sup>, *Barakāt ibn Mūsa* al-Muḥtasib and the judge *Maḥmūd ibn Ājā* during the reign of al-Ghawrī<sup>93</sup>. Each of them hosted the sultan in his house or dome and such buildings were aristocratic foundations connected with the personal use of the sponsor and after his death used by sultans for recreation<sup>94</sup>. Heads of Arabian tribes and al-kushāf were also obliged to host the sultan or offer him presents whenever he passed their regions. It is obvious that such banquettes and presents were so expensive, and chronicles commented on that. For example, the expenses paid by the amirs during the sultan's travel to al-Maṭariyya in 919 A.H./ 1513 A.D. were described as very high and onerous<sup>95</sup>. When Maḥmūd ibn Ājā hosted the sultan at al-Gīza in 920 A.H./ 1514 A.D. the cost of the banquettes exceeded one thousand dinars<sup>96</sup>.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol.14, p. 64.

<sup>89</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ic*, part IV, pp. 276-278.

<sup>90</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 10, p. 155.

<sup>91</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 14, p. 74, 85, 93, 98, 101.

<sup>92</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ic*, part III, p. 60, 107, 121, 134, 305.

<sup>93</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ic*, part IV, p. 243, 248, 328, 330, 362, 393, 397.

<sup>94</sup> Behrens-Abouseif, Doris, “The Qubba, an Aristocratic Type of Zāwiya”, *Annales Islamologiques*, 19, IFAO, 1983, p. 5.

<sup>95</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ic*, part IV, p. 356.

<sup>96</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ic*, part IV, p. 393.

The recreational travels were an escape of the sultan and his company to relax, to spend good times outdoors, to entertain themselves and to enjoy lavish food; therefore, the chronicles usually commented on such travels with the phrase "... and the sultan was so pleased and he returned to the Citadel".

### **Analasise of data about mamluk sultans' travels**

#### **Length of the stay**

The length of the sultan's stay in the above-mentioned travels varied according to the many factors such as the distance of the destination from the capital, the facilities available for the stay and the reason for travel. The close destinations such as Būlāq, Imbāba, Ṭura and al-Miqyās were visited for a day or a day and night<sup>97</sup>. Khalīj al-Za<sup>c</sup>farān and al-Maṭariyya were also close destinations but the length of stay there varied between a day<sup>98</sup>, two or three days<sup>99</sup> or several days<sup>100</sup>. Al-Maṭariyya in particular was the most visited destination by Qāyṭbāy and al-Ghawrī and Ibn Iyās listed a large number of visits of both sultans because the dome of Yashbak there was a place of excursion for sultans and amirs<sup>101</sup>. The visits to al-Maṭariyya were usually for one day but occasionally lasted for several days.

Other close destinations were visited for longer times each for a reason. Al-Gīza was visited for less than a week in average<sup>102</sup> and the maximum stay of a sultan there was 20 days<sup>103</sup>. This site was around the pyramids and had no permanent facility for the sultan, thus, tents were set there which required at least two day of stay in each travel. The opposite was the case with Siryāqws which was well-equipped with palaces, gardens, and facilities, thus, sultans stayed there for several days usually about a week<sup>104</sup>. Wasīm was another close destination where the stay of the sultan was usually several days because it was the site of "Marbaṭ al-Khayl" which was visited by the sultan in spring<sup>105</sup>. Al-Raidāniyya was also visited for several days because it hosted "Maṭ<sup>c</sup>m al-Ṭair" and sultans in their visits to the site checked on the animals and birds they bread there in addition to the main purpose of the visit. The longest recorded stay there was 13 days<sup>106</sup> but short visits for a day or several days were more common.

Damietta and al-Fayyūm were relatively far from the capital and the stays there were between 13 and 20 days<sup>107</sup>. Farther destinations of course required longer stays. For example; al-Nāsir Muḥammad's visit to Upper Egypt for hunting in 736 A.H./ 1335 A.D. lasted for 45 day<sup>108</sup>, while the visit of al-Mu'ayyad to Truja in 817 A.H./ 1415 A.D. lasted for 57 days<sup>109</sup> and that of Qāyṭbāy to al-Biḥya in 873 A.H./ 1469 A.D. lasted for 40 days<sup>110</sup>.

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<sup>97</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 14, p. 74; Ibn Iyās, Badā<sup>c</sup>, part II, p. 54; part III, p. 19, 92, 107; part IV, p. 142, 215, 243, 248, 250, 269, 280, 283, 290, 311, 328, 372, 393.

<sup>98</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 15, p. 96, 345.

<sup>99</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā<sup>c</sup>, part III, p. 41, 99.

<sup>100</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā<sup>c</sup>, part III, p. 53.

<sup>101</sup> Behrens-Abouseif, "The Qubba", p. 3.

<sup>102</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 9, p. 74; vol. 12, p. 48; vol. 14, p. 91, 105; Ibn Iyās, Badā<sup>c</sup>, part II, p. 96; part III, p. 55.

<sup>103</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol 8, p. 175.

<sup>104</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 11, p. 236, 239; vol. 12, p. 68; vol. 14, p. 60.

<sup>105</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 14: p. 16, 253.

<sup>106</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 12, p. 55.

<sup>107</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā<sup>c</sup>, part III, p. 55, 75, 143; part IV, p. 290.

<sup>108</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 9, p. 114.

<sup>109</sup> Al-<sup>c</sup>Aynī, Al-Sayf al-Muhanad, p. 331.

<sup>110</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā<sup>c</sup>, part III, p. 33.

### Who accompanied the sultan in his travels?

Occasionally the sultans' wives and concubines accompanied the sultans in their travels. They accompanied al-Nāsir Muḥammad in his travel to al-Gīza in 723 A.H./ 1323 A.D.<sup>111</sup>, Sha<sup>c</sup>bān in his travel to Siryāqws in 746 A.H./ 1345 A.D.<sup>112</sup> Barqūq in his travel to Siryāqws in 786 A.H./ 1384 A.D. and 800 A.H./ 1397 A.D.<sup>113</sup>, and accompanied al-Mu'ayyad Shykh in his travel to Būlāq in 822 A.H./ 1419 A.D.<sup>114</sup>

But the general norm was that the amirs and mamluks accompanied the sultan in his travels especially for hunting and practicing sports<sup>115</sup>. Sometimes they were only the sultan's close amirs or *khāṣatah*<sup>116</sup> some other times all the amirs. In some cases, the sultan invited also the judges or other religious officials<sup>117</sup>.

### Were the travels only for pleasure?

Although the above-mentioned travels were for pleasure or recuperation in general and these were the announced reasons for travel, they were sometimes used for other undeclared reasons. Sometimes the sultan took advantage of the travel to apprehend a rebellious amir or official as al-Nāsir Muḥammad did during his travel to Siryāqws in 725 A.H./ 1325 A.H. when he took hold of Buktumur and another amir<sup>118</sup>. The same strategy was used by Barqūq when he caught Naṣr-Allah al-Baqrī; Nāzīr al-khāṣ, on his return from Siryāqws in 785 A.H./1383 A.D.<sup>119</sup>

The undeclared reason of a travel could also be to frustrate a rumour. Jaqmaq travelled to Khalīj al-Za<sup>c</sup>farān in 849 A.H./ 1445 A.D. to frustrate the rumour of a revolt to protest the appointment of Ināl al-<sup>c</sup>Alā'ī as Atābik<sup>120</sup>. Similarly, Qāyṭbāy travelled to Sinyt and spent days there in 884 A.H./ 1479 A.D. to discomfit the rumour of mamluks' uprising as a result of the relegation of Azdumur al-Ṭawīl<sup>121</sup>.

On the other hand, the travels of the sultans were also used to assassinate the sultan himself or one of his close amirs. This happened in 693 A.H./ 1293 A.D. when al-Āshraf Khalīl was hunting in al-Ḥamāmāt with his amirs who took the chance to arrange to assassinate him. They took advantage of his stay alone; as he ordered most of his amirs to return to the capital and leave him to enjoy hunting alone, thus, he was unarmed, not guarded and weak enough to be assassinated<sup>122</sup>. The travel of the sultan Sha<sup>c</sup>bān to al-Biḥyra in 768 A.H./ 1366 A.D. was also a chance for the mamluks to conspire to kill Yalbughā the Ātābik, without telling the sultan. They attacked his tent and he escaped but they eventually killed him<sup>123</sup>. That means the amirs and mamluks could also take advantage of the sultan's travel to achieve an undeclared goal other than the pleasure of travel.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 9, p. 74.

<sup>112</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 10, p. 121.

<sup>113</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol.11, p. 239; vol. 12, p. 68.

<sup>114</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā'<sup>c</sup>, part II, p. 48.

<sup>115</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, Ahmad, Ṣubḥ al-Ā<sup>c</sup>shā fi Ṣinā<sup>c</sup>at al-Inshā, Dār al-Kutub, 1922, part IV, p. 48; Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 11, p. 239; vol. 12, p. 45; vol. 14, p. 61, 106; vol. 15, p. 345.

<sup>116</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 14, p. 88; vol.15, p. 358; vol. 16, p. 267.

<sup>117</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 11, p. 229; Ibn Iyās, Badā'<sup>c</sup>, part III, p. 224.

<sup>118</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 9, p.79.

<sup>119</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 11, p. 236.

<sup>120</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 15, p. 370.

<sup>121</sup> Ibn Iyās, Badā'<sup>c</sup>, part III, p. 152.

<sup>122</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 8, p. 17.

<sup>123</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, Al-Njūm, vol. 11, p. 36.

It is worth mentioning that the Mamluk sultans used to distribute various gifts of clothes, money and horses among their amirs and mamluks on the occasion of travelling for hunting and this became as a protocol especially during the Bahari Mamluk period<sup>124</sup>. Al-Āshrāf Shaḥbān also started the tradition of distributing luxurious clothes “khil<sup>ḥ</sup>a” on amirs of thousand whenever he travels to Marbaṭ al-Khayl<sup>125</sup>. Moreover, Al-Mu’ayyad Shykh started the tradition of bestowing the woollen robes at Maṭḥam al-Ṭair and this ceremony is always referred to in sources as “libs al-ṣawf bil-maṭḥam”<sup>126</sup>.

### **Can we consider such travels as tourism?**

After discussing the above-mentioned travels and the activities related to them, can we consider them tourism? There are many definitions for tourism and that of the World Tourism Organization states that: “tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes”<sup>127</sup>. Accordingly, there is a difference between a traveller and a visitor or a tourist. Travel is the movement from a place to another and the traveller could be a migrant, a refugee, a nomad, a diplomat...etc. On the other hand, a visitor makes a trip for tourism purposes and he/ she is called a tourist if he stays at the destination visited for a period of minimum 24 hours. Or else, if the duration is less than 24 hours, the visitor is referred to as same-day visitor<sup>128</sup>. That means three criteria are used to characterize a trip as belonging to tourism<sup>129</sup>:

- Displacement outside the usual environment.
- Purpose of travel: the travel must be for any purpose different from being remunerated from within the place visited.
- Duration: only the maximum duration of 12 months is mentioned, not a minimum. Tourism displacement can be with or without an overnight stay.

If we apply these modern criteria on the above-mentioned travels of the Mamluk sultans we will realize that they could be considered tourism. Sultans travelled from the capital to close and far destinations for leisure, recreation, recuperation, practicing sports or for religious reasons. They stayed at least for the day and up to months in these travels and many activities occurred during the travels. That means the activities of tourism existed during the Mamluk period although the term, of course, was not used.

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<sup>124</sup> Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, part IV, p. 54-55; Maged, *Nuḥum*, p. 65; °Abd al-°Aziz, *Riyāḍat al-Ṣayd*, p. 34.

<sup>125</sup> Ibn Taghrī Bardī, *Al-Njūm*, vol. 11, p. 58.

<sup>126</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badā’*, part II, p. 400, 425, 434; Behrens-Abouseif, “The North-eastern Extension”, p. 168.

<sup>127</sup> Dileep, M.R., *Tourism: Concepts, Theory and Practice*, I.K. International Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 2018, pp. 2-5.

<sup>128</sup> Dileep, *Tourism*, pp. 6-9.

<sup>129</sup> [www.tugberkugurlu.com](http://www.tugberkugurlu.com).

### Conclusion and recommendations

The Mamluk sultans enjoyed their leisure time with various travels to various destinations within Egypt; some of which were close to the capital or suburbs that were urbanized, while others were destinations in the Delta or in Upper Egypt. Such travels were either to practice sports, hunting, recuperation of illness, visiting religious sites or simply for relaxation and entertainment. During these travels various activities were practiced and events, ceremonies and banquettes were held considering that all the activities had a common factor which is providing joy and pleasure for the sultan and his company. The length of these travels varied between one day to several months and so did the company of the sultan which varied between his close amirs to all his family, his amirs and his mamluks. That means, we can consider such travels as tourism since all the criteria required for tourism was present although the term; of course, was not used at that time.

In fact, the data collected about the travels of the Mamluk sultans could be used to promote the Islamic heritage of Egypt. Here are some recommendations to achieve that:

- Some of the above-mentioned destinations could be revived with innovative activities to attract both local and international tourists. For example: the site of Birkat al-Ḥāj or Gīza could be used for organizing competitions for racing on horses or tournaments for falconry. A camp could be held with sample tents similar to those used by the sultans and sample furniture and utensils could be used to create an exhibition presenting an imitation of the sultan's camp during hunting. A parade could also be organized on special dates to show how the sultan, amirs and mamluks dressed for hunting, how the amirs were spruced up according to rank behind the sultan and what the flags, bands and weapons they used in such travels.

Al-Rawda Island could also be revived as a royal picnic and recreation destination. The site of al-Miqyās could be used for theatrical performances showing how the Nilometer was used, the sultans' visits to it and the celebrations held there. A replica of one of the sultans' boats could also be used for special tours in the Nile with food served from a menu inspired by the Mamluk cuisine. Fireworks nights could be organized on special dates to present how the Mamluks used them for entertainment with consideration of providing watching platforms on the Nile banks for audience. Such nights could also include performances for singers and musicians or even poets and the Mamluk literature could be the inspiration for such events to imitate the original Mamluk nights. In fact these ideas and a lot more could easily be applied provided that we use heritage experts and historian to supervise the details of execution. Similar experiences were successfully implemented in heritage sites, archaeological site and museums worldwide and we can use some of the as benchmark for us.

- Special or temporary exhibits could be organized in various museums about all the topics related to the travels of the sultans. For example: an exhibition about the clothes of sultans and amirs in addition to tents and furniture could be held in the textile museum, while an exhibition about hunting weapons could be organized in the Islamic Art Museum and a third about banquettes and protocols of junkets and feasts could be held in °Abdīn Museum. Such exhibitions should focus on both the objects related to each topic and the social history and practices related to them.
- SIT or Special Interest Tourism could also be promoted in relation to some of the above-mentioned destinations and activities. This type of tourism offers a well-defined product matching the exclusive needs and interests of a specific market segment of tourists (Dileep, 2018, 39). Bird watching is an example of SIT which means simply viewing birds in their natural habitat. Many of the above-mentioned sites were visited by sultans for hunting

because of their rich fauna and these sites could be used nowadays for bird watching. Egypt is also a migration bridge which attracts about 280 species of birds<sup>130</sup>. Therefore the sites that have long history and were famous for hunting migrating birds during the Mamluk period could be promoted for that type of tourism such as Truja, al-Ṭurāna and al-Fayyūm<sup>131</sup>. Adventure tourism; which is another type of SIT, could be offered in Gīza while photography tourism could be offered in al-Rawda Island, Gīza and many other sites. Such types of tourism could be promoted among unions of bird watchers and groups of photography amateurs and specialists. The tours can offer the typical interests of the target tourists in addition to the history of the site and its usage by the Mamluk sultans both in engaging and innovative activities.

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<sup>130</sup> [www.touegypt.net](http://www.touegypt.net); [www.facebook.com/Birdingegypt](https://www.facebook.com/Birdingegypt)

<sup>131</sup> [www.birdfinder.co.uk](http://www.birdfinder.co.uk)

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