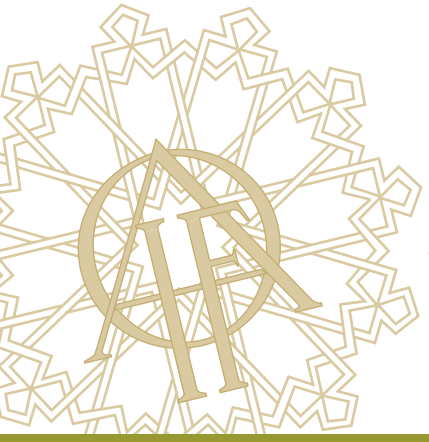
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KRISTOF D'HULSTER & JO VAN STEENBERGEN*

Family Matters

The "Family-In-Law Impulse" in Mamluk Marriage Policy**

RÉSUMÉ

Le débat qui divise les chercheurs sur la question du mode de succession au sein du sultanat mamelouk d'Égypte et de Syrie (1250-1517) est ancien et très controversé. Le présent article entend y contribuer en proposant une nouvelle perspective, celle de "l'appel à la belle-famille". En étudiant empiriquement la politique de mariage menée entre 784/1382 et 872/1467 par les sultans mamelouks (de Barqūq à Ḫušqadam) – avec qui se mariaient-ils ? –, l'enquête suggère que bien que n'ayant aucun lien de parenté entre eux, ces sultans étaient néanmoins liés par le mariage. L'article entreprend ensuite d'interpréter cette observation, en analysant les significations possibles de ces liens de mariage. L'argument qui prime est que ces liens matrimoniaux représentent une des nombreuses stratégies visant à la reproduction sociale : en épousant une personne issue de la famille de leur prédécesseur, les nouveaux sultans, entre 1382 et 1467, épousaient en fait un capital symbolique. Ils établissaient de la sorte un lien et une parenté de belle-famille avec leur prédecesseur. En reconstituant ainsi le rôle des femmes mameloukes et

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des liens matrimoniaux au sein du processus de succession, deux des paradigmes dominants au sein des études mameloukes sont remis en question: la division de l'espace politique selon le sexe et le fondement servile de l'État mamelouk.

Mots-clés : Femmes mameloukes et capacité d'action politique – sultans circassiens – stratégies matrimoniales – mode de succession sultanienne – Impulsion dynastique, de famille étendue et de belle-famille – division de l'espace selon le sexe – fondement servile de l'État mamelouk

✦ **ABSTRACT**

The academic debate on the ideas and practices that organized succession to the sultanate of Mamluk Egypt and Syria (1250-1517) is long-standing and vexed. This article adds to this debate by bringing in a novel perspective: the "Family-In-Law Impulse." First, an empirical identification of whom Mamluk sultans between Barqūq (784 AH/1382 CE) and Ḫušqadam (872 AH/1467 CE) married is presented, suggesting that many of these unrelated sultans were connected nonetheless through marriage. The hermeneutics of this observation are then dealt with, by reviewing the possibilities of what these marital ties might mean. It is argued that they reflect one of many strategies aiming at social reproduction: by marrying into their predecessor's family, new sultans between 1382 and 1467 married into symbolic capital first and foremost, thus obtaining an "in-law tie" and "in-law pedigree" to a predecessor. By thus reconsidering the role of Mamluk ladies and of marital ties within the Mamluk mode of succession, two dominant paradigms of Mamluk studies are simultaneously challenged: gendered political space and the Mamluk slave state.

Keywords: Mamluk women and political agency – Circassian sultans – marriage strategies – mode of sultanic succession – Dynastic, Extended Family and Family-In-Law Impulse – public/male and private/female gendered space – Mamluk slave state

* * *

Fully in line with the well-known *ḥadīṯ*, *Lan yufliḥa qawmun wallaw amrahum imra'atan*, "Those who entrust power to a woman will never enjoy prosperity"[1], Mamluk society of late medieval Egypt and Syria (1250-1517) was a gendered society, the public and "visible" sphere being dominated by the male element, and the female element being secluded inside

1. For references to the hadith collections, see Wensinck, *A Handbook of Early Muhammad Tradition*, p. 255, sub "Woman, Women". This *ḥadīt* is often quoted, see, e.g., Abbot, "Women and the State in Early Islam", p. 120; Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite*, p. 49-61; Spellberg, *Politics, Gender, and the Islamic Past*, p. 138-140 (superbly reviewed, together with two other works on medieval Islamic women, in Meisami, "Writing Medieval Women," p. 55-56); and Jawad, *The Rights of Women in Islam*, p. 88-96.

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the private and "invisible" sphere.[2] M. Chapoutot-Remadi rightly observed, however, that "il y a en effet un discours idéologique qui propose, et une société qui dispose":[3] this gendered division of space and power, and the patriarchalism linked to it were ideal states, rather than social realities. Neither in Mamluk society itself, nor in the sources that have come down to us, were women as "invisible" as this *ḥadīṯ* might suggest.[4] However low their visibility may have been in society, and however androcentric the sources may appear, we do find glimpses of Mamluk women. Indeed, ever since A. ʿAbd al-Rāziq's seminal work on Mamluk women, *La femme au temps des Mamlouks en Égypte*,[5] scholars have made great progress in making Mamluk women as "visible" as the sources allow them to.

Yet, this progress notwithstanding, the paradigm of "rigidly separate public/male and private/female spheres"[6] still looms large. In this article, we wish to add more color and texture to our evolving picture of Mamluk women and to further challenge this gender paradigm. We will call attention to matrimonial ties as an aid to socio-political (re)production, by rethinking women as custodians and transmitters of capital that was valued in the male public sphere, and, hence, as politically valuable.

Mamluk Women, Mamluk Paradigms and Bourdieusian Capital

A most suitable lens through which to look at Mamluk women we have found in the various *forms of capital*, as conceptualized by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.[7] In Bourdieu's terms, the concept of capital extends far beyond its usual economic meaning, to include all forms of power, whether material, cultural, social or symbolic. Thus broadly defined, capital is any valued resource that functions as a "social relation of power", that becomes the object of struggle, and that one can turn to in order to maintain and enhance one's position in the social order. While such resources can be embodied in a wide variety of forms, including religious and statist capital, most often, four generic types are considered:

2. For the dyadic public/private distinction in general, see Weintraub, "The theory and politics of the public/private distinction." More in particular, see Denoix, "Les notions de 'privé' et de 'public' dans le monde musulman sunnite médiéval."

3. Chapoutot-Remadi, "Femmes dans la ville mamluke," p. 164. For the discrepancy between the theoretical and actual restrictions on women, and the question of whether so-called "descriptive" sources may have a normative inkling, see also Lufti, "Manners and Customs of Fourteenth-Century Cairene Women"; and Booth (ed.), *Harem Histories. Envisioning Places and Living Spaces* ("I. Normative Images and Shifting Spaces," p. 21-84).

4. See Hambly, "Becoming Visible: Medieval Islamic Women in Historiography and History." Other introductions are provided by Keddie, "Problems in the Study of Middle Eastern Women"; *id.*, "Introduction: Deciphering Middle Eastern Women's History"; *id.*, *Women in the Middle East: Past and Present*; and Fay, "Methodologies, Paradigms and Sources for Studying Women and Islamic Cultures."

5. ʿAbd ar-Rāziq, *La femme*. Even though outdated, this is still a useful collation of many sources.

6. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem*, p. 149.

7. Swartz, *Culture & Power*, p. 73-74. The basic ideas were developed by Bourdieu in his "Ökonomisches Kapital, kulturelles Kapital, soziales Kapital". For his importance for gender studies, see, e.g., Adkins and Skeggs, *Feminism After Bourdieu*.

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– *Economic capital* (money and property);
– *Cultural capital* (educational credentials, training, literacy, savoir-vivre);
– *Social capital* (membership in a network of varying relationships);
– *Symbolic capital* (any form of power not perceived as such but as legitimate demands for recognition, obedience, or the service of others: philanthropy, charisma, pedigree, etc.).

What makes this conceptualization of capital such a powerful tool is the fact that it allows us to consider different assets (as widely diverging as patron-client ties, charisma, charity and language skills) simultaneously and as equal means of power resources to be obtained, protected, lost or passed on. Apart from being equally important, these forms of capital are moreover mutually convertible: just as the symbolic capital of charisma can be converted into social capital, as it allows for the construction of a large network, so can the cultural capital of a good education be cashed in as economic capital, as it leads to a well-paid job.

When reviewing past studies on Mamluk women[8] from the perspective of Bourdieusian capital, it appears that mostly aspects of their cultural and economic capital have been dealt with. Women's education, their role in the transfer of *ḥadīṯ*, their founding or supervising of *waqf*-s and their trousseaus are discussed, —often in confrontation with the patriarchal ideal—, by scholars such as Berkey, Petry, and Rapoport.[9] In terms of symbolic and especially social capital, Mamluk women seem to have fared considerably less well, with only a handful of relevant publications, such as those by Behrens-Abouseif, Johnson and Staffa.[10] One issue that is conspicuously absent from the studies referred to above, however, is politics. While Mamluk women are increasingly recognized as stake-holders to various forms of capital, next to men, we rarely meet any women who by virtue of any type of such capital are considered to be *a factor in the political power process*. If their political role is referred to in the secondary literature, this happens mostly as an afterthought or between the lines.[11] In this, these studies are obviously informed by the primary sources at our disposal. Apart from the unique *sulṭān(a)*

8. While a general introduction into the subject is provided by Kortantamer, "Woman in Mamluk Society," an excellent survey is given by Rapoport, "Women and Gender," including valuable work by M. Shatzmiller, A. Sayeed, A. Layish, H. Kilpatrick, etc. See also Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, p. 104-120 (reviewed in Meisami, "Writing Medieval Women").

9. Berkey, "Women and Islamic Education in the Mamluk Period"; Petry, "A Paradox of Patronage"; *id.*, "Class Solidarity Versus Gender Gain"; *id.*, "Conjugal Rights Versus Class Prerogatives"; *id.*, "The Estate of al-Khuwand Fāṭima al-Khāṣṣbakiyya"; Rapoport, "Divorce and the Elite Household"; *id.*, *Marriage, Money and Divorce in Medieval Islamic Society*; *id.*, "Women and Gender."

10. Behrens-Abouseif, "The *Maḥmal* Legend and the Pilgrimage of the Ladies of the Mamluk Court"; Johnson, "Royal Pilgrims: Mamluk Accounts of the Pilgrimage to Mecca of the Khawand al-Kubra"; Staffa, "Dimensions of Women's Power." The former two focus on symbolic capital (their seclusion as proof of the sultan's patriarchal authority, their richly furbished pilgrimage as a token of the household's economic capital; their performance of the Hadj as a Hadj-by-proxy for the sultan, thus adding to the sultan's (religious) symbolic capital.

11. Petry, "Class Solidarity Versus Gender Gain," p. 123-125; *id.*, "A Paradox of Patronage," esp. n. 39 and 43; Rapoport, "Divorce and the Elite Household", p. 211-212; and *id.*, "Women and Gender," p. 45 ("the gendered spheres of women were complementary, rather than subordinate, to those of men. This was true in most

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Šaǧar al-Durr (r. 1250), widow of the Ayyubid sultan al-Ṣālih Ayyūb, Mamluk primary sources do not hint at women of political power, whether in- or outside the mainstream of formalized power. Hence, while the gender paradigm is increasingly reviewed in terms of capital, its revision in terms of political power remains largely wanting.[12]

One of the main reasons for this perseverance surely is the long-standing monopolization of the study of Mamluk politics by the equally androcentric notion of the Mamluk sultanate as a self-conscious and continuous (male) slave state, "a *Colluvies* of slaves, the scum of all the East, who, having treacherously destroyed the Jobidae, their Masters, reigned in their stead"—to quote from the more cartoonesque representation of Reverend Humphrey Prideaux (1722).[13] This resilient paradigm has been and remains rooted in the undeniable reality of the discontinuous transitions of rule that characterized much of the pedigree of Mamluk sultans between 1250 and 1517. The succession of the eighteen sultans between Barqūq's accession in 1382 and Ḫušqadam's demise in 1467 in particular does not reveal any consanguineous continuity: apart from six short and unsuccessful "father-to-son" sultanic successions, the sultanate is passed on from one former military slave (*mamlūk*) to another, without any blood tie connecting them. The normative nature of the Mamluk slave state is then commonly offered as the rationale behind such a discontinuous mode of succession, and this is explained by the idea of a continuous priority in the Mamluk socio-political space of bonds of solidarity inculcated through (exclusively male) military slavery and of anti-dynastic and one-generational attitudes. *Mamlūk*-s were imported from their homeland, purchased by their *ustāḏ*, trained, subsequently manumitted and then enrolled into the Mamluk establishment; as a rule (called "Joseph's Law" by contemporary observers), the *mamlūk*-s' sons or *awlād al-nās* were systematically excluded from office, so that time and again new generations of *mamlūk*-s needed to be imported in order to fill all the ranks. Being commonly imported and traded individually, *mamlūk*-s were moreover thought to have substituted whatever blood relatives they had left behind in their homeland with artificial relatives in their new home: their *ustāḏ* or manumitting master, their fellow-slaves or *ḫušdāšiyya*, etc. Translated to the Mamluk mode of succession, this meant that sultans' sons were "as a rule" cut off from office: their sultanates were transitional and "abnormal" periods only, during which the battle for the "normal" sultanate was fought among all those worthy of that title, i.e., *mamlūk*-s, who were related not by blood, but by *mamlūk* ties at most. *Mamlūk*-dom being a prerequisite for the sultanate, there *could be no* dynasty, and there *could only be* sultanic succession without consanguineous continuity.

political, economic, and social aspects of public life"). Notable exceptions are ʿAbd ar-Rāziq, *La femme*, p. 27-33; Staffa, "Dimensions of Women's Power"; and Koby, "Ethnic Groups, Social Relationships and Dynasty."

12. Cf. Pierce, *The Imperial Harem*, p. 149: "Only when the paradigm of rigidly separate public/male and private/female spheres is discarded can we begin to appreciate the ways in which the structure of the Ottoman ruling class enabled women to participate in the political life of the empire. Conversely, by understanding how women were able to acquire and exercise power, we obtain a clearer picture of the structure of Ottoman politics and society in the early modern period."

13. Anon., *The Life of Reverend Humphrey Prideaux, D.D., Dean of Norwich*, London 1748, p. 268-269; quoted from Holt, "The Position and Power of the Mamluk Sultan," p. 237.

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Just as the paradigm of gendered space has long bedazzled us, blinding us to the role that women actually played, we might wonder whether explanations emphasizing the historical and anthropological exceptionalism of an exclusive Mamluk "slave state" might not also be blinding us, this time from seeing trans-generational continuity (as only one-generationality is expected) and relevant blood ties (as only artificial ties are expected to be relevant). Fortunately, scholars such as A. Broadbridge, U. Haarmann, Y. Koby, A. Levanoni and J. Loiseau[14] increasingly question the validity of such explanations. Of all these challenges, the one posed by Broadbridge is especially relevant here.[15] She in fact identified two "impulses" that go diametrically against any exclusive "slave state" notion:

– The "Dynastic Impulse"[16]: against the apparent one-generational attitudes, Broadbrige—amongst others—argues that sultans indeed aimed at founding a dynasty, by putting their son on the throne. Instead of a succession of non-related "normal" *mamlūk* sultans, separated from one another by "abnormal", transitional and typically short reigns of non-*mamlūk* sultans' sons, she sees a succession of short-lived nascent dynasties, which, time and again, were aborted prematurely at the onset of the second generation, by non-relative *mamlūk*-s, who then founded a dynasty themselves.

– "Extended Family Impulse": rather than *mamlūk*-s being reprogrammed as to make tabula rasa with whatever blood ties they had, it appears that certain high-profile *mamlūk*-s were less forgetful regarding their relatives than commonly assumed; indeed, quite some of them made conscious efforts to have these come over to the Mamluk domains.[17]

Not coincidentally, a prime example for Broadbridge's "Dynastic Impulse" and "Extended Family Impulse" is to be found in the person of sultan al-Ẓāhir Barqūq. It was he who ended the Qalāwūnid dynasty, and we have many reasons to believe that he consciously sought to reproduce socially, that is, to found his own, Barqūqid, dynasty. After all, by importing relatives and appointing them to offices, he greatly boosted his Bourdieusian social and symbolic capital. He thus provided his reign and that of his offspring with the much more solid and diversified

14. Broadbridge, "Sending Home for Mom and Dad"; Haarmann, "The Sons of Mamluks as Fief-Holders in Late Medieval Egypt"; *id.*, "Joseph's Law"; Koby, "Ethnic Groups, Social Relationships and Dynasty"; *id.*, "Mamluks and Their Relatives"; Levanoni, "The Sultan's *laqab*"; Loiseau, *Reconstruire la Maison du sultan*, p. 197-199. For the 14th century, see Van Steenbergen, *Order Out of Chaos*, p. 76-94, esp. p. 82-85, and *id.*, "Mamluk Elite on the Eve of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's Death."

15. As Koby "Ethnic Groups, Social Relationships and Dynasty" is in Hebrew and remains unpublished, we have been able to consult only its four-page English summary, which proves very relevant: "(…) blood ties, marital ties and ethnic solidarity were more important than it is commonly believed (…) Blood and marital ties had great importance in transferring status, privileges and property." The English summary available online (see bibliography) and Koby, "Mamluks and their relatives," appeared only after finishing this article.

16. Called the "Dynastic Reflex" by Van Steenbergen, "'Is anyone my guardian…?'"; Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology*; and Bauden, "The Sons of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and the Politics of Puppets."

17. See Ayalon, "The Circassians in the Mamlūk Kingdom," p. 144 ("One of the most characteristic features of the Circassian period is the practice of the sultans and *amīr*-s to bring over their relatives from their country of origin in numbers unprecedented in the earlier period."); Broadbridge, "Sending Home for Mom and Dad"; Levanoni, "The Sultan's *laqab*", p. 104, n. 122; and Loiseau, *Reconstruire la Maison du sultan*, p. 198-199.

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basis of a founder backed by at least seven relatives, father included. No longer a "nobody's son" (*ibn ʿAbd Allāh*)[18], as were other contestants for the throne, Barqūq was "somebody's son", he was the son of Anaṣ (*ibn Anaṣ*). Indeed, this pedigree must have mattered, for it was carried down for many generations to come. In their obituaries, e.g., two of Barqūq's grandsons were referred to as *al-maqām al-Ġarsī Ḫalīl b. al-sulṭān al-malik al-Nāṣir Faraǧ b. al-sulṭān al-Ẓāhir Barqūq b. amīr Anaṣ*, and *amīr Zayn al-Dīn Faraǧ b. al-sulṭān al-malik al-Nāṣir Faraǧ b. al-sulṭān al-malik al-Ẓāhir Barqūq b. al-amīr Anaṣ*[19].

Mamluk Ladies, Politics and the Sultans' Marriage Policies

The relevant question for this article on Mamluk women and political power now is whether this surprisingly complex Mamluk socio-political space, unlike that of the Mongols, the Timurids, the Ottomans and the Mughals[20], truly was that gendered: was it the exclusive domain of men, whether they were former slaves or not? Or could the political role of women have been downplayed in the primary sources by their androcentric/misogynistic authors?[21] Of those hundreds of women we come across in the primary sources, an obvious choice now is to zoom in onto those who were closest to the sultans as foci of political power, either through blood, marital or slavery ties: Mamluk ladies (by which is meant here: daughters, sisters, mothers, and wives of sultans). As a way to retrieve their political power, we will try to validate the various forms of capital held by them within the specific context of the sultans' marriage policy and ask whether this capital yielded any political agency to anyone. While, admittedly, such an approach may come somewhat as a surprise, as it entails a fairly instrumental approach to women, the rationale behind it follows from the two organizing questions that will be answered in the remainder of this article:

– The basic question is a straightforward and empirical one: whom did the sultans marry, and to whom did they marry off their sons and daughters?[22]

18. This somewhat flippant translation of *Ibn ʿAbd Allāh* is not to imply that this *nasab* carried no meaning whatsoever or that it was disparaging in any way. By hinting at the common—but questionable—assumption that a *mamlūk*'s pedigree was considered irrelevant and/or unknown, what this translation implies is the fact that this *nasab*, while indeed a marker of identity, could hardly be considered a truly individualizing one.
19. Ibn Taġrībirdī, *Nuǧūm* 7, p. 457, 574.
20. See the references in Balabanlilar, "The Begims of the Mystic Feast"; Brack, "A Mongol Princess Making *hajj*", esp. p. 334-335; Gabbay, "In Reality a Man"; Togan, "Turkic Dynasties: 9th to 15th Century"; *id.*, "Islam: Early Expansion and Women. Central Asia and Eurasia"; and Ansari, "Islam: Early Expansion and Women. Iran to South Asia."
21. See Spellberg, "Niẓām al-Mulk's Manipulation of Tradition." Most relevant is A. Afsaruddin's comparison of some entries relating to female Companions of the Prophet as found in the biographical dictionaries of Ibn Saʿd (9th cent.) and Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī (15th cent.), which reveals an increased anxiety about female conduct in the public sphere (Afsaruddin, "Methodologies, Paradigms and Sources for Studying Women and Islamic Cultures"; *id.*, "Early Women Exemplars and the Construction of Gendered Space," esp. p. 32-43).
22. Various aspects of the Mamluk marriage are dealt with in ʿAbd ar-Rāziq, *La femme*, p. 123-174.

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– The second question is more challenging, from an epistemological and a hermeneutical point of view[23]: through these marriages, what did they "marry into"[24] in terms of Bourdieusian capital? Did they first and foremost marry into money, thus extending their own economic capital? Or did the spouse's network (social capital) or lineage (symbolic capital) perhaps matter most?

For the time being, we hope to answer these questions for the eighty odd years stretching between 1382 to 1461, starting with the end of the Qalāwūnīd dynasty and the first sultan of the Circassian Mamluks, al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (r. 1382-1399), up to al-Malik al-Ẓāhir Ḫušqadam (r. 1461-1467), who was then followed by the better-studied al-Ašraf Qāytbāy. Many of their marital ties have been mapped already, and their importance long acknowledged:

– Intra-household marriages: *Mamlūk*-s married either an *umm walad* of their own, one of their *ustāḏ*'s (in order to recuperate some of the latter's capital following his death), or one of the latter's daughters (in order to cement the household's internal cohesion)[25];

– Extra-household marriages: they married into other Mamluk households,[26] into families that dominated the administrative apparatus (such as the families of Kātib al-Ǧakam and al-Kuwayz)[27], or into foreign dynasties (such as the Ottoman princess Šāhzādah).

Of all these marriages, one group stands out as particularly relevant (and so far unnoticed) for the purpose of this article: ladies linked via ties that include marriage to two or more different sultans, who are otherwise unrelated by blood, marriage or patronage. As appears from the sources, such a "marriage-plus link" did not go unnoticed. For example, it is explicitly stated that, by marrying Zaynab, daughter of al-Ẓāhir Barqūq and sister of al-Nāṣir Faraǧ, al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ made her "a sultan's daughter, a sultan's sister, and a sultan's wife" (*ibnat sulṭān wa-uḫt sulṭān wa-zawǧ sulṭān*)[28]. When he married off his son, Sīdī Ibrāhīm, to Satīta, sultan Šayḫ organized a huge feast "because he had married (*bi-sabab tazawwuǧihi*) the daughter of sultan al-Nāṣir (Faraǧ)."[29] Further limiting our present scope of inquiry, we will deal with precisely those ladies who display such a "marriage-plus link".

23. Rather than being dictated by love or romance, marriages entailed transaction of the utmost importance: "The union of two properties, the joining of two households, the creation of a web of affinal relations, the perpetuation of a family's symbolic patrimony – its name and reputation" (Gutiérrez, "Honor Ideology, Marriage Negotiation, and Class Gender Domination," p. 86). In order to limit the inherent risks and making it as profitable as possible, marriages were subjected to a carefully wrought marriage policy, with the future spouse being carefully screened in terms of the capital that he/she would bring into the family.

24. French "faire le gendre", Arabic "tazawwuǧ fī" (see, e.g., al-Sahāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmiʿ* 11, p. 195, *sub* al-Ǧamālī: *Ǧamāl al-Dīn al-Ustādār Aḥmad b. Muḥammad mutazawwiǧ fī bayt Banī al-Ǧīʿān*).

25. See, e.g. *La Femme* 151; *Ḍaw'* 414, 89/622, and 1069. For sake of convenience, in the following, women are referred to by their respective entry number (not by page number!) in ʿAbd al-Rāziq, *La femme*, p. 269-302; and al-Sahāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmiʿ* 12: *Kitāb al-Nisā'*.

26. See, e.g., *Daw'* 192: Ḫadīǧa, a wife of al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ, who was bequeathed by him (*waraṯahā zawǧuhā*) following his death to the *amīr šikār*, Urkmās al-Ǧāmūs.

27. See, e.g., Martel-Thoumian, *Les civils et l'administration*, p. 365-372.

28. *Ḍaw'* 234.

29. *Ḍaw'* 1029.

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Whom Did the Sultans Marry?

As demonstrated above, two dominant paradigms of Mamluk studies and the challenges posed to these by recent scholarship have informed our decision to question the political agency of Mamluk ladies, and to zoom in onto those ladies who display a "marriage-plus link". Before dealing with the hermeneutics of the relevant marriages and returning to the issue of women's political power, we start with our first, empirical question: who are these "marriage-plus" ladies, i.e., those ladies who are linked to two unrelated sultans, either by a (marriage + marriage tie), by a (blood + marriage tie) or by a (patronage + marriage tie). Having culled the sources, we have retrieved the following ten ladies:[30]

Name	Relations	Sources
Hāğar bt. Manklī Buġā al-Šamsī (d. 1430)	Granddaughter of al-Ašraf Šaʿbān, wife of al-Ẓāhir Barqūq	*La femme* 96, *Ḍaw'* 808
Zaynab bt. al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (d. 1423)	Daughter of al-Ẓāhir Barqūq, wife of al-Muʾayyad Šayh	*La femme* 188, *Ḍaw'* 234
Satīta bt. al-Nāṣir Faraǧ b. Barqūq (d. 1416)	Daughter of al-Nāṣir Faraǧ, wife of Ibrāhīm b. al-Muʾayyad Šayh (married 5/10/1413)	*La femme* 152, *Ḍaw'* 1029
Saʿādat bt. Ṣirġitmiš (d. 1430)	Wife of al-Muʾayyad Šayh (married before 1419), mother of al-Muẓaffar Aḥmad, wife of al-Ẓāhir Ṭaṭar (married 4/8/1421)	*La femme* 131, *Ḍaw'* 376
Fāṭima bt. al-Ẓāhir Ṭaṭar (d. 1469-1470)	Daughter of al-Ẓāhir Ṭatar, wife of al-Ašraf Barsbāy (married after 2/12/1421)	*La femme* 53, *Ḍaw'* 572
Zaynab bt. Ğarbāš Qāšiq (d. 1459)	Relative of al-Ẓāhir Barqūq (great-granddaughter of Barqūq's sister) and granddaughter of Šukrbāy (wife of al-Ẓāhir Hušqadam), wife of al-Ẓāhir Ğaqmaq	*La femme* 189, *Ḍaw'* 237, 621, Ibn Taġrībirdī, *Ḥawādiṯ*, p. 154 (cf. *La femme* 51, *Ḍaw'* 621)
Šāhzādah bt. Ibn ʿUṯmān (d. 1455)	Wife of al-Ašraf Barsbāy (married between 1436 and 1438), wife of al-Ẓāhir Ğaqmaq (married between 1438 and 1451)	*La femme* 141, *Ḍaw'* 213
Hadīğa bt. Āqṭuwah	Relative of al-Ašraf Barsbāy (daughter of "someone who came together with" his relatives (*ğumlat aqārib*) from the Circassian domains), wife of Muḥammad b. Ğaqmaq	Ibn Taġrībirdī, *Manhal* 3, p. 5-6, 279-282
Bint Sulaymān bt. Dulġādir (d. 27/4/1460)	Wife of al-Ẓāhir Ğaqmaq (married after 6/8/1450), wife of al-Muʾayyad Aḥmad (married after 12/2/1453 before his sultanate)	*Ḍaw'* 1018, Ibn Taġrībirdī, *Ḥawādiṯ*, p. 85, 393
Šukrbāy al-Ğarkasiyya al-Nāṣiriyya al-Aḥmadiyya (d. 1466)	Manumitted slave girl of al-Nāṣir Faraǧ, wife of al-Ẓāhir Hušqadam (married before 1442-1443), grandmother of Zaynab (wife of Ğaqmaq)	*La femme* 150, *Ḍaw'* 417, 621

30. For all primary sources (except for al-Saḫāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmiʿ*, vol. 12: *Kitāb al-Nisā'*) the reader is referred to ʿAbd ar-Rāziq, *La femme*. References to other primary sources are given only when the woman is not recorded in *La Femme* or if especially relevant. For the importance of al-Saḫāwī's *Kitāb al-Nisā'*, see Lufti, "Al-Sakhāwī's *Kitāb al-Nisā*.'"

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While anecdotal references to these ladies are available in the sources, these are not brought in here, as our aim lies elsewhere: to position these ladies within the Mamluk mode of succession. When we thus reshuffle the empirical data, organizing it this time around the sultans rather than their ladies, and indicating their ties to their predecessors, a surprising and novel "Family-In-Law Impulse" reveals itself: sultans, if unrelated by blood to a previous sultan, often married the latter's daughter, widow or slave girl, thus rendering these into "marriage-plus" ladies.

Sultan	Blood ties?	Marital ties?
Barqūq	/	Married to Ḥāǧar, a granddaughter of al-Ašraf Šaʿbān
Faraǧ	Son	/
ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz	Brother	/
Šayh	/	Married to Zaynab, daughter of Barqūq and sister of Faraǧ and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz; married to Satīta, daughter of Faraǧ
Aḥmad	Son	/
Ṭaṭar	/	Married to Saʿādat, wife of Šayh and mother of Aḥmad
Muḥammad	Son	/
Barsbāy	/	Married to Fāṭima, daughter of Ṭaṭar and sister of Muḥammad
Yūsuf	Son	/
Ǧaqmaq	/	[Married to Šāhzādah, wife of sultan Barsbāy; married to Zaynab, a relative of Barqūq; married off his son Muḥammad to Ḫadīǧa, a relative of Barqūq
ʿUṯmān	Son	/
Īnāl	/	/
Aḥmad	Son	Married to Bint Sulaymān bt. Dulġādir, widow of Ǧaqmaq
Hušqadam	/	Married to Šukrbāy, manumitted slave girl of Faraǧ and grandmother of Zaynab, wife of Ǧaqmaq

The "Family-In-Law Impulse" clearly reveals itself from Barqūq up to Yūsuf b. Barsbāy: either of these sultans, if not the son of the previous one (except for ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, brother of Faraǧ), married into the latter's family. While the cases of Ǧaqmaq, Īnāl and Ḫušqadam seem to represent ruptures in this respect, these should not cause us too much concern. After all, the "Family-In-Law Impulse" is an "impulse" rather than a "rule". As such, it is much more capable of accommodating exceptions. Apart from this first observation, which will be taken up again in the conclusion, there is the fact that against their lack of "direct marital links" (i.e., to their immediate predecessor), "indirect links" and other "mitigating circumstances" can be called in:

– Perhaps in order to make up his lack of "direct tie" to his predecessor, al-ʿAzīz Yūsuf, Ǧaqmaq married Šāhzādah (a wife of Yūsuf's father, Barsbāy) and Zaynab bt. Ǧarbāš Qāšiq (a remote relative of Barqūq; yet, in spite of the remote relation, still buried in the latter's madrasa!). Moreover, he is said to have wanted to marry a daughter of al-Ẓāhir Ṭaṭar, who turned down the offer, and he married off one of his sons, al-Nāṣirī Muḥammad, to Ḫadīǧa bt. Āqṭuwah (a relative of Barsbāy).[31]

31. Petry, "Class Solidarity Versus Gender Gain," p. 131.

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– Al-Ašraf Īnāl had only one wife, Zaynab (d. 1479),[32] a Mamluk woman, yet unrelated to any previous sultan, whom he had married over thirty years before his sultanate, and who outlived him. Whether Zaynab, allegedly a strong-willed woman of great ambition, power and influence, was the reason for him not yielding into the "Family-In-Law Impulse", or whether this was due to the ongoing transformation of the royal household from a polygamous to a monogamous institution,[33] or to some other reason, we cannot tell. Significantly, and perhaps in order to make up for this lack of "direct tie", Īnāl married off his son, the future sultan al-Muʾayyad Aḥmad, to one of Ǧaqmaq's widows, Bint Sulaymān, already before Aḥmad's accession to the throne.

– Parallel to al-Ašraf Īnāl's matrimonial status, Ḫušqadam had only one wife for a long time, Šukrbāy al-Ǧarkasiyya, who was said to have been exceptionally strong-willed, and whom he had married already some twenty years before his sultanate. While she shows a weak link to al-Nāṣir Faraǧ, being a Nāṣiriyya Faraǧ manumitted slave girl, she offers no "direct link" to al-Ašraf Īnāl and son. It was only after Šukrbāy's death in 1466 that Ḫušqadam took another wife, this time one of his own slave girls, the *umm walad* Sūrbāy.[34] Having been sultan for five years already at this point, marrying "wisely", i.e., marrying into the family of the previous sultan, may well have become less urgent.

The visualization of the sultanic mode of succession in accordance with the prevalent paradigm, even while validating the "Dynastic Impulse" (table 1), reveals a strong discontinuity and can only be read as a succession of mutually unrelated stretches of father-son successions. Visualizing this succession while also validating the "Extended Family" and "Family-In-Law" impulses (table 2), however, yields a different picture and clearly reveals the significance of the "Family-In-Law Impulse".[35] Discontinuity is now substituted with continuity, cognatic rather than agnatic, and one that incorporates both biological and matrimonial ties, consanguine continuity and in-law continuity.

32. *La femme* 187, *Ḍaw'* 261.
33. Rapoport, "Women and Gender," p. 30-32.
34. *La femme* 165.
35. For sake of clarity, the interim reigns of Ḥaǧǧī (1389) and al-Mustaʿīn (1412) are left out, and the two reigns of Barqūq (1382-1389 and 1390-1399) and Faraǧ (1399-1405 and 1405-1412) are merged. The right column records the relation of a sultan to the immediately preceding one.

AnIsl 47 (2014), p. 61-82 Kristof D'hulster, Jo Van Steenbergn
Family Matters: The "Family-In-Law Impulse" in Mamluk Marriage Policy
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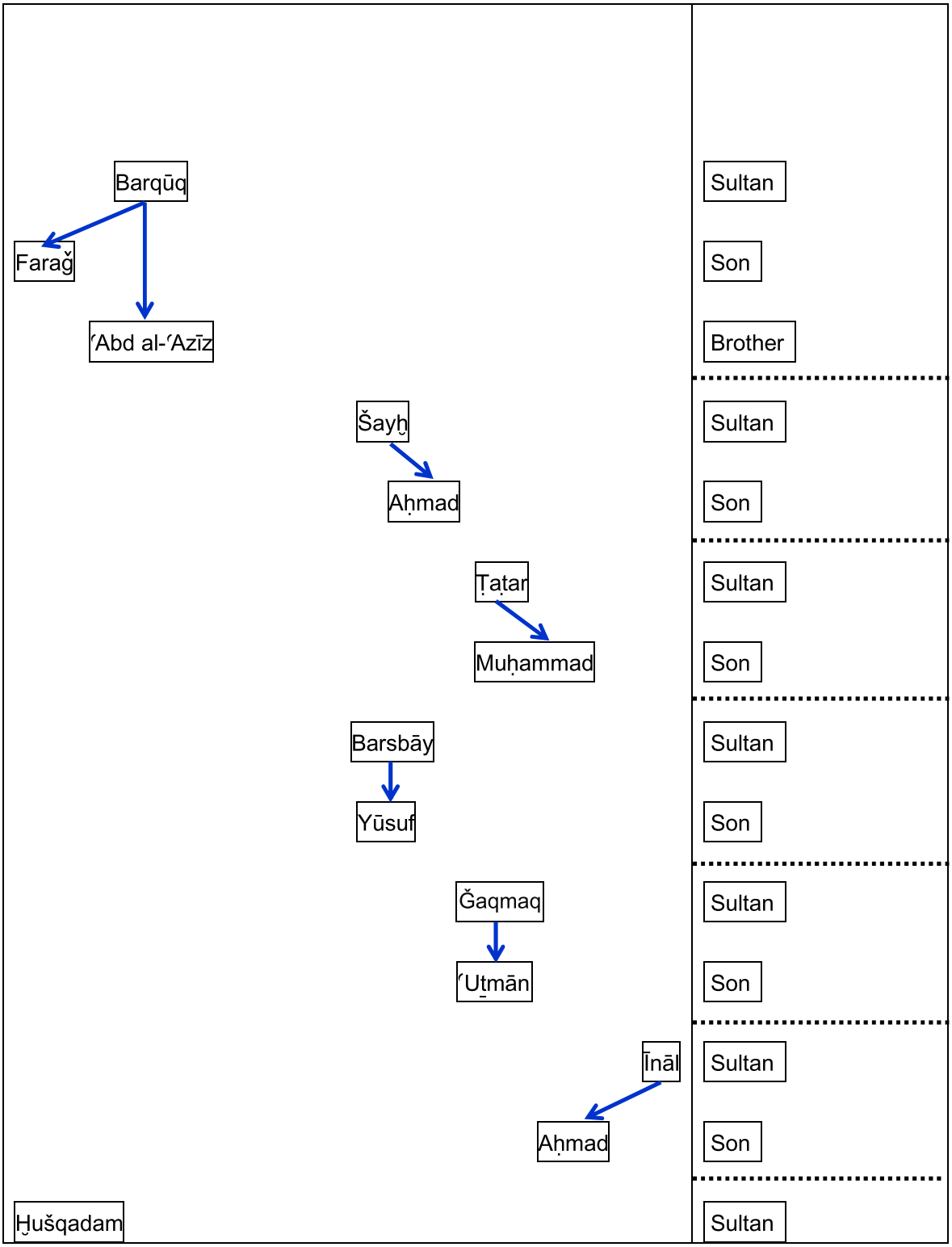


Table 1. The Mamluk mode of succession taking into account the Dynastic Impulse (⟶ parental tie).

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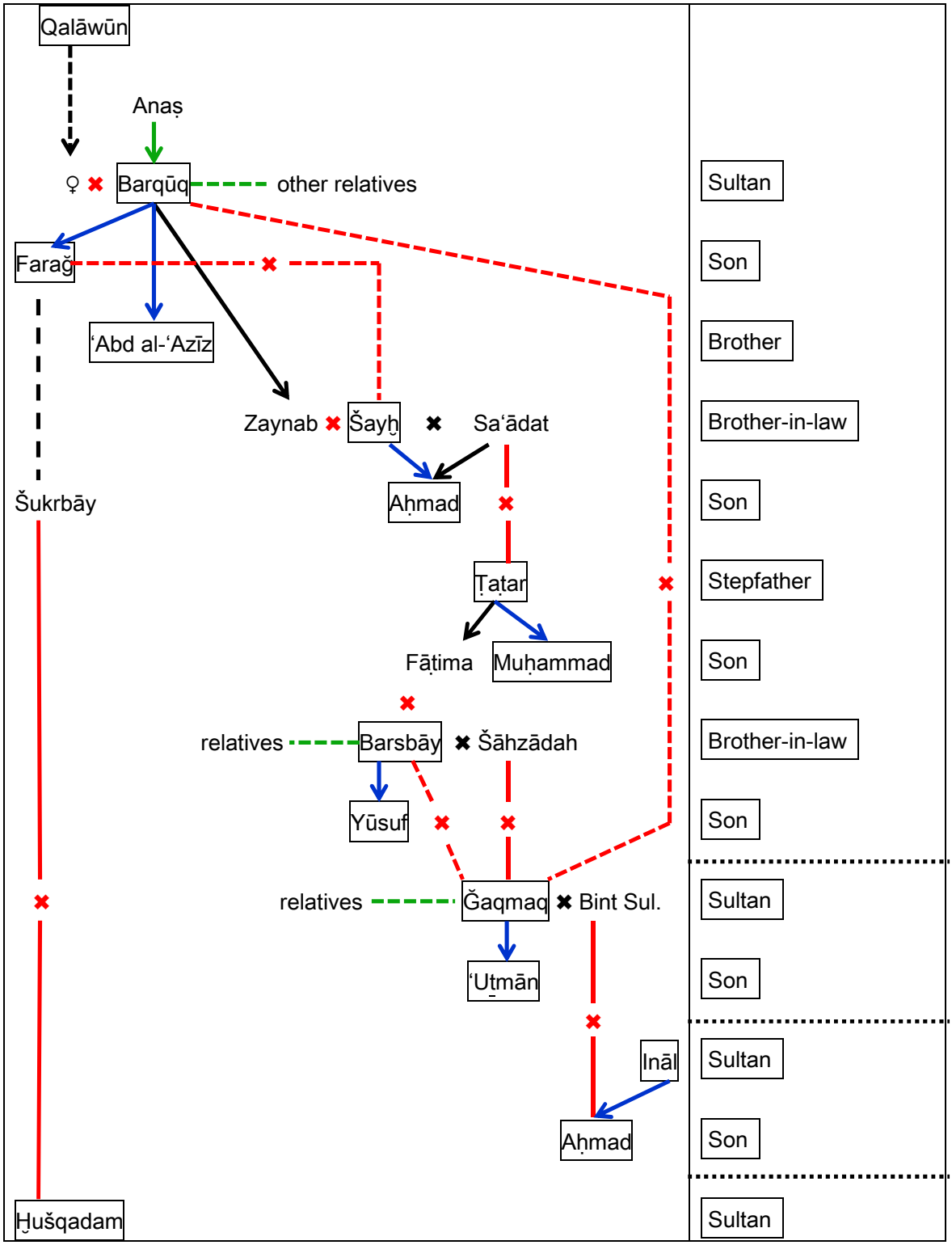


Table 2. The Mamluk mode of succession taking into account the Dynastic, Extended Family and Family-In-Law Impulse (✖ marriage, → parental tie, - - - indirect tie).

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What Did the Sultans Marry Into?

Until now, we have answered our first, empirical question, and have established the fact that sultans often were matrimonially linked to a previous sultan, a link we have labeled the "Family-In-Law Impulse". Having thus revealed a hitherto uncharted undercurrent of continuity, the question remains as to what was actually being passed on along this line. We now return to Bourdieu's "forms of capital"[36], in order to answer the second, hermeneutically more challenging question: what does all this mean? Said otherwise: by marrying these ladies, what did the sultans actually marry into? What kind of capital was it that made late sultans' widows, daughters or slave girls sought after by later sultans?

– Economic capital: As argued by Rapoport, Mamluk women were financially independent. The often considerable dowry (mostly strongly gendered capital) they received from their parents at marriage was theirs and theirs alone. Exceptions notwithstanding, it appears that the ladies' financial resources could not be appropriated by their husband-sultans. Another argument in favor of assuming economic capital was not a significant motive is the fact that means other than marriage were available to the sultan to appropriate the economic capital of the widow of a late sultan: downright expropriation. Ḫušqadam, e.g., appropriated the great fortune of al-Ašraf Īnāl's widow, Zaynab, after her husband's demise not through marriage but by "oppressing her ceaselessly", thus "taking all her wealth".[37] Finally, social sciences teach us that the divorce rate is inversely proportional to partners' economic interdependence.[38] The increased divorce rate of fifteenth-century Mamluk society could indicate that divorce was not a costly affair, and, hence, that the individual's property remained his or her own. While the possibility of economic capital playing its role cannot be ruled out, and evidence in favor of this can indeed be called to the front,[39] it appears rather unlikely for this to have been the major rationale behind the sultan's "Family-In-Law Impulse".

– Social capital: Rather than money, did the sultans perhaps marry into their spouse's social capital? By marrying her, could a sultan perhaps directly link up her network to his, and thus indirectly recuperate whatever that was left of the network of her late father, husband or master? This is not unlikely, as the importance of social capital in the run for the sultanate can hardly be overestimated, especially when dynastic legitimation was lacking. Regarding the Mamluk ladies' counterparts in early Ottoman Egypt, Hathaway concluded that these acted as custodians to their husband's social capital: following the *ustāḏ*'s demise, his widow anchored the household as a family matriarch and stopped it from disintegrating. As such, she was the key par excellence for any other Mamluk to the household of the late *ustāḏ*.[40] As a consequence, networks in Ottoman

36. Assuming cultural capital to have played no significant role in this respect, this is not discussed here.
37. See Ibn Taġrībirdī, *Ḥawādiṯ*, p. 407; and Petry, "Class Solidarity versus Gender Gain," p. 126-129.
38. Gathorne-Hardy, *Love, Sex, Marriage and Divorce*, p. 176.
39. See, e.g., the case of Ibnat Sīdī (*Ḍaw'* 1019), a widow with such fortunes that "more than one" tried his luck at her (*wa-lahā ṯarwa zā'ida wa-ǧihāt mawqūfa ʿalayhā bi-ḥayṯu raġiba ġayr wāḥid fī al-ittiṣāl bihā*).
40. Hathaway, "Marriage Alliances"; *id.*, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt*, p. 109-124. See also Staffa, "Dimensions of Women's Power", p. 78-83; Ayalon, "Studies in al-Jabartī I", esp. p. 288-299. Fay ("Women

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Egypt were much less prone to the one-generational cyclicalism of Mamluk Egypt, instead being transferred over several generations, with ladies being an important channel of transfer in this respect. As Fay has it, "Far from being irrelevant or peripheral members of the neo-Mamluk households of Ottoman Egypt, women were crucial to its maintenance and reproduction because they added important elements of cohesion, stability, and continuity to an inherently unstable system."[41] However, social capital in Mamluk times appears to have been much more gendered than it was in Ottoman Egypt. Of course, Mamluk ladies held social capital, that of the *ḫawand al-kubrā* often comprising several hundreds of slaves and eunuchs and extending far in society through *iḫtiṣāṣ* and other connections.[42] Yet, the sources do not portray them as custodians to the social capital of their late fathers, husbands or masters. Concluding, whereas Ottoman Mamluk ladies come to the fore as true *matres familias*, it remains doubtful whether Mamluk ladies equally functioned as "mothers" to their husbands' extended households, and, consequently, as readily available keys to these.

– Symbolic capital: There is good reason to believe that the sultans married these women first and foremost, not because of the money or clients that came with them, but simply because "they were who they were": daughters, widows, or sisters of the late sultan. Whereas the late sultan's citadel was automatically turned into the residence of the new one, as "institutionalized booty," his women might have been considered as "un-institutionalized booty". Yet, these women were more than trophies to a triumphant victor. After all, one of the Mamluk sultans' weak spots, both on the international theatre and vis-à-vis the home audience, was their lack of pedigree. In a world where *nasab* mattered a great deal,[43] being a "nobody's son" (*ibn ʿAbd Allāh*) was a symbolic deficit indeed, and one way to make up for this lack of pedigree was to marry into one. When the Mamluk sultan thus married a widow or a daughter of the late sultan, he gained both

and Waqf"), observing the fact that "(women) have also been seen as inconsequential and irrelevant to the reproduction of a system, the Mamluk or neo-Mamluk, heretofore depicted as entirely male" (p. 33), highlights the role played by the women in contributing to the cohesion of the Neo-Mamluk household, its stability and continuity, by transmitting property and political legitimacy: "Real and fictive kinship ties interlocked within the household, acting as a cohesive force to counterbalance the tendency toward fragmentation. What has been overlooked in the past is the role that women played in creating and strengthening the ties of kinship and legitimizing the victors in the struggles for power" (p. 45).

41. Fay, "Women and waqf," p. 34.

42. For female networking, see, e.g., Ḫadīǧa bt. Amīr Ḫāǧǧ (*Ḍaw'* 144), who is said to have had great *iḫtiṣāṣ* with al-Ašraf Īnāl's *ḫawand al-kubrā*, and who was sought for by the people to intercede on their behalf with her son and others (*wa-ntafaʿa al-nās bi-šafāʿatihā wa-sifāratihā ʿindahu wa-ʿinda ġayrihi*); and ʿĀ'iša bt. Ğānbirdī (*Ḍaw'* 464), said to have had "connections with the princesses and others" (*lahā ittiṣāl bi-l-ḫawandāt wa-ġayrihinna*). For Ottoman Egypt, see Fay, "Women and Waqf," p. 47 ("Women used their former slaves to expand their influence and power (…). Women were active in constructing patronage networks of their own by placing their freed slaves in the households of the Mamluk elite and arranging their marriages. As a patroness, a woman would have a continuing claim to the loyalty of her former slaves and an independent source of information and influence").

43. Hence the importance of bibliographical dictionaries and their strong attention to lineages. For an approach of these and other types of sources as documents that provide proof of someone's identity, see Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, p. 17, 156-159 ("biographical collections were designed as a record of a person's status in the city"); and Berkey "Al-Subkī and his Women."

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a pedigree, albeit only an in-law pedigree, and a tie to the late sultan, albeit only an in-law tie,[44] and thus boosted his legitimacy and provided the discontinuous line of succession with some continuity. Indeed, Al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ remained a "nobody's son" throughout his life, yet he was more: by marrying Zaynab bt. Barqūq, he was a son-in-law of Barqūq, and a brother-in-law of the two previous sultans, Faraǧ and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz. An observation that tallies neatly with our assumption that symbolic capital mattered most, is the fact that, apart from Aḥmad b. Īnāl, no other sultan-son married into the family of his father's predecessor. As these were "somebody's sons", already, we could assume "profitable" marital ties to have mattered less for them.[45]

We have apparently answered the second, hermeneutical question in general terms only, as the primary sources do little more than record the actual marital ties and mostly remain mute on the rationale behind these and on the boost these gave to the new sultans.[46] If the sources had provided more circumstantial detail, we might have been able to move beyond the sweeping categorization of "Family-In-Law Impulse" and to discern more specifically the complexity of the forms of capitals playing. Specifics that might have allowed us to do so would include the date of marriage (pre- or post-accession to the throne)[47], as well as the status of the woman involved

44. Apart from the short reference to the importance of in-laws in Ayalon, "The Circassians in the Mamlūk Kingdom," p. 144 ("Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to call the second half of the Circassian period 'the period of rule by brothers-in-law and relatives,'" quoted in Loiseau, *Reconstruire la Maison du sultan*, p. 199), Koby appears to be the only scholar to date who has drawn significant attention to the category of in-laws in his PhD ("Ethnic Groups, Social Relationships and Dynasty"): "In this period, the status of female members of the sultan's family devolved to those emirs who married them, and who were often buried in the mausoleums of the sultans, together with their sons. It is also common to find in sources from the Circassian period references to the sons of emirs who married daughters of sultans as descendants in a cognate line of the sultan (*asbāṭ*), and these sons were even given a royal title (*sīdī*) (…) Family and marital ties were a factor that counterbalanced the erosion in the importance of biological family (sic), as well as the decline of the agnate lines and of the dynasty and hereditary practices." Unfortunately, we had recourse to the English abstract of his PhD only (see n. 15).

45. As tempting as this may be, we should take into account the fact that sultan-sons were much younger at their accession than the "true" sultans were and remained on the throne for a short period only.

46. Against this, marriages of non-sultans into the sultans' family are sometimes explicitly (yet vaguely!) said to have boosted the husband's power. Qāḍī Fatḥ Allāh b. Mustaʿṣim b. Nafīs and Īnāl Bāy b. Quǧmās al-Ẓāhirī, e.g., are said to have become powerful by marrying into the families of al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ and al-Nāṣir Faraǧ (al-ʿAynī, *ʿIqd*, vol. 1, p. 193: *zawwaǧahu Šayḫ wālidatahu fa ʿaẓuma bi ḏalika ǧiddan*; Ibn Taġrībirdī, *Manhal*, vol. 3, p. 218: *wa ṣāra lahu kalima nāfiḏa fī al-dawla li zawāǧihi bi uḫt al-sulṭān*).

47. A pre-accession marriage could be considered as a preparatory manoeuvre, a way of paving the road to the citadel, while post-accession marriages might have aimed at consolidating or legitimizing the rupture posed by the new sultan's accession. Unfortunately, with few exceptions, the timing of marriages eludes us. Īnāl, e.g., married off his son, the future sultan Aḥmad, to one of Ǧaqmaq's widows, already *before* his son's accession to the throne. Timing has also been referred to already as a possible explanation for the ruptures posed by the sultans Īnāl and Ḫušqadam. Finally, there is one notable case, where timing seems to have been crucial: al-Ẓāhir Ṭaṭar's marriage to Saʿādat, al-Mu'ayyad Šayḫ's widow and mother to his successor-son, Aḥmad. Following Šayḫ's death, Ṭaṭar acted as a regent to young Aḥmad, during the latter's short-lived reign. Then, "the *amīr kabīr* Ṭaṭar married the mother of sultan Aḥmad (…) thus becoming the sultan's uncle (sic!), being married to his mother, as well as his *niẓām al-mulk*" (Ibn Taġrībirdī, *Nuǧūm*, vol. 6, p. 500). However, they didn't live long and happily ever after: before long, Ṭaṭar deposed his stepson, seized the throne for himself and divorced Saʿādat.

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(slave girl, *umm walad*, *ḫawand al-kubrā*, etc.)[48] and the make-up of the sultan's core household (the presence of other women and of male offspring), both pre- and post-marriage. Yet, we have to work with the scant material at hand, and while no form of capital can be ruled out as an incentive, this material does suggest symbolic capital to have mattered first and foremost.

Mamluk Ladies and Political Power

Whereas scholars such as Broadbridge, Loiseau and Koby have called attention to the category of blood ties and ethnicity as understudied elements in Mamluk culture, we have called attention to the category of matrimonial ties as an aid to socio-political (re)production, hereby challenging the validity of two prevalent paradigms. We have argued that the Mamluk sultans' marriage policy reveals a "Family-In-Law Impulse", as they marry into the family of the preceding sultan. While the heuristics of this impulse remain elusive, we tentatively consider these marriages to be marriages into symbolic capital first and foremost, as these provided the new sultan with an in-law pedigree an in-law tie to the previous sultan, both strong legitimizing tools. Not only does this impulse challenge the paradigm of gendered space, by rethinking women as transmitters of capital that was valued in the male public sphere, hence, as politically significant; but also that of Mamluk one-generationalism and the prevalence of artificial ties. As such, this impulse might help us to come to terms with the discontinuous mode of Circassian sultanic succession: competitive ruptures that separated stretches of two-/three-generational agnatic dynastic continuity (provided by the "Dynastic Impulse", and preferably anchored by a broader family basis, provided by the "Extended Family Impulse"), are smoothened by the "Family-In-Law Impulse". This impulse aimed at carrying one or various forms of capital, sought after by the new sultan, over these ruptures, thus providing an undercurrent of trans-generational or trans-dynastic continuity. Mamluks gained the sultanate through a competitive mode of succession, and then tried to substitute this very mode that had won them the throne with a dynasty, the chances of which they tried to enhance through an "Extended Family Impulse" and a "Family-In-Law Impulse".

In order to further elaborate on these matters, a wider net should be cast: first by including the later period up to the Ottoman conquest of 1517 (during which, it appears, the three

48. One could assume slave girls to have been valued less by later sultans than free women, as the sources yield only one such girl, the manumitted Šukrbāy, who, moreover, offers but a weak link. Further, even though the capacity to reproduce biologically is very much a coveted capital in its own right (especially given the heavy toll of the Black Death, and as Mamluk society was marked not by lateral but by vertical inheritance), there is the fact that only Saʿādat bt. Ṣirġitmiš appears to have been an *umm walad* to her previous husband. Tentatively, one could assume concubinage and polygamy to have devaluated this "biological capital" as a rationale behind the sultans' marriages. Compare to Balabanlilar's observation on the Timurids ("The Begims of the Mystic Feast," p. 138): "'Maternity was not in itself a path to power'; it was a woman's personal pedigree that allowed her to develop a prestigious dynastic position."

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impulses were very much at play[49]), and second, by including ladies linked to only one sultan. A good acid test to the validity of our assumptions would be to zoom in on amirs who made a failed run for the sultanate. Do these perhaps display more marital ties to sultanic households than their more compliant peers? A notable example could be Qurqumās, who competed with Ǧaqmaq for the throne, following the death of Barsbāy and during the reign of the latter's son, Yūsuf. Could this Qurqumās' marriages to a daughter of Farağ and one of Šayḫ perhaps be seen as preparatory manœuvres?

As challenging as these impulses may be vis-à-vis the two paradigms referred to, we should be cautious not to substitute these paradigms with fresh ones. Indeed, it would be unwise to replace the notion of one-generational cyclicalism with one of trans-generational continuity, for there is no reason to assume that one of two possible assets, *mamlūk nisba* and consanguineous *nasab*, played in the socio-political field to the exclusion of the other. Nor should Mamluk ladies be hailed as saviors, who, at last, have ridded us from that enigmatic "Mamluk phenomenon", by providing us with a full-fledged dynasty that runs along both consanguine and marital ties. Neither these women nor the "Family-In-Law Impulse" are the one key to understanding this phenomenon. Moreover, it is important for the "Family-In-Law Impulse", as well as Broadbridge's "Dynastic Impulse" and "Extended Family Impulse" to be properly understood, as tools, not as "rules of succession". These impulses are social strategies, neither always available nor always turned to, and used to obtain, preserve, reproduce or legitimize office, network, status, money, in short, Bourdieusian capital in its widest forms.[50] The game of Mamluk politics was played through brokerage: in order to win over to his side the different factions and households, to integrate these into one system intimately linked to his person, and to legitimize the resulting power constellation, a Mamluk amir turned to a broad spectrum of social strategies, either triggering existing ties of solidarity based on kinship, ethnicity, *ḫušdāšiyya* or others, or forging new ones based on, e.g., *ṣaḥāba* or a clever marriage policy.

It is within this highly diversified socio-political field that Mamluk ladies performed. Perhaps they didn't always do so by actively operating in the public sphere; yet this doesn't rule out their significance in politics. As rightfully observed by Meisami, against "the modern assumption that politics involves the public sphere only (…) in the medieval Islamic world, politics must be seen as a continuum between public and private."[51] Hence, wherever women may have been positioned along this continuum, they had power nonetheless, influencing

49. After validating the three impulses, the sequence of sultans following Ḫušqadam reads as follows: // al-Ašraf Qāytbāy (rupture with the previous sultan, yet married to a daughter of al-Ašraf Īnāl [Ibn Taġrībirdī, *Nuǧūm*, vol. 7, p. 684]; also had two sisters in the sultanate [*Ḍaw'* 1041 and 1042]) > his son al-Nāṣir Muḥammad > his uncle al-Ẓāhir Qānṣūh (i.e., the brother of Muḥāmmad's mother, Aslbāy [*La femme* 12]; also married to a wife of Muḥammad, Miṣrbāy [*La femme* 120]) > his brother-in-law al-Ašraf Ǧānbulāṭ (married to Aslbāy) // al-ʿĀdil Ṭūmānbāy (rupture, yet married to Fāṭima [*La femme* 45], a wife of Qāytbāy) > his uncle al-Ašraf Qānṣūh (i.e., a brother of al-ʿĀdil Ṭūmānbāy's father) // al-Ašraf Ṭūmānbāy (rupture, yet married to a niece [*La femme* 45, 57, 58] of the aforementioned Fāṭima).

50. See, e.g., Bourdieu, "Les strategies matrimoniales"; and *id.*, "Stratégies de reproduction."

51. Meisami, "Writing medieval women," p. 63.

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action through a political significance that derived from holding highly valued capital and from transmitting such capital from one sultan to the other. As Staffa has it, "Although women's political power was rarely obvious, it was a continuous undercurrent in the mainstream of formalized power exercised by men." [52] While Petry considered women "custodians of property" (i.e., economic capital), we believe that we may expand this, by considering them custodians and transmitters of capital in all its forms. As such, they provide an undercurrent of continuity, which we are starting to appreciate only now.

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52. Staffa, "Dimensions of Women's power," p. 71. See also p. 95: "It was the feminine connection that continually eroded the exclusive boundaries of the successive military elites that ruled Egypt (…) an integrative force in a society that desired, yet feared, integration."

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