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Mamluk Soldiers in Their Old Age

The Case of the *Tarḥān* Status

VIEWING the history of war as part of cultural history is a new approach in the especially traditionally-oriented historiography of war, which for a long period of time was mainly directed towards political and juridical, strategic and technical questions. Recent research in this field also takes into consideration social and cultural aspects of warfare. In this context, war has been described as a cultural practice.¹

With regard to the Middle Ages, Arno Borst—who can be regarded as a pioneer of everyday history—has described war as one of the possible ways of life during those times. He called research attention to the lifestyle of professional knights in Europe, who committed themselves entirely to warfare. They invested their money in horses, weapons, armours, and fortifications and dedicated their time to becoming qualified warriors, using their leisure time for activities such as hunting or tournaments, all meant to train for the actual fight during wartime.² As astonishing as it might be from the perspective of war history, most of these activities were carried out during so-called times of peace. This implies that if we are interested in war as a way of life, as a culture, then our writing on the history of war has to be enlarged in the sense that we have to see war and peace not as opposites, but rather as a continuum, as a common cultural space.

Following this historical-anthropological approach, I would like to examine the fate of Mamluk soldiers that had become weak and worn-out in their old age. What happens to an infirm warrior, who is no longer able to fight? This question actually turns away from

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warfare as such. It does not even explicitly deal with times of peace, but rather turns to a point in the lives of war professionals when they were simply no longer able to participate in a battle. Such a question only makes sense with regard to professional warriors, knights or soldiers. This, of course, also holds true for the Mamluk soldiers; indeed, this is one of the special features of the Mamluk structure. A farmer or a Bedouin, who might also have been called to participate in a battle, would return to his home once the fight was over, and when he became too weak to till the land or to ride on a camel, he would be responsible for himself, ideally supported by his social network, his family, his friends and acquaintances or his neighbours.

In contrast to a farmer or Bedouin, professional soldiers constituted an elite. In the Mamluk case, they not only served the ruling class, they actually represented the ruling class. Did the profession of these people and their way of life determine their fate in their old age? To come to the point: There are several references to different kinds of old-age provision for Mamluk soldiers. In this contribution, one of the options will be examined in detail, namely, the status of *ṭarḥān*.

Concerning this status, we find the following normative information: In the encyclopaedia on the art of composing administrative documents, completed at the beginning of the fifteenth century (814/1412), the jurist and bureaucrat al-Qalqašandī (756–821/1355–1418),³ who became civil secretary under the first Circassian sultan, al-Zāhir Barqūq (d. 801/1399), describes a special sort of document that was called *al-ṭarḥāniyya*.

Al-Qalqašandī explains that such a document, when drafted for a sword-bearer (*arbāb al-suyūf*)—i.e. one of the professional warriors, the Mamluk elite—, it was “drawn-up for amirs (*umarā*)” as well as for simple soldiers (*aḡnād*); and that most of them (those documents) are drafted for someone, who has reached a high age, with his physical power diminished and who had become too feeble for the Sultanic service (*wa-akṭaru mā tuktabu li-man kabirat sin-nuhu wa-dāʿufat qudratuhu wa-aḡaza ʿan al-ḥidma al-sulṭāniyya*).⁴

He explains that, in general, the purpose of these documents was “to relieve the bearer from any duty towards the sultanate; and to stay where he wants and to travel whenever he likes.”⁵

Al-Qalqašandī offers two examples of a *Ṭarḥāniyya*-document for sword-bearers that refer distinctively to a person that acquired the new status of *ṭarḥān* due to infirmity. In one of these documents it is said, for example: “If so-and-so has been a person whose behaviour in his service to the sultan has been appreciated and he has grown old in obedience and his bones have become weak and his movements no longer allow him to ride or to dismount and his steadfastness in war has gone and nothing is left but the *baraka* (blessing) that one can obtain from him, then it behoves to the good manners of the High Opinion to double the benefactions towards him and to take pity on him and to favour him abundantly.”⁶

The document concludes with the annotation that: “Therefore it was decreed by order of the Sultan... that he is to settle down as *ṭarḥān* and that he will no longer be demanded for service neither by day nor by night, neither to use the javelin nor the horse. So the ruling concerning this *ṭarḥāniyya* cannot be interpreted otherwise and no one should oppose, refute or reduce it. Each one who reads this decree should abide by its content and follow its rulings to the letter, God willing.”⁷

Al-Qalqašandī evidently describes an official document that the sultan could issue and therewith dismiss an amir or a simple soldier from his service with respect and generosity, on the grounds that the individual in question was no longer able to fight due to infirmity, granting him a special status, the status of *ṭarḥān*. From today’s perspective, this could be viewed as a kind of old-age pension notice that grants the individual concerned the status of a retired person, an old-age pensioner.

A system of old-age pensions for infirm professional warriors at that point in history would certainly have to be regarded as remarkable. Generally speaking, old-age pensions, as we know them today, are a very recent and modern phenomenon. Even at the beginning of the 20th century, a good life, as perceived by most, implied working until the very end. A civil servant was at

first only offered to ask for a pension, if he deemed this necessary. Initially, it was not an automatic procedure. The introduction of a fixed retirement age was a very slow process, with a great deal of setbacks. The first pension systems were implemented for the new class of industrial workers on the one hand, and for civil servants on the other.⁸

In this sense, Mamluk soldiers could be compared with today's civil servants, i.e. as servants to the ruler. They were definitely in a privileged position in comparison to other social groups, not only in comparison to farmers and Bedouins, but also to traders and members of the intellectual elite.

However, to what extent was the type of formal document that al-Qalqašandī describes actually common in everyday life? Was it systematically applied? Would it make sense to speak of a Mamluk system of old-age pensions, at least with regard to the military elite?

As a matter of fact, in bio-historiographical texts of the Mamluk period we frequently find the information that amir so-and-so was made *ṭarḥān*. In the following, these records will be examined in order to understand to what extent this can be seen as an institutionalized system, as well as to understand the dimensions of honour and generosity connected with this status.

One difference to the modern system of old-age provision is already apparent from the documents al-Qalqašandī refers to: One did not acquire the *ṭarḥān* status simply by reaching a specific age. This status was only granted to individuals who had clearly become too feeble to do their duty and were therefore incapable of serving the sultan. There is no doubt that in Mamluk society the ideal consisted in working to one's dying day, irrespective of one's profession.⁹ However, in order to be able to comply with this ideal, one would need to remain physically strong and active, and, as we know well, this is not granted to everyone.

In what concerns the fate of infirm Mamluks, the *ṭarḥāniyya* documents presented by al-Qalqašandī attest to the fact that the respective person would no longer be obliged to do his duty, but strikingly they do not go into detail regarding the question of financial provision. It is only mentioned that the ruler should

exercise generosity, but it seems that there were no specific regulations concerning the financial support of a *tarḥān*. Hence this kind of Mamluk old-age provision lacked another important feature of our modern pension system with its precisely defined pension rates. With the help of the information provided by Mamluk contemporaries on individuals that acquired the *tarḥān* status, we would like to examine, what kind of financial support was available without formal rules and regulations. What does generosity on the side of Mamluk sultans towards infirm warriors imply?

In advance, it should be noted that the word *tarḥān* is not an Arabic, but a Turkish word. According to the lexicographer Ibn Manẓūr (630–711/1232–1311), who lived at the beginning of the Mamluk period and completed his Arabic-Arabic-Dictionary in the year 689/1290, in the language of the people of Khurasan *tarḥān* denotes a nobleman (*al-rağul al-šarīf*).¹⁰ Ibn Manẓūr does not offer any other meaning for this word. In the Mongol context *tarḥān* apparently denotes a special diplomatic status; and when in 729/1329 a Mongol envoy entered the Mamluk domain as a Mongol *tarḥān*, the Mamluk Sultan al-Nāšir Muḥammad issued for him also a Mamluk *tarḥān*-document.¹¹ In the Turkish-speaking context, so it seems, it was not especially associated with infirmity, even though some of the distinguished individuals had possibly already reached a certain age. However, in the Mamluk context, at least judging from al-Qalqašandī's depiction at the beginning of the fifteenth century, i.e. at the turning point from Turkish to Circassian rule, the *tarḥān* status was not conceded to distinguished individuals as a special diplomatic status, but specifically to persons who had become incapable of working due to infirmity and/or senility. Hence this seems to be peculiar to the Mamluk period and, accordingly, the term is employed more often during this time. In earlier times, *Tarḥān* can be found in Arabic texts primarily as a personal name. It is to be assumed that this concept was imported into Mamluk society by the Mongols. The question remains, how and at which point this notion found its way into the Mamluk administration system and how it developed into a specific term for infirm individuals, granting them a kind of retirement status. Therefore, on

the basis of the information gathered from the bio-historiographical texts, we will also attempt to understand and describe the probable development of this status during the Mamluk period.

Much of the material that I will discuss here has already been dealt with by David Ayalon in his article on “Discharges from Service, Banishments and Imprisonments in Mamluk Society”.¹² However, Ayalon’s research was guided by a very different question. He was not interested in the specific fate of infirm war professionals, but in the Mamluk practice of dismissal, which, of course, was often connected with internal politics. However, with this question in mind, Ayalon also discovered persons that had been made *ṭarḥān*, and he indicates that many of them had been dismissed because of their old age. However, he does not stress this fact, since he discusses the granting of the status of *ṭarḥān* as one possible form of dismissal, while I will discuss it as a possible form of old-age provision, which involves a very different set of questions. Therefore, it makes sense to look at this material once again, focusing on the fate of old and infirm war professionals.

With respect to our first question regarding the extent to which this form of dismissal on the grounds of old-age decay—as described by al-Qalqašandī—reflects a current and established retirement practice, we first of all have to note that the contemporary bio-historiographical texts contain only a limited number of references to persons who are explicitly said to have been declared *ṭarḥān*.

In the works of authors from the early Mamluk period, such as Abū l-Fidā’ (672–732/1273–1331),¹³ al-Ḍahabī (673–748 o. 753/1274–1348 o. 1352),¹⁴ al-Nuwayrī (677–733/1277–1333)¹⁵ and Ibn al-Dawādārī (ca. 685–nach 735/ca. 1286–nach 1336),¹⁶ but also, for example, in the work of Ibn al-Fūrāt (735–807/1334–1405),¹⁷ the status of *ṭarḥān* finds no mentioning at all. In the augmented version of the biographical lexicon by al-Ḍahabī, for which Ibn Qāḍī Šuhba (779–851/1377–1448) signs responsible, one can find under the year 761/1359 one single reference to someone actually being conceded the *ṭarḥān* status.¹⁸

In the biographical lexicon written by al-Šafadī (696–764/1297–1363) about his contemporaries there is evidence of two individuals

having been granted the status of *ṭarḥān*, and it is the earliest evidence of this type of procedure discovered so far.¹⁹ The two cases al-Ṣafadī refers to go back to the years 721/1321 and 762/1361, respectively.²⁰

Al-Maqrīzī (766–845/1364–1442),²¹ Ibn Ḥağar al-‘Asqalānī (773–852/1372–1449)²² and al-Saḥāwī (830–902/1427–1497)²³ refer to the status of *ṭarḥān* in three cases, while Ibn Tağrī Birdī (812–874/1410–1470) mentions four instances of someone being granted this status.²⁴ In contrast to these extremely sporadic references to the *ṭarḥān* status by Mamluk authors, that actually cover a time span of two hundred years, the relatively frequent mentioning in the historiographical work composed by Ibn Iyās (852–ca. 930/1448–ca. 1524),²⁵ an author from the late Mamluk period, is striking. All in all, Ibn Iyās mentions twenty-four individuals that had been declared *ṭarḥān*, and he uses the term twice again when referring to situations involving a group of people.

Firstly, this preliminary appraisal already demonstrates that only very few individuals actually acquired the *ṭarḥān* status, or rather that reports referring to this practice are scarce. Secondly, it shows that the absolute majority of reported cases is to be found in one single work, namely, the work by the late Mamluk author Ibn Iyās. This clearly suggests that the official dismissal from service to the sultan due to infirmity was extremely rare. On the other hand, it seems that this practice became more frequent in the course of the Mamluk period. Yet even with regard to the late period we cannot claim that this type of provision for professional warriors who had become infirm was practised in any systematic or comprehensive way.

According to al-Qalqaşandī, a *ṭarḥāniyya* document could be issued for amirs as well as for simple soldiers. However, the bio-historiographical texts mainly refer to amirs. All 32 named persons that reportedly acquired the *ṭarḥān* status had been amirs. There are three references to particular situations involving a larger group of Mamluks collectively declared as *ṭarḥān*-s. In these instances it is probable that ordinary soldiers were involved. While most probably only a limited number of amirs were officially granted this

special status, it seems to have played a negligible role with respect to ordinary soldiers.

Al-Qalqašandī claims that the majority of *tarḥāniyya*-documents were issued for persons that had become incapable of doing their duty as a result of infirmity; this simultaneously implies that there were exceptions. It seems that from the Mamluk administrative perspective, this status could also be granted for other reasons. In what cases then was the *tarḥān* status conceded to persons that were not infirm? Or rather, is the statement that it was mainly an official status for an old and infirm person actually correct?

In nine of the thirty-two cases reported by Mamluk authors it is very clear that the person in question acquired the *tarḥān* status due to infirmity. Ibn Iyās, for example, indicates in two cases that the person “had aged and become well advanced in years (*qad šāḥa wa-kabira sinnuhu*)”.²⁶ In two other cases he expands this formulation, saying that the respective person “had aged and become well advanced in years and was unable to move (*qad šāḥa wa-kabira sinnuhu wa-‘ağza ‘an al-ḥaraka*)”.²⁷ In one case he claims that a certain Amir Ğānbak “had already become well advanced in years and absent-minded (*kāna qad kabira sinnuhu wa-dāhala*)”.²⁸ In the case of amir Qurqmās he provides the information that his “infirmity was apparent (*wa-aḫhara al-‘ağz*)”.²⁹ Ibn Tağrī Birdī mentions that Amir Ḥuškaldī al-Qawwāmī was declared *tarḥān* “because of his infirmity (*bi-ḥukmi ‘ağzihi*)”.³⁰ According to Ibn Iyās, the Atabak Ğarbāš Kurt died at the age of 90 years as *tarḥān*.³¹ In the case of Amir Sūdūn al-Šayḥūnī Ibn Iyās simply notes that he died as *tarḥān*.³² Given that Ibn Tağrī Birdī provides additional information about this amir, we can be certain that it happened due to infirmity: “when he became old and had aged (*lamā kabira wa-šāḥa*)”,³³ even though Ibn Tağrī Birdī does not mention the fact that Amir Sūdūn had been granted the *tarḥān* status.³⁴

In one case al-Saḥāwī reports how Amir Kazal al-‘Ağamī suffered a stroke and thereupon acquired the status of *tarḥān*. He continued to live for almost twenty years and finally died absent-minded and no longer able to speak at the age of more than eighty years.³⁵ Also in this case the *tarḥān* status was conceded to a person unable to

work, and even though Kazal al-‘Ağamī continued to live for twenty more years, we can count this example among those that point to a direct connection between the application of the *tarhān* status and the “inability to work due to infirmity”.

However, there are also examples of amirs declared *tarhān* for political rather than for health reasons. In all of these cases the *tarhān* status is used as a sort of penalty, and definitely not as a distinction in connection with a diplomatic mission. However, being dismissed as *tarhān* for political reasons was a less severe punishment than being banished or imprisoned.

A famous example is the case of Amir Maṅğak al-Yūsufī, who in the year 761/1360 was made *tarhān* by Sultan Ḥasan during his second reign (755–762/1354–1361), but continued his career after Sultan Ḥasan’s death and died fifteen years later at the age of sixty in the year 776/1375 as deputy sultan, that is to say, in a powerful position and accordingly in possession of his physical power. This is actually the second case recorded in the bio-historiographical texts of a Mamluk amir who was bestowed the *tarhān* status. Maṅğak al-Yūsufī had already reached a first climax in his career as vizier between 748 and 751/1347 and 1350, before he simply disappeared from his office as the sultan’s deputy at Aleppo in the year 760/1359, neglecting his official duties. It was only one year later that he was discovered and taken to Cairo, where he made his appearance as someone who had renounced the world and dressed in Sufi clothes; it is said that the sultan forgave him and issued a *tarhāniyya*-document, according to which the former was “allowed to stay within the Muslim lands wherever he likes”. Along with this certificate he was bestowed an *iqṭā‘* in Syria.³⁶ As already mentioned, this was not the end of Maṅğak al-Yūsufī’s career: He lived on until 776/1375 and died as deputy of the sultanate. This implies that in the year 761/1360, when he was made *tarhān*, he had been only 45 years old. There are five more comparable cases of people being granted the *tarhān* status, most probably without showing any signs of infirmity.³⁷

Yet all in all, the *tarhān* status was predominately explicitly associated with infirmity by the reporting Mamluk authors, with

only few exceptions. In the remaining 16 reports about persons who had been declared *tarhān*, a connection with infirmity seems absolutely plausible, for example, when Ibn Iyās only mentions that an amir “died as *tarhān*”.³⁸ This also applies to the case of an amir who was released from prison and then allowed to stay at home as *tarhān*,³⁹ and others who were permitted to return from their place of banishment in order to stay at home as *tarhān*.⁴⁰ The fate of Ṭāz Ibn Quṭğāğ fits into this category. He was a contemporary of Maṅğak al-Yūsufī and, according to the extant evidence, he was also among the first persons that acquired the *tarhān* status. In the year 759/1358 he was taken prisoner in Alexandria by Sultan Ḥasan and lost his eyesight. Al-Ṣafadī reports that at the beginning of Sultan al-Manṣūr Muḥammad’s reign (reg. 762–764/1361–1363) Ṭāz Ibn Quṭğāğ was released through the agency of another amir and permitted to go to Jerusalem according to his wish. “After that he was sent to Damascus where he received on the new moon of *Muḥarram* 763/1361 a letter written with gold traces (*burlağ maktūb bi-l-dahab muzammak*) that made him *tarhān* in the manner of Amir Maṅğak, so that he was allowed to stay in any place in Syria at his discretion.”⁴¹

Soon thereafter Ṭāz Ibn Quṭğāğ fell ill and died the same year in Damascus. In these cases, the bestowal of the *tarhān* status can be seen as a rehabilitation measure. However, I would argue, that this kind of rehabilitation was most probably only granted to individuals who were already very feeble, that is to say, in these cases the new status was also granted in consideration of the poor condition of the person concerned.

Ṭāz Ibn Quṭğāğ received a letter written with gold traces as *tarhāniyya*-document. Is it to be assumed that such a document—as described by al-Qalqaṣandī—was also issued in all the other cases? In other words, to which degree can this status be considered as an official and formal one? The earliest evidence of a person granted the *tarhān* status concerns Amir Šaraf al-Dīn Ğandarbak al-Rūmī, who was ordered to leave Damascus—clearly for a political reason—, but who in the year 721/1321⁴² had already been sent from Cairo to Damascus, where he received a good *iqṭāʿ*, on the grounds of

his precarious physical condition; he had broken his leg in the year 712/1312⁴³ or 720/1320⁴⁴ and had been in a poor condition ever since. Upon a quarrel with Tankiz, the mighty governor of Damascus, “the sultan stipulated (*rasama al-sulṭān li-l-amīr* ...) that his place of abode will be Şafad from now on, while his *iqṭāʿ* remains the same.”⁴⁵

The verb *rasama* can imply an official letter, but the text continues more explicitly “and he received a letter from the sultan (*wa-ğāʾa kitāb al-sulṭān ilayhi*)” in which his action was reproved as politically incorrect. Al-Şafadī, who reports this event, states: “And the governor of Şafad received a letter from the sultan (*kitāb al-sulṭān*) stipulating that Amir Şaraf ad-Dīn is now a *ṭarḥān*, who should not be ordered to function as guard nor be obliged to serve; if he wants he can ride and/or dismount.”

At the time, al-Şafadī was acting as secretary in the service of Amir Şaraf al-Dīn⁴⁶ and can therefore be assumed to have had knowledge of this official correspondence. He mentions the letter, but does not characterize it as a *ṭarḥāniyya*-document. It seems that in this early case the letter was not addressed to the person that had been declared *ṭarḥān*, but rather to the governor who was made responsible for the supervision of the dismissed person. It is also clear that here the person concerned was not allowed to choose his domicile at his own discretion; on the contrary, he was forced to relocate to a prescribed place. The letter directed to the governor included directives with regard to the *ṭarḥān* being out of service. Whether this was understood more as grace or rather as punishment is left open in the text. What is clear is that a letter was issued with regard to the *ṭarḥān* status.

In connection with the second case, namely Manğak al-Yūsufi, who became *ṭarḥān* in 761/1360, Ibn Tağrī Birdī mentions that the sultan “sent him an official decree with regard to that matter (*wa-kataba lahu bi-dalika tawqīʿ šarīf*)”.⁴⁷ As already mentioned, al-Şafadī highlights the quality of the issued document written with gold traces in connection with the third evidenced *ṭarḥān*-case, i.e. Amir Ṭāz Ibn Quṭğāğ.

In later cases we are only informed that the sultan “prescribed that so-and-so should now be *ṭarḥān* (*rasama an yakūna ṭarḥānan*)”,⁴⁸ or very different formulations are used with no indication of the character of a possible formal document issued for an infirm person. For example, in many cases it is simply said that a certain person died as *ṭarḥān* (*māta wa-huwa ṭarḥānan*).

It seems to me that this change and especially the fact that in the earliest cases the written document is described or at least mentioned points to the introduction of a new kind of document. Presumably, official documents were issued also in the later cases, but this fact was no longer considered worth mentioning, since the practice of making a merited Mamluk *ṭarḥān* by decree on the grounds of his infirmity had become relatively common. At the same time, the descriptions from the time when this new kind of *ṭarḥāniyya*-document was introduced show us that it could have a festive and appreciative character.

This brings us to the next question: To which extent can the *ṭarḥān* status as such be considered as honourable? Apart from the lavish documents there is another important indication that the *ṭarḥān* status is more likely to have been perceived as a distinction than primarily as a punishment, i.e. the fact that several persons actually requested to be made *ṭarḥān*. We have already alluded to the fact that in Mamluk times the ideal *curriculum vitae* should end in office and in the execution of a dignified function. Yet some Mamluks seem to have considered it as a possible alternative to ask to be officially declared old and infirm, and hence no longer able to do their duty. It seems that this possibility was made more acceptable through the perception of the *ṭarḥān* status as an “honourable disembarkation”. In fact, in the bio-historiographical texts one can find quite a number of individuals, who requested their retirement on the grounds of infirmity, even without being granted the status of *ṭarḥān*—or at least without this being mentioned by the Mamluk authors.

The famous Amir Sūdūn al-Šayḥūnī, for example, who made a career for himself at the end of the 8th/14th century, until he became deputy sultan under the first Circassian sultan, Sultan al-Zāhir

Barqūq (reg. 784–791 and 792–801/1382–1399),⁴⁹ died in the year 798/1396 “after he had grown old and advanced in years (*ba‘damā šāḥa wa-‘alat sinnuhu*)”.⁵⁰ In connection with events in the year 797/1395 his contemporary Ibn al-Furāt reports: “The news spread that Amir Sayf al-Dīn Sūdūn al-Faḥrī al-Šayḥūnī requested to be exempted from the office of deputy sultan of Egypt as well as from his amirate and that he had asked to be allowed to stay in Jerusalem because of his illness that had hit him and because of the alteration of his condition due to his age and his infirmity (*li-marad ašābahu wa-tağyīr ḥālihi li-kibarihi wa-‘ağzihi*)”.⁵¹

Ibn al-Furāt notes that he was granted his wish and that his previous revenue was distributed among several amirs, while the sultan ordered remunerations (*rawātib*) for Sūdūn al-Šayḥūnī and conceded that he could stay in his house (*wa-aqāma bi-manzilihī*). However, Ibn al-Furāt does not mention that the latter was bestowed the official status of *ṭarḥān*. The same holds true for the report on this amir compiled by Ibn Tağrī Birdī, but he was not a contemporary.⁵² Al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Ḥağar al-‘Asqalānī—both contemporaries of Sūdūn al-Šayḥūnī—only state that he grew old without mentioning the fact that towards the end of his life he gave up his exalted position: “Al-Malik al-Zāhir (Sultan Barqūq) respected and appreciated him highly and nothing abhorrent (*munkarāt*) arose until he limped (*ḥamala*) as a result of joint ailments and did not leave his house anymore (*wa-lazama baytahu*)”.⁵³

In fact, only Ibn Iyās provides the information that Sūdūn al-Šayḥūnī died as *ṭarḥān*. According to Ibn Iyās, Sūdūn al-Šayḥūnī had been “one of the best amirs venerated by the whole state who had been deputy sultan for a long period, but he died as *ṭarḥān*”.⁵⁴

It is difficult to decide whether the famous Amir Sūdūn al-Šayḥūnī had actually been given a *ṭarḥāniyya*-document or perhaps no official status at all. Yet due to his exalted position an informal “honourable disembarkation” would have been possible, and therefore Ibn Iyās’s statement could be interpreted to the effect that from his perspective Sūdūn al-Šayḥūnī was naturally to be regarded as a *ṭarḥān* case. This, in turn, would suggest a development of this status during Mamluk times.

It is also Ibn Iyās who says that in the year 782/1380 “one of the amirs of a thousand stops in front of the Atābak Barqūq (shortly before he was to become sultan), kissed the earth and asked for the favour to become *ṭarḥān*” which was granted.⁵⁵ Ibn Iyās also mentions that in the year 873/1468–1469 Amir Qurqmās asked the sultan to be dispensed from travelling, because his infirmity (*al-‘ağz*) had become apparent, and he requested to be granted the status of *ṭarḥān*.⁵⁶ Furthermore, Ibn Iyās reports that in 885/1480 Amir Lāğīn al-Zāhiri asked the sultan (at that time al-Ašraf Qāyṭbāy, reg. 873–901/1468–1495) to be released from his *mağlis*-emirate^{••}: “He reminded the sultan that he had grown old and advanced in years and become unable to move (*qad šāḥa wa-kabira sinnuhu wa-‘ağza ‘an al-ḥaraka*). The sultan gave his consent and provided him with the necessary. He remained *ṭarḥān* until he died.”⁵⁷

His death is noted to have occurred some months later.⁵⁸

In two cases someone else interceded on behalf of an amir who had requested to be declared *ṭarḥān*. Aytmiš al-Ḥuḍarī arrived in 825/1422 from Jerusalem (whereto he had most probably been banished), and thanks to his advocate he was allowed to stay in his house as *ṭarḥān*.⁵⁹ Similarly, Qānī Bāy al-Yūsufī, who had been exiled to Qūṣ, did not even have to relocate; thanks to an intercession in the year 870/1466 he was allowed to stay in his house as *ṭarḥān*.⁶⁰ I suppose that in both cases this was granted, because the persons concerned were already in a relatively poor physical condition, in other words infirm.

As we have seen, a small number of individuals had the courage to deviate from the common ideal and to voluntarily give up their exalted and dignified position. Most probably this step was made easier for them by the fact that they could apply for an officially recognized status on the grounds that they were no longer able to work due to infirmity—a status that still seems to have provided some kind of dignity.

In most cases it is not clear from the wording used by the authors of the bio-historiographical texts whether a person asked to be declared *ṭarḥān*, or whether this status was imposed. However, it is obvious that the initiative could come from the sultan and

that this could be perceived as a loss. For example, Ibn Taġrī Birdī writes that in the year 870/1466 “the sultan took away the *iqṭāʿ* of Huškaldī al-Qawwāmī ... because of his weakness due to old age (*ahraġa al-sultān iqtāʿ* ...)”;⁶¹ and in 814/1411 “the sultan gave order (*rasama al-sultān*)” to Amir Timrāz al-Nāṣirī “that he now was a *ṭarḥān*.”⁶² Yet, there is no documented *ṭarḥān* case where this procedure was applied explicitly against the will of the person concerned as in other cases of dismissal due to infirmity that do not involve the *ṭarḥān* status.

On the whole, the *ṭarḥān* status indeed seems to have been a form of dismissal that could be seen as something positive also from the perspective of the person in question. For example, with respect to the amirs ‘Alī Bāy (d. 906/1500) and Azbak al-Yūsufī (d. 914/1508) Ibn Iyās mentions that “they were fine with it (*wa-kāna lā ba’sa bi-hi*)”.⁶³ Others were offered honorary gifts upon their dismissal, as in 876/1471 the governor of Tripoli, Iyās al-Ṭawīl, who “had aged and become well advanced in years and was unable to move”. He “was honoured by the sultan. He received a robe of honour and a horse with a gold bridle and a saddlecloth (*fā-akramahu al-sultān wa-ahla’a ‘alayhi wa-arkabahu farasan bi-sarġin dahabin wa-kunbūs*)”.

In order to return to Tripoli as *ṭarḥān*.⁶⁴ Even an amir who was released from prison to be declared *ṭarḥān* was given a robe of honour when he appeared in front of the sultan.⁶⁵ All in all, it can be said that this form of dismissal on the grounds of infirmity was guided by the concern to preserve the honour and dignity of the respective individual, as can be discerned from the *ṭarḥāniyya*-documents reproduced by al-Qalqašandī.

According to al-Qalqašandī, the primary purpose of the *ṭarḥāniyya*-documents was the exemption from all official duties, and secondly the confirmation that the person concerned was allowed to stay or travel wherever he pleased. This formulation is reminiscent of the Mongol usage of the term *ṭarḥān*, i.e. for someone who is first of all exempt from paying taxes and, in addition, enjoys the privilege to enter at any time into the presence of the ruler or to take his leave without need of permission; or, respectively, to enter any place at his discretion as a diplomat.⁶⁶ The freedom to

travel and to choose one’s place of residence was obviously a privilege and therefore a distinction. To what extent was this freedom described by al-Qalqašandī as one of the main purposes actually relevant in the *tarhān* cases mentioned in the bio-historical texts? This freedom is only explicitly mentioned in connection with two *tarhān* cases, and these belong to the earliest ones recorded, namely the above-mentioned cases of Amir Maṅğak al-Yūsufī and Amir Ṭāz Ibn Quṭğāğ.

The vizier who later was to become deputy sultan, Maṅğak al-Yūsufī (d. 776/1374), was bestowed the *tarhān* status in the year 761/1360, when he appeared before the sultan in Ṣūfī clothes, although he had been in hiding for one year, and he was granted the privilege “to stay in the Muslim lands wherever he likes (*yuqīmu ḥaytu šā’a min al-bilād al-islāmiyya*)”,⁶⁷ but, under the condition, that he would not leave the Muslim lands altogether, as Ibn Tağrī Birdī specifically points out.⁶⁸ In the year 763/1362 Ṭāz Ibn Quṭğāğ, who had gone blind and was most probably in a poor physical condition upon leaving prison, was granted the same freedom. He first went to Jerusalem at his own wish, but was then “sent to Damascus”, where he received his document “that made him a *tarhān* in the manner of Amir Maṅğak, so that he was allowed to stay at any place in Syria that he chooses”, as al-Şafadī puts it.⁶⁹ Al-Şafadī emphasizes that Ṭāz Ibn Quṭğāğ was made *tarhān* “in the manner of Amir Maṅğak”, implying that this was either new or rather unusual. In contrast, in the first recorded case of an amir declared *tarhān*—and it is al-Şafadī who provides us with this record—a specific place of residence was stipulated, even though the person concerned was already in a poor physical condition, and this was clearly meant as a penalty. The invalid Amir Ğandarbak al-Rūmī (d. 729/1329) had been sent to Damascus, where he had a quarrel with the governor Tankiz, and as a result he was ordered to leave for Şafad in the year 721/1321, the governor of which was instructed to treat him as *tarhān*.⁷⁰ Firstly, this was clearly a measure of punishment, though not a very severe one, and one that was later revoked. Secondly, the person concerned is not granted free choice of residence; the place of residence is explicitly dictated,

contrary to the second main purpose of the *ṭarḥāniyya*-documents that al-Qalqašandī refers to. Thus, in this case we cannot speak of a special distinction providing honour. However, we have to acknowledge that this is an exceptional case.

In all the other records of amirs having been declared *ṭarḥān* that include information about the whereabouts of the person concerned—and these are after all twelve cases—it is either stated that the sultan ordered the person “to stay at home” as *ṭarḥān*, or it is simply mentioned that “he did not leave his house anymore”. We could interpret this as a penalty measure, as a sort of house arrest—more agreeable than imprisonment, but definitely a constraint, since apart from not having the freedom to choose the place of residence the person in question would also be confined to the house.⁷¹ However, it seems to me that these formulations in most of the cases indicate a restriction to the home due to infirmity. The formulation that the person concerned was “ordered” to stay at home could be interpreted as a permission to stay at home and as an exemption from official duties that would, for example, include being summoned into the sultan’s presence. In the bio-historiographical texts many more individuals are mentioned that from a certain point in time “stay at home”, even without being declared *ṭarḥān*, at least without this being mentioned by the authors of the bio-historiographical texts. For example, Ibn al-Furāt writes that Amir Maliktamur, who died in the year 794/1392, “at the end of his time stayed in his house in Cairo without office, and the reason why his amirate had been taken away was that he had been weak for a while, isolated in his house.”⁷²

Ibn al-Furāt makes it explicit here why Amir Maliktamur “stayed in his house”; the reason for his dismissal is simply the fact of no longer being capable of leaving the house, and thereafter he will, understandably, continue to stay at home. On the basis of this example and similar ones it seems justified to assume that when we are told that a *ṭarḥān* “stays at home or has to stay at home” it is due to the inability of the respective person to leave the house and that it should not be equated with the house arrest of a physically fit person. The famous Amir Sūdūn al-Šayḥūnī, who had risen

to be deputy sultan, is another good example of this. In the year 797/1395 he asked to be released from his office due to his infirmity, and from then on he “was present in Cairo and did not leave his house anymore” until he died a good year later.⁷³ Also in the case of Kazal al-‘Ağamī, who suffered a stroke in the year 830/1427, it is evident that he could no longer leave the house, since “he was confined to bed (*wa-lazama al-firās*)”.⁷⁴

According to Ibn Iyās, in the year 779/1377 the sultan ordered that Amir Ṭaynāl al-Māridīnī “should stay in his house (*bi-an yuqīmu fī baytihi*)” as *ṭarḥān*, what the latter actually did (*wa-lazama baytahū*).⁷⁵ He died ten years later.⁷⁶ Even though Ṭaynāl al-Māridīnī continued to live for a relatively long time, it could very well be another case of someone who was restricted by his infirmity. Sūdūn al-Afram was most probably in a similar situation; from 877/1472 he “stayed in his house as *ṭarḥān*” and died a year later.⁷⁷ Ğarbāš Kurt died the same year, aged nearly 90, after he had “stayed in his house as *ṭarḥān*”.⁷⁸ When Amir Yūsuf al-Nāṣirī was dismissed in the year 917/1511, “he set up in his house and remained *ṭarḥān*”.⁷⁹ As in the afore-mentioned cases, it seems manifest that Yūsuf al-Nāṣirī had no longer been able to leave his house.

In the year 779/1377 Amir Yalbugā al-Nāṣirī was “ordered to take abode in his house (*wa rasama lahubi-iqāma fī baytihi*)” as *ṭarḥān*.⁸⁰ This was evidently a rehabilitation measure after having been banished, but most probably it also had something to do with his state of health. A comparable case is Aytmiš al-Ḥuḍarī, who, thanks to a powerful advocate, was allowed to return from his place of banishment in 825/1422 and to “stay in his house” as *ṭarḥān*.⁸¹ The same holds true for Arkmās al-Zāhirī, who in the year 846/1442 was summoned from Damietta and then “settles in his house where he remains as *ṭarḥān*”.⁸²

In the year 870/1466 someone advocated also for Qānī Bāy al-Yūsufī “to become a *ṭarḥān* in his house”.⁸³ However, in this case it is not quite as obvious that it was related to infirmity. We may assume that in some cases an order of this kind can indeed be equated with house arrest. For example, Amir Azbak al-Mukaḥḥal came back from his place of banishment in the year 915/1509 and

“settled in his house”, and “remained *ṭarḥān*”. However, years later, in 920/1514, the sultan took pity on him and once again bestowed on him an amirate of a thousand, thereby restoring his previous status.⁸⁴ Perhaps Azbak al-Mukahḥal actually was infirm and the sultan—out of compassion—nonetheless decided that he should receive proper financial backing through the official status as amir of a thousand.

The case of Amir Timrāz al-Nāṣirī is also ambiguous. As a contemporary, al-Maqrīzī writes that in the year 814/1411 the sultan “ordered that Amir Timrāz al-Nāṣirī will henceforth be *ṭarḥān*, who does not need to serve the sultan, but should stay in his house or betake himself to Damietta (*rasama li-l-amīr Timrāz al-Nāṣirī an yakūnu ṭarḥānan, lā yaḥḍaru al-ḥidma al-sultāniyya wa-yuqīmu bi-dārihi wa-yatawaḡḡahu ilā Dimyāt*)”.⁸⁵

Ibn Ḥaḡar al-‘Asqalānī states that “he was free to choose between Cairo and Damietta and that he chose Damietta and was sent there.”⁸⁶ Ibn Iyās only mentions that Timrāz al-Nāṣirī was sent to Damietta without an office (*baṭṭālan*).⁸⁷ All in all, punishment seems to have been the primary motive in this case. What is evident here is the fact that again, similar to the case of Amir Ġandarbak al-Rūmī, a specific place of residence was dictated.

It becomes very clear that the *ṭarḥān* status did not necessarily entail the freedom to travel and to choose one’s place of residence—contrary to the norm that al-Qalqaṣandī presents in his encyclopaedia. This only seems to have been applied in two early cases. The majority of Mamluks who were declared *ṭarḥān* were already in such poor condition that they could no longer leave the house. In this context, the sultan’s order to stay at home along with the bestowal of the *ṭarḥān* status should not be understood as a punishment in the sense of house arrest, but rather as a permission to stay at home.

Al-Qalqaṣandī emphasises that the sultan should exercise generosity vis-à-vis the person that was dispensed from office, albeit without further specification. However, the question of financial security will certainly have been crucial for the individual concerned. Therefore, it seems appropriate to examine the bio-historiographical

texts with regard to this matter. Is it possible to deduce a certain pattern from the given examples, or was the financial provision of a *ṭarḥān* completely at mercy of an arbitrary “generosity”, and what would this imply? It would also be interesting to find out, whether it is possible to discern a certain development in the course of the Mamluk period.

First of all it is to be noted that the Mamluk authors recorded and discussed the respective financial provision in twenty-one out of the thirty-two cases in which a person is said to have been declared *ṭarḥān*. This relatively high percentage attests to the importance of this issue, and at the same time it suggests a certain irregularity and incalculability. Usually, Mamluks would receive a monthly salary for their service to the sultan and, in addition, meat and cereals, two robes (annually) as well as extra payments for military campaigns.⁸⁸ Amirs—and, as has become clear, most of the individuals granted the *ṭarḥān* status due to infirmity were amirs—additionally received an *iqṭāʿ* (a piece of land) so as to be able to provide for themselves and their household with the collected taxes. An amir’s household included not only his family, but also his servants and his own Mamluk soldiers, with the number of people depending on the rank of the amir.

The first person known to us, who is recorded to have been declared *ṭarḥān*, is Ğandarbak al-Rūmī, who had been awarded the highest amir’s rank, namely an amir of a thousand, and had been appointed as amir of the hunt during the second reign of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (698–708/1298–1308). He had been transferred to Damascus, most probably after having been ill for a while; in the year 721/1321 he was sent to Şafad as *ṭarḥān*, obviously as a punishment, while “his *iqṭāʿ* in Damascus remained as it was”, as Ibn Ḥaġar al-ʿAsqalānī explicitly notes.⁸⁹ We know from al-Nuwayrī that this had been the *iqṭāʿ* of the previous sultan’s deputy at Damascus, which implies that it was particularly lucrative.⁹⁰ When Ğandarbak was later allowed to return to Cairo, he also received a “good *iqṭāʿ*”, as al-Şafadī reports, and stayed there until he died.⁹¹ Thus, in this first documented *ṭarḥān* case it seems

that the financial provision did not change with the new status. However, as we will see, this is an absolutely exceptional case.

Already the famous Maṅḡak al-Yūsufī, who ascended to the rank of amir of a thousand and then to the position of vizier during the first reign of Sultan al-Nāṣir Ḥasan (748–759/1347–1351), before he was made *ṭarḥān* in the year 761/1360 and was allowed to stay where he pleased, received—along with his change of status—“a Ṭablḥānā-amirate in Syria”,⁹² that is to say an amirate of forty, the middle rank for Mamluk amirs. Hence, this is an example of a *ṭarḥān* being given a title that was inferior to his previous one, but which, of course, was connected with the allocation of an appropriate *iqṭāʿ*—even though he was no longer in office. This model seems to have prevailed throughout the Mamluk period: Upon being declared *ṭarḥān* a high-ranking amir would receive a smaller amirate and would simultaneously be exempted from his duties. Financial security seems to have been the central issue in this context. This model seems to have been applied until the end of the Mamluk period. The amir of a thousand, Yalbuḡā al-Nāṣirī, who in the year 779/1377 was ordered to stay at home as *ṭarḥān*, was bestowed (*anʿama ʿalayhi*) with a Ṭablḥānā amirate.⁹³ In the same year, Ṭaynāl al-Māridīnī, who had finally held a Ṭablḥānā amirate, received—according to al-Maqrīzī—an amirate of ten upon being declared *ṭarḥān*, with the permission to stay at home.⁹⁴ The next example of this kind of provision was recorded approximately a century later: In the year 876/1471 Iyās al-Ṭawīl, who had held the office of the sultan’s deputy at Tripoli (*nāʾib Ṭarāblus*), received “an amirate in Tripoli to sustain him while he is a *ṭarḥān* (*wa-anʿama ʿalyhi bi-imra fī Ṭarāblus yaʿkuluhā wa-huwa ṭarḥānan*)”—and this occurred explicitly due to his infirmity.⁹⁵ In this case the exact rank of the new amirate is not mentioned, but it becomes clear that the person concerned is allowed to stay at his previous place of office. Similarly, Sūdūn al-Afram had been an amir of a thousand, but he died in the year 878/1473 as *ṭarḥān* and “had in his hands an amirate of ten to sustain him until he died (*wa-kāna bi-yadihi imra ʿašara yaʿkuluhā ḥattā māta*)”.⁹⁶ Amir Bard Bak also “had in his hands an amirate of ten to sustain him (*wa-kāna bi-yadihi imra ʿašara*

ya'kuluhā)” when he died as *ṭarḥān* in the year 892/1487.⁹⁷ Thus, in six out of the known *ṭarḥān* cases it is stated that an amir—and most probably all of them had previously been amirs of a thousand—received a smaller amirate, in two cases an amirate of forty, three times an amirate of ten, and one time an amirate that was not exactly defined. In all these cases the bestowal of an amirate was obviously not connected with any duties of service; the amirate, which entailed the allocation of an *iqṭāʿ*, was bestowed purely as a means of financing the dismissed person and his household, even though this is not spelt out explicitly by the Mamluk authors.

In other cases the Mamluk authors only report the allocation of an *iqṭāʿ*, without mentioning the bestowal of an amirate. For example, when in 830/1427 Kazal al-ʿAḡamī suffered a stroke, he became disabled “so that he was deprived of his amirate, but got a good *iqṭāʿ* on which he lived as *ṭarḥān* until he died (*ilā an ubriḡa imratahu wa-aʿtāhu iqtāʿan ḡayyidan yaʿkuluhu ṭarḥānan ḥattā māta*)”.⁹⁸ At the time Kazal al-ʿAḡamī had held a Ṭablḥānā amirate, but had previously also been an amir of a thousand. It seems that as *ṭarḥān* he was allotted an *iqṭāʿ*, even without officially receiving a new amir’s title. For the administration of *iqṭāʿ*s such a procedure must have been rather unusual, but if it was applied, then it appears not to have posed a sincere problem. Yet it is also possible that Kazal al-ʿAḡamī was actually registered as amir of ten, for example, and that our source of information, al-Saḥāwī, simply failed to mention it. In fact, this is more probable, since, with regard to his contemporary Amir Qarāḡā al-Zāhirī, Ibn Taḡrī Birdī also restricts himself to saying that the latter received an *iqṭāʿ*, but still refers to him as “amir”. He says that in the year 863/1459 “the *iqṭāʿ* of Šādbak was given to Amir Qarāḡā al-Zāhirī, who had been in Jerusalem without office (*baṭṭālan*), so that it would be in his hands as *ṭarḥān* (*li-yakūnu bi-yadihi wa-huwa ṭarḥān*)”.⁹⁹ Perhaps one had to belong to a specific category of amirs in order to be allocated an *iqṭāʿ* by the administration. In the year 870/1466—also according to Ibn Taḡrī Birdī—“the sultan took away the *iqṭāʿ* from Ḥuškaldī al-Qawwāmī, one of the Ṭablḥānā amirs because of his fading strength due to old age (*bi-ḥukmi ʿaḡzihī*) ... and he bestowed upon Ḥuškaldī an

iqṭāʿ that “annually generated more than 200.000 to sustain him as *ṭarḥān* (*wa-anʿama ʿalā Ḥuškaldī bi-iqṭāʿ yaʿmalu fi-l-sana azyad min maʿyatay alf yaʿkuluhu ṭarḥānan*)”.¹⁰⁰ Be it as officially nominated amir or not, the same pattern is discernible here: A high-ranking amir is degraded as *ṭarḥān* through the allocation of a reduced *iqṭāʿ*. Nevertheless, it needs to be stressed that in all ten cases that we have examined—approximately half of the reported *ṭarḥān* cases with information regarding the financial arrangement—the amirs that had been made *ṭarḥān* received an income through an *iqṭāʿ*, as was generally common for an amir, and were not simply paid a monthly salary, as was usual for an ordinary Mamluk in service. This kind of provision in case of infirmity thus seems to have been a fairly good arrangement, enabling the person concerned to continue to maintain his household, even though he might possibly have had to reduce it to a certain extent. In any case, it seems that only the highest-ranking amirs were actually entitled to the *ṭarḥān* status.

However, in the bio-historiographical texts we come across other formulations that indicate that some amirs received money directly from the state treasury and did not hold an *iqṭāʿ*, which would have implied that the collection of taxes was incumbent upon the amir in question. A good example is Sūdūn al-Šayḥūnī, who held one of the highest positions in the Mamluk sultanate, namely the office of the sultan’s deputy in Egypt, when in the year 797/1395 he asked to be discharged on the grounds of his advanced age and subsequently stayed at home. Ibn al-Furāt reports that the sultan ordered “remunerations (*rattaba ... rawātib*)” after he had dismissed Sūdūn al-Šayḥūnī from his office and assigned “his alimony (*ḥubzuhū*)” to others.¹⁰¹ We have already alluded to the fact that contemporaries like Ibn al-Furāt do not identify Sūdūn al-Šayḥūnī as *ṭarḥān*, but Ibn Iyās does. In any case, the wording used by Ibn al-Furāt suggests a kind of financial support that consisted in direct monetary payment and, since he uses *rawātib* in the plural, it is probable that these were monthly payments. However, we do not know in what way such payments were dealt with by the administration, nor at which point during the days of payment a person like Sūdūn al-Šayḥūnī would receive his fixed sum (*rātib*).

Given that these must have been exceptional cases, each case was probably dealt with individually.

Al-Saḥāwī mentions that in 871/1467 Sultan al-Zāhir Ḥuṣḡadam took away the *iqṭāʿ* of the amir of a thousand, Ġānibak al-Nāṣirī al-Murtadd, on the grounds of his infirmity and “provided him with a salary (*rizq*) to live on (*abraġa al-Zāhir iqtāʿahu wa-aʿtāhu rizqan yaʿkuluhu*)”.¹⁰² The latter died approximately one year later. This wording also points to a direct monetary payment from the state treasury. Ibn Iyās reports that when in the year 914/1508 the former amir of a thousand, Azbak al-Yūsufī, died well advanced in years as *ṭarḥān* that “there had been a provision (*ḡaḥīra*) arranged for him until he died and that he was fine with it (*wa-kāna lahumurattab ʿalā al-ḡaḥīra ḡattā māta wa-kāna lā baʿsa bi-hī*)”.¹⁰³ Ibn Iyās also reports that when in the year 915/1509 Azbak al-Muḡaḡḡal became *ṭarḥān*, the sultan “arranged for him what was sufficient without an *iqṭāʿ* (*wa-rattaba lahu mā yakfīhi min al-ḡaḥīra bi-ġayri iqtāʿin wa-istamarra ṭarḡānan*)”.¹⁰⁴ It is possible that in these two cases one single sum called “provision” was paid. In the last case quoted the term “provision without *iqṭāʿ*” could be interpreted to the effect that the more common model of financing a *ṭarḥān* was indeed the allocation of an *iqṭāʿ*. It could also mean that usually an *iqṭāʿ* was allocated in addition to the above-mentioned provision. However, since there are only two recorded cases of a *ṭarḥān* receiving a *ḡaḥīra*, the term is difficult to interpret. The other two above-mentioned terms, *rawātib* and *rizq*, also only appear once and are therefore difficult to classify. We can only conclude that there were definitely possibilities of supporting a *ṭarḥān* without allocating an *iqṭāʿ* to him and that therefore there was no need to give him an amirate.

In fact, in many cases the financial support for a *ṭarḥān* is described only with the words “and it was arranged for him what was sufficient for him (*rattaba lahumā yakfīhi*)”. This formulation is rather vague, but at least it indicates that the person concerned was to receive some kind of support. Ibn Iyās uses this formulation in eight cases,¹⁰⁵ but it is also documented in Ibn Ḥaġar al-ʿAsqalānī’s¹⁰⁶ and in Ibn Taġrī Birdī’s works.¹⁰⁷ With respect to Amir Ṭaynāl

al-Māridīnī, Ibn Iyās writes that the sultan “arranged for him what was sufficient for him (*fa-rattaba lahumā yakfihī*)”, while al-Maqrīzī notes that in the year 779/1377 Ṭaynāl al-Māridīnī received an amirate of ten.¹⁰⁸ Thus, it seems that Ibn Iyās considered an amirate of ten as “sufficient” financial support for a *ṭarḥān*. In his report of the year 877/1472 Ibn Iyās mentions that the sultan “arranged for Sūdūn al-Afram what was sufficient for him (*wa-rattaba li-Sūdūn al-Afram mā yakfihī*)”.¹⁰⁹ When he died one year later, Ibn Iyās notes that the latter had been given an amirate of ten. Once again, this case suggests that an amirate of ten was perceived as “sufficient”. Also for Ġānibak al-Nāṣirī al-Murtadd “the sultan arranged what was sufficient for him (*fā-rattaba la-hu al-sultān mā yakfihī*) and took away from him his amirate of a thousand (*wa-abraġa ‘anhu al-taqaddum*)”, according to Ibn Iyās.¹¹⁰ Al-Saḥāwī relates that in the year 871/1467 the same person, Ġānibak al-Murtadd, received a salary (*rizq*) from the sultan to live on. So, at least for Ibn Iyās, this kind of financing could also be classified as “sufficient”. In the case of Azbak al-Mukaḥḥal Ibn Iyās provides the information that in 915/1509 the sultan “arranged for him what was sufficient as provision without *iqṭā’* (*wa-rattaba lahu mā yakfihī min al-daḥīra bi-ġayri iqṭā’in wa-istamarra ṭarḥānan*)”.¹¹¹ Here, the modality “provision without *iqṭā’*” is directly identified as sufficient. Given the fact that all these different possibilities are classified as “sufficient”—at least by Ibn Iyās—, it is impossible to precisely determine what this relatively vague phrase implied in other cases. Yet on the whole, it seems appropriate to emphasize once again that high-ranking amirs, who were obliged to quit their service to the sultan due to infirmity and were declared *ṭarḥān*, were evidently provided with a relatively good financial backing, which most probably enabled them to maintain themselves along with their households, even though they had become unable to work. It is to be assumed that an old and infirm amir would get the needed help and care from the people in his household. The fact that particularly the late Mamluk author Ibn Iyās does not specify the form of financial support and instead often employs the standardised formula “it was arranged for him what was sufficient for him” may be interpreted to the effect

that in his time this practice had become well established and that it was more or less understood that an infirm amir declared *tarḥān* would be provided with the necessary support, in accordance with his previous high-ranking position.

In contrast, in Ibn Manẓūr’s time, i.e. around the year 700/1300, such a procedure still seems to have been unknown. The status of *tarḥān* appears to have been introduced during the third reign of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (709–741/1310–1341), initially following the Mongol model. Judging from the documented cases this practice was revived during the second reign of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan (755–762/1354–1361), most probably still following the Mongol model. During this period the individuals that were declared *tarḥān* were explicitly granted the freedom to choose their place of residence. Four other cases are reported under the Turkish Mamluk sultans, and only three more cases under the first Circassian sultans until the time of al-Qalqašandī, who completed his encyclopaedic handbook for clerks in the administration in the year 814/1411. In his work he already pinpoints the essential difference between the Mongol model and the practice that had developed in the Mamluk period, namely the specific bestowal of this honourable status without official duties upon Mamluks who had become unable to work due to infirmity. On the other hand, al-Qalqašandī still indicates that the free choice of residence was one of the two principal purposes of the *al-tarḥāniyya* document. However, as we have seen, this special freedom no longer played a role after the early cases under al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, and this holds true until the end of the Mamluk period. An especially large number of the documented *tarḥān* correspond to the reign of al-Ašraf Qaytbāy (873–901/1468–1495), already towards the end of Mamluk rule. As indicated at the beginning, the absolute majority of references go back to the late Mamluk author Ibn Iyās. Of course, this might partly be due to a special interest in the *tarḥān* status on the part of the author—for whatever reason. However, it can also be taken as an indication that this status became increasingly common in the course of the Mamluk period.

In conclusion, the Mamluks introduced a new administrative procedure involving certain practices and gave it a specific name.

The described provisions for professional warriors who had become infirm and thus unable to do their duty really seems to have been an independent invention that took root in the course of Mamluk rule. This would imply that—from a historical and cultural comparative perspective—we are dealing with a remarkable phenomenon. Not only does it attest to the fact that the service of high-ranking professional warriors was highly appreciated, but it also implies a high degree of respect for individuals who had become feeble and infirm due to old age and were therefore no longer able to comply with the ideal of dying in the execution of their duty in an exalted position. Thanks to the *tarḥān* status, as it developed over the Mamluk period, the honour of a highly merited amir could be safeguarded despite his physical and/or mental decay, and, as we have seen, his financial wellbeing was also provided for. Evidently, only highly distinguished Mamluk amirs were entitled to this kind of old-age provision. On the one hand, this high appreciation of even an old and infirm warrior may be explained by the professionalization of the military way of life that is discernible during the Mamluk period and, on the other hand, by an increased consciousness of human issues and appreciation of the individual.

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1. See ZOUACHE 2009b, p. 1–30.
 2. BORST 2004, p. 448–451.
 3. BOSWORTH 1978, p. 509–511.
 4. Al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, XXIII, p. 48.
 5. *Ibid.*, XXIII, p. 48.
 6. Al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, XXIII, p. 51.
 7. *Ibid.*, p. 52.
 8. GÖCKENJAN 2000, p. 298–361: “Sozialpolitik und die Umgestaltung des Alters”.
 9. See my research on the history of old age in Mamluk times.
 10. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*.
 11. AYALON 1972, p. 29–31, with further bibliographical information on the Mongol usage of the word. The information on the issuing of a *tarḥāniyya*-document for a Mongol diplomat comes from al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, VII, p. 229, where he discusses the kind of letter called *barlağ*.
 12. AYALON 1972, p. 25–50.
 13. HOLT 1983.
 14. Al-Dahabī, *Tārīḥ*, LII (covering the years 691–700).

15. Al-Nuwayrî, *Nihāya*, XXXII–XXXIII (covering the years 701–730).
16. Ibn al-Dawādārî, *Kanz*, VIII–XIX (covering the years 649–735).
17. Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārîḫ*, IX, 1–2 (covering the years 789–799).
18. Al-Ḍahabî, *Ḍuyūl*, IV (covering the years 701–764).
19. Al-Şafadî, *A‘yān*.
20. *Ibid.*, II, p. 262 and p. 570.
21. Al-Maqrîzî, *Sulūk*; al-Maqrîzî, *Ḥiṭaṭ*.
22. Ibn Ḥaġar al-‘Asqalānî, *Inbā’*.
23. Al-Saḥāwî, *Ḍaw’*.
24. Ibn Taġrî Birdî, *Nuġūm*.
25. Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’*.
26. *Ibid.*, III, p. 122 (regarding Ğānî Bak al-Muṣadd, d. 881/1476); III, p. 414 and IV, p. 139f. (regarding Amir Azbak al-Yūsufî, d. 904 or 914/1499 or 1508) “at the age of nearly 80 years”, as Ibn Iyās adds in both cases.
27. Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’*, III, p. 71 (regarding Amir Iyās al-Ṭawîl); III, p. 176 (regarding *amîr* Lāġîn al-Zāhirî, d. 885/1480).
28. Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’*, II, p. 450.
29. *Ibid.*, III, p. 27.
30. *Ibid.*, *Ḥawādîṭ*, ed. Popper, 3, p. 511.
31. Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’*, III, p. 83.
32. *Ibid.*, *Badā’i’*, I/2, p. 482.
33. Ibn Taġrî Birdî, *Nuġūm*, XII, p. 151.
34. See also al-Maqrîzî, *Sulūk*, III/2, p. 865, who only mentions that Amir Sūdūn died “after he had aged and advanced in years (*ba’damā šāḥa wa-‘alat sinnuhū*)”.
35. Al-Saḥāwî, *Ḍaw’*, VI, p. 288, no 779.
36. Al-Maqrîzî, *Sulūk*, III/1, p. 53; Maqrîzî, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV/1, p. 305; Ibn Taġrî Birdî, *Nuġūm*, X, p. 310f.; Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’* I/1, p. 572; Ḍahabî, *Ḍuyūl*, IV, p. 184.
37. Ibn Ḥaġar al-‘Asqalānî, *Inbā’*, I, p. 144, no. 64 (son of a slave-girl, 778/1376, who received this status as a lifelong support); al-Saḥāwî, *Ḍaw’*, III, p. 296, no. 1139 (Şāḥîn al-‘Alā’î, 860/1456, returned into service after having been *ṭarḥān* and then was banished); Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’*, II, p. 432 (Qānî Bey, 870/1466, was punished by the sultan with banishment, but through intercession was allowed to stay at home as *ṭarḥān*); Al-Saḥāwî, *Ḍaw’*, III, p. 195–197, no. 748 (Ḥalîl Ibn Şāḥîn, 873/1468, was made *ṭarḥān* several times during his career together with an office, and each time returned into service); Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’*, IV, p. 157, 244 and 372 (Azbak al-Mukaḥḥal, 915/1509, who was assigned an amirate of a thousand after having been made *ṭarḥān*).
38. Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’*, IV, p. 7 (‘Alî Bāy al-Zāhirî Tamurbugā, 906/1500); III, p. 240 (Bard Bak Ṭarḥān al-Zāhirî Ğaqmaq, 892/1487); III, p. 80 and 95 (Sūdūn al-Afram, 877–878/1472–1473); III, p. 88 (Ṭūḥ al-Nawrūzî, 877/1472); III, p. 88 (Ğānim al-Lufāf, 877/1472); II, p. 119 (Iyās al-Zāhirî, 831/1428); I/2, p. 511 (Bökilmîş/Baklamaş al-‘Alā’î, 801/1399).
39. Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’*, II, p. 237 (Arkmās al-Zāhirî, 846/1442).
40. *Ibid.*, p. 79 (Aytmiş al-Ḥuḍarî, 825/1422); I/2, p. 201 (Yalbugā al-Nāşirî, 779/1377); Ibn Taġrî Birdî, *Nuġūm*, XVI, p. 128 (Qarāġa al-Zāhirî, 863/1459).

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41. Al-Şafadī, *A’yān*, II, p. 570.
42. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, XXXIII, p. 28, reports on this relocation to Damascus among the news of the year 721/1321 and provides the exact date of his arrival at Damascus, namely the last Monday of *Raġab*. In contrast, al-Nuwayrī does not give any reason for this relocation and does not mention that Ġandarbak had been ill or that he had broken his leg.
43. This is reported by the contemporary al-Şafadī, *A’yān*, II, p. 261.
44. This date is provided by Ibn Ḥaġar al-‘Asqalānī in his work *Durar*, II, p. 137, no. 1581, which is largely on al-Şafadī’s report.
45. This report is by the contemporary al-Şafadī, *A’yān*, II, p. 262.
46. Al-Şafadī, *A’yān*, II, p. 262.
47. Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Nuġūm*, X, p. 310f.
48. See, for example, al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/1, p. 53 (Maṅġak al-Yūsufī, 761/1360); III/1, p. 320 (Ṭaynāl al-Māridīnī, 779/1377); IV/1, p. 178 (Timrāz al-Nāşirī, 814/1411); Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Nuġūm*, XIII, p. 121 (Timrāz al-Nāşirī, 814/1411); *Hawādīt*, ed. Popper, 3, p. 694 (group, 873/1468); Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’*, I/2, p. 126 and 217 (Ṭaynāl al-Māridīnī, 775/1373 and 779/1377); I/2, p. 201 (Yalbuġā al-Nāşirī, 779/1377).
49. Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Nuġūm*, XII, p. 151.
50. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, p. 865.
51. Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīḥ*, IX/2, p. 399.
52. Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Nuġūm*, XII, p. 151: “When he grew old and had aged, he became tired of the amirate and his duties and asked to be released (*lamā kabira wa-şāḥa aḥada yatabarruma min al-imra wa-l-wazīfa wa-yasta’fā*), until al-Malik al-Zāḥir released him (*ilā an a’fāḥū*) after his return from a trip to Syria. Sūdūn stayed in Cairo and did not leave his house anymore from *Şafar* 797/1374, until he died at the said date”, that is the 5th of *Ġumādā al-Āḥira* 798/1396. This implies that he was without office for one year and four months, staying in his house.
53. Ibn Ḥaġar al-‘Asqalānī, *Inbā’*, I, p. 517, no. 22; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, p. 865: “after he had aged and advanced in years (*ba’damā şāḥa wa-‘alat sinnuhū*)”.
54. Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’*, I/2, p. 482.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 278.
56. *Ibid.*, III, p. 27.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 176.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 177; here, Ibn Iyās also uses the formulation “without office (*baṭṭālan*)”.
59. *Ibid.*, II, p. 79.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 432.
61. Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Hawādīt*, ed. Popper, 3, p. 511.
62. Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Nuġūm*, XIII, p. 121f.; similarly al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, IV/1, p. 178 (*rasama*); and Ibn Ḥaġar al-‘Asqalānī, *Inbā’*, II, p. 482 (*‘azala*).
63. Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’*, IV, p. 7; IV, p. 140.
64. *Ibid.*, III, p. 71.
65. *Ibid.*, II, p. 237 (Arkmās al-Zāḥirī, 846/1442).
66. AYALON 1972, p. 30–31.

67. Al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV/1, p. 305; cf. al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/1, p. 53; cf. also al-Ḍahabī, *Ḍuyūl*, IV, p. 184.
68. Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Nuġūm*, X, p. 310f.
69. Al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, II, p. 570.
70. *Ibid.*, p. 262; cf. likewise Ibn Ḥaġar al-'Asqalānī, *Durar*, II, p. 137, n. 1581.
71. AYALON, "Discharges from service", p. 25.
72. Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīḥ*, IX/2, p. 319; cf. also Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Nuġūm*, XII, p. 129.
73. Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Nuġūm*, XII, p. 151; See Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīḥ*, IX/2, S. 399 (*wa-aqāma bi-manzilihī*); See also al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/2, p. 865; Ibn Ḥaġar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā'*, I, p. 517, no. 22.
74. Al-Saḥāwī, *Ḍaw'*, IV, p. 228, no. 779.
75. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ir*, I/2, p. 217.
76. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/1, p. 320 and III/2, p. 570.
77. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ir*, III, p. 80 and p. 95.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
79. *Ibid.*, IV, p. 211.
80. *Ibid.*, I/2, p. 201.
81. *Ibid.*, p. 79: "*bi-an yakūnu muqīman fi baytihi*", and so he did (*wa-aqāma fi baytihi*).
82. *Ibid.*, p. 237: "*wa-nazala ilā baytihi yuqīmu fihi*".
83. *Ibid.*, p. 432.
84. *Ibid.*, IV, p. 157, 244 and 372.
85. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, IV/1, p. 178; cf. also Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Nuġūm*, XIII, p. 121f.
86. Ibn Ḥaġar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā'*, II, p. 428.
87. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ir*, I/2, p. 812.
88. AYALON 1958.
89. Al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, II, p. 262; Ibn Ḥaġar al-'Asqalānī, *Durar*, II, p. 137, n. 1581.
90. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāya*, XXXIII, p. 28.
91. Al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, II, p. 262; in *Durar*, II, p. 137, no. 1581, Ibn Ḥaġar al-'Asqalānī states that this had been an *iqṭā'* taken away from the *silāḥdār*.
92. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/1, p. 53; *id.*, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV/1, p. 305; Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Nuġūm*, X, p. 310f.; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ir*, I/1, p. 572; al-Ḍahabī, *Ḍuyūl*, IV, p. 184, (or for this piece of information rather Ibn Qāḍī Ṣuhba) is the only one who states that "he received an *iqṭā'* and stayed in Jerusalem".
93. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ir*, I/2, p. 201; See also al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/1, p. 305; cf. for more information on Yalbuġā al-Nāṣirī the entry in VAN STEENBERGEN 2006, p. 188.
94. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/1, p. 320 and III/2, p. 570.
95. Ibn Iyās, *Badā'ir*, III, p. 71.
96. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
97. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
98. Al-Saḥāwī, *Ḍaw'*, VI, p. 228, no. 779.
99. Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Nuġūm*, XVI, p. 128.
100. *Id.*, *Ḥawādiṭ*, ed. Popper, III, p. 511.
101. Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīḥ*, IX/2, p. 399f.

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102. Al-Saḥāwī, *Ḍawʿ*, III, p. 60f, no. 245.
103. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʿiʿ*, IV, p. 139f. (The term *dahira* in this edition should be read as *dahira*).
104. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
105. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʿiʿ*, I/2, p. 217 (Ṭaynāl al-Māridīnī, 779/1377, *fa-rattaba lahu mā yakfihi*); I/2, p. 278 (One of the amirs of a thousand asked Barqūq—shortly before the latter was made sultan—to be allowed to become *ṭarḥān* and demanded “that he arranges for him what would be sufficient for him (*wa-yurattibu lahu mā yakfihi*)”, and he was willing to renounce his amirate of a thousand; and this was done accordingly); II, p. 237 (Arkmās al-Zāhirī, 846/1442, *wa-rattaba lahumā yakfihi*; he also received a robe of honour); II, p. 450 (Ġānibak al-Nāširī, 871/1467, *fa-rattaba lahu al-sultān mā yakfihi*); III, p. 80 (Sūdūn al-Afram, 877/1472, *wa-rattaba li-Sūdūn al-Afram mā yakfihi*); III, p. 83f. (Atabak Ġarbaš Kurt, 877/1472, *wa-rattaba lahumā yakfihi*); III, p. 176 (Lāġīn al-Zāhirī, 885/1480, *wa-rattaba lahu mā yakfihi*); IV, p. 157 (Azbak al-Mukahḥal, 915/1509, *wa-rattaba lahu mā yakfihi*).
106. Ibn Ḥaġar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Inbāʿ*, II, p. 482 (Timrāz al-Nāširī, 814/1411, *qarrara lahu šayʿan yakfihi*).
107. Ibn Taġrī Birdī, *Hawādīt*, ed. Popper, 3, p. 694 (group, 873/1468, *wa-baqiya lahu šayʿan yakfihi bi-ḥisbi l-ḥāl*).
108. Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, III/1, p. 320 and III/2, p. 570; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʿiʿ*, I/2, p. 217.
109. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʿiʿ*, III, p. 80.
110. *Ibid.*, II, p. 450.
111. *Ibid.*, IV, p. 157.

