

## Celebrations and Occasions Witnessing Fire Works in Accordance with the Mamlūk Historical Sources

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**Abstract:** "Fireworks" is an attractive term for both eyes and ears when just uttered. There is a special kind of magic in "fireworks", that term which always has strong correlation with joy and excitement. This is because it is connected with those stunning displays witnessed during celebrations throughout ages. It connects the past to the present as humanity has been enjoying its thrilling displays for quite a long while. A question mark frequently hangs over the usage of fireworks during the Mamlūk period. Did the Mamlūks really know fireworks?! Answering this question needs further searching the historical roots of fireworks during this era.

This study "celebrations and occasions witnessing fireworks in accordance with the Mamlūk historical sources", leaves no shadow of doubt that Mamlūks used fireworks. It tackles the historical marks of the fireworks' usage in the celebrations and occasions which took place in the Mamlūk period. Actually, fireworks played a magnificent role in religious festivals, national ceremonies, river celebrations and family celebrations. In addition, they were a means of entertainment as well as power show off during this period.

**Key words:** Fireworks, Stunning displays, Religious festivals, National ceremonies, River celebrations, Family celebrations, Entertainment , Power show off, Mamlūk period, Mamlūk Sultans.

**المُلخَص:** الألعابُ الناريةُ تعبيرٌ يخطفُ الأبصارَ والأسماعَ بمجردَ النطقِ به وذلك لارتباطه في الأذهانِ بالعروضِ الرائعة التي تشهدها السماءُ أثناءَ الاحتفالاتِ والمناسباتِ المختلفة. تعد الألعابُ الناريةُ موضوعًا شيقًا جديدًا بالدراسة، فقد تميزَ بأنه من الموضوعات التي تربط الماضي بالحاضر فلا نزال نستمتع بتلك العروض الممتعة الخاصة بالألعاب النارية حتى يومنا هذا. وقد كان استخدام المماليك للألعاب النارية دائمًا ما يثير الدهشة ويدفع إلى التساؤل: هل عرف المماليك الألعاب النارية حقًا؟! وقد كان هذا سببًا كافيًا ودافعًا قويًا إلى البحث في الجذور التاريخية للألعاب النارية خلال العصر المملوكي .

هذا وقد تضمنت هذه الدراسة وعنوانها "الاحتفالات والمناسبات التي شهدت استخدام الألعاب النارية في ضوء المصادر التاريخية المملوكية"، الحديث عن شتى الإشارات التاريخية الواردة عن استخدام الألعاب النارية في مختلف احتفالات ومناسبات هذا العصر. فقد كانت للألعاب النارية دورًا كبيرًا في الاحتفالات الدينية والقومية بالإضافة إلى احتفالات النيل. وكذلك استخدمت في المناسبات الأسرية. وإلى جانب كونها مظهرًا من مظاهر البهجة والترفيه فقد كانت كذلك وسيلةً لإظهار قوة الدولة المملوكية .

**الكلمات الدالة:** الألعاب النارية، العروض الرائعة، الاحتفالات الدينية، الاحتفالات القومية، احتفالات النيل، المناسبات الأسرية، الترفيه، إظهار قوة الدولة، عصر المماليك، سلاطين المماليك.

Mamlūk historical sources are replete with various marks of celebrations and occasions that witnessed the usage of fire works. Fire works played a great role as one of the manifestations of ceremonies during the Mamlūk period. They were used in religious festivals such as Pilgrimage, Birthdays, Christmas and Holy Saturday, national ceremonies as celebrating Caliphate revival, victory, civil achievements such as constructing buildings and ships in addition to recovery. There were also River celebrations like the Nile plenitude and dam opening and the Martyr day as well as family celebrations such as marriage and circumcision.

Fire works were also used for entertaining. Mamlūk Sultans, princes, dignitaries as well as public were keen on enjoying the fascinating shows of fire works during their outings. Moreover, they were used in acrobatic shows during that period. On the other hand, fire works were not only used for ceremonies and entertaining only but also for power show off through processions and guarding ports. In addition to its usage before delegates and against the rebellion of beduin tribes.

Hereinafter, the citation of these different celebrations and occasions within these sources clearly display the use of fire works.

## **I- Fireworks as manifestation of Celebrations**

### **I- Religious Festivals**

#### **Islamic Feasts**

##### **Pilgrimage**

Pilgrimage is one of the most significant seasons that have special sanctity and reverence for Muslims throughout ages<sup>(1)</sup>. As for the Mamlūks, the *Maḥmal*<sup>(2)</sup> was considered a symbol of the sovereignty of Mamlūk Sultans over Hiğāz as being

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(1) Nirmīn Šawqī, *Qā'imāt al-ṭa'ām wa dilālātuhā fī 'aṣr salāṭīn al-mamālīk fī miṣr (648 – 923 A.H / 1250 – 1517 A.D)*, (Master Thesis, Faculty of Arts, History Department, Minufiya University: 2006), 118.

(2) *Al-Maḥmal* is a ceremonial howdah carried on a camel. This howdah consists of a pyramidal wooden frame raised on another square shaped one that was covered with silk. . See: al-'Umarī, *al-Ta'rīf bi-l-muṣṭalah al-šarīf*, released by Samīr al-Durūbī (Mu'tah University: 1992), 314-315; al-Qalqašandī, *Šubḥ al-a'šā fī šinā'at al-īnšā* (Cairo: 2004) II, 130; IV, 57; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-sulūk lima 'rifat duwal al-mulūk*, released by Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyādah (Cairo: 1941), III/II, 497; Ibn Šāhīn al-Zāhirī, *Nayl al-amal fī ḡayl al-duwal*, released by 'Umar Tadmīrī (Beirut: 2002), II, 206; J. Jomier, "Le maḥmal et la caravane égyptienne des pélerins de la mecque", IFAO, XX, le Caire (1953), 10-11; Doris Abouseif, "The Maḥmal Legend and the Pilgrimage of the Ladies of the Mamlūk Court", *Mamlūk Studies Review*, I (Chicago: 1997), 89; Ibrāhīm Ḥilmī, *al-Maḥmal riḥalāt ša'biyyah fī wuḡdān ummah* (Cairo: 1998), 180; Maḥāsīn al-Waqqād, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ša'biyyah fī-l-qāhirah al-mamlūkiyyah* (Cairo: 1999), 229; Širīn 'Abd al-Ḥalīm, *al-Maḥmal al-miṣrī fī-l-'aṣrayn al-mamlūkī wa-l-ḥadīṭ*, (Master Thesis, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Tourism Guidance Department, Alexandria University: 2005), 15, 19-20; Hayām 'Īsā, *al-Ḥağğ ilā al-Ḥiğāz fī-l-'aṣr al-mamlūk* (PhD Thesis, Institute of Eastern Arts, Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences, Saint Jusif University (Beirut: 2010), 39, 72, 80; 'Alyā' al-Babāwī, *al-A'yād wa-l-iḥtiḫālāt fī 'aṣr salāṭīn al-mamālīk (648-923 A.H / 1250-1517 A.D)*, (Master Thesis, Faculty of Arts, History Department, Helwan University: 2013), 76; Muṣṭafā Wağīh, *Iḥtiḫālāt al-ḥağğ al-miṣriyyah fī 'aṣr salāṭīn al-mamālīk* (Cairo: 2014), 54, 67.

Custodians of the two Holy Mosques<sup>(1)</sup>. Accordingly, it was regarded as centrepiece of the pilgrimage caravan from Cairo to Mecca<sup>(2)</sup>.

It is worth noting that the *Maḥmal* tour<sup>(3)</sup> was one of the most interesting objects belonging to the Pilgrimage at that period<sup>(4)</sup>. The celebrations held in the Mamlūk period on that occasion were so terrific. The stereotype was that the *Maḥmal* tour took place twice a year in *Raḡab* and *Šawwāl*<sup>(5)</sup>. The *kiswah* of the Honoured *Ka‘bah*<sup>(6)</sup> and that of the *maqām*, station of prophet Ibrāhīm, peace and blessings be upon him<sup>(7)</sup>, as well as that of the mausoleum of prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings be upon him<sup>(8)</sup>, were exhibited during this tour<sup>(9)</sup>.

(1) Doris Abouseif, "The Maḥmal", *Mamlūk Studies Review*, I, 89; Širīn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm, *al-Maḥmal*, 16, 20; Nabīl Ġamīl, *al-Iḥtifālāt fī ‘aṣr al-mamālīk (648 – 922 A.H / 1250 – 1516 A.D)* (Master Thesis, Faculty of Arts, History Department, Damascus University: 2010), 67, 71; Hayām ‘Īsā, *al-Ḥaḡḡ*, 38, 41; ‘Alyā’ al-Babāwī, *al-A ‘yād*, 76-77.

(2) Egypt and the Mahmal: [www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org).

(3) According to the preferable opinion, the tradition of the *Maḥmal* tour began in the reign of the Mamlūk Sultan *al-Zāhir Baybars*. See: al-Maqrīzī, *al-Dahab al-masbūk fī dīkr man ḥaḡḡa min al-ḥulafā’ wa al-mulūk*, released by Ġamāl al-Dīn al-Šayyāl (Cairo: 1955), 11; al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍarah fī aḥbār miṣr wa-l-qāhirah*, released by ‘Alī ‘Umar (Cairo: 2007), II, 84,271; Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’ al-zuhūr fī waqā’i’ al-duhūr*, released by Muḥammad Muṣṭafā (Cairo: 1960), I/I, 336; al-Ġazīrī, *al-Durar al-farā’id al-munazzamah fī aḥbār al-ḥaḡḡ wa ṭarīq Makkah al-mu‘azzamah*, released by Hamad al-Ġāsir (Riyadh: 2008), III, 1694; J. Jomier, *Le maḥmal*, 36; Doris Abouseif, "the Maḥmal", *Mamlūk Studies Review*, I, 90-91.

(4) ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Māḡid, *Nuzum al-mamālīk dawlat salāṭīn al-mamālīk wa rusūmihim fī miṣr, dirāsah šāmilah lil-nuzum al-siyāsiyyah*, I (Cairo: 1979), II, 145; Nabīl Ġamīl, *al-Iḥtifālāt*, 66; ‘Alyā’ al-Babāwī, *al-A ‘yād*, 80; Muṣṭafā Waḡīh, *Iḥtifālāt al-ḥaḡḡ*, 157.

(5) Al-Qalqašandī, *Šubḥ*, IV, 57-58; Sa‘īd ‘Āšūr, *al-Muḡtama’ al-miṣrī fī ‘aṣr salāṭīn al-mamālīk* (Cairo: 1962), 180-181; *al-‘Aṣr al-mamālīkī fī miṣr wa-l-šām* (Cairo: 1965), 321-322; Nabīl ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, *al-Malā’ib fī ‘aṣr salāṭīn al-mamālīk* (Cairo: 2006), II, 133, 207; Qāsim ‘Abduh, *‘Aṣr salāṭīn al-mamālīk al-tārīḥ al-siyāsī wa-l-iḡtimā’ī* (Cairo: 1998), 296; Du‘ā’ ‘Uṭmān, *al-Nafī fī-l-‘ālam al-islāmī* (Master Thesis, Faculty of Arts, History Department, al-Mansūrah University: 2010), 58.

(6) The *kiswah* of the Ka‘bah was made of precious brocaded silk. Mamlūk Sultans devoted immense care of its make. Specific *awqāf*, endowments, and employees were dedicated for it. They adhered to dispatching it from Egypt annually to the Honoured Mecca so as to reserve the religious characteristic of their rule as defenders of the two Holy Mosques. About the *kiswah* of the Ka‘bah, . See: Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *al-Rawḍ al-zāhir fī sīrat al-malik al-Zāhir*, released by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Ḥuwayṭir (Riyadh: 1976), 353; al-Qalqašandī, *Šubḥ*, IV, 57, 276-277, 281-283; Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, *Muhaddīb riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭah al-musammāh tuḥfat al-nuzzār fī ḡarā’ib al-amṣār wa ‘aḡā’ib al-asfār*, released by Aḥmad al-‘Awāmīrī and Muḥammad Ġād al-Mawlā (Cairo: 2009), I, 152-153; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, III/II, 497; al-Saḥāwī, *al-Tibr al-masbūk fī ḡayl al-sulūk*, released by Labībah Muṣṭafā and Naḡwā Kāmil (Cairo: 2005), II, 65; Ibn Šāhīn al-Zāhirī, *Nayl al-amal*, II, 206; V, 344; Doris Abouseif, "the Maḥmal", *Mamlūk Studies Review*, I, 89-90; Širīn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm, *al-Maḥmal*, 78-82, 87-90, 125-127.

(7) About the *kiswah* of *maqām* of prophet Ibrāhīm peace be upon him, . See: Ibn Taḡrībīrdī, *Hawādīt al-duḥūr fīmadā al-ayyām wa-l-ṣuhūr*, released by Fahīm Šaltūt, I (Cairo: 1990), 423-424; Ibn Šāhīn al-Zāhirī, *Nayl al-amal*, V, 420-421; Širīn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm, *al-Maḥmal*, 90.

(8) About the *kiswah* of the prophetic room, . See: Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *al-Rawḍ al-zāhir*, 200; Ibn Šāhīn al-Zāhirī, *Nayl al-amal*, V, 450; Sa‘īd ‘Āšūr, *al-Zāhir Baybars* (Cairo: 1963), 108.

(9) Ibn Zahīrah, *al-Faḍā’il al-bāhirah fī maḥāsīn miṣr wa-l-qāhirah*, released by Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā and Kāmil al-Muhandis (Cairo: 1969), 199-200; Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’ al-zuhūr*, IV, 72; Maḥāsīn al-Waqqād, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ša‘biyyah*, 229; ‘Alā’ Rizq, *‘Āmmat al-qāhirah fī ‘aṣr salāṭīn al-mamālīk* (Cairo: 2003), 142

Mamlūk historical sources clarified that the reason behind the *Maḥmal* parading is informing the public that the way from Egypt to Hiḡāz was secure to agitate motivation, determination and longing in those who want to perform Pilgrimage<sup>(1)</sup>.

Moreover, historical sources presented vivid depictions of the celebratory demonstrations of the *Maḥmal* tour during the Mamlūk period<sup>(2)</sup>. For example, al-Qalqašandī portrayed a precise description for its traditional celebration, saying: "*The Maḥmal tour was accustomed to be made twice a year. The first one occurred after the elapse of the first half of Raḡab. Three days before the procession, the shops that situated on its route were ordered to be decorated. The tour took place either on Monday or Thursday only. The Maḥmal - howdah covered with yellow satin silk and surmounted by a silvery dome- was carried on a camel ... The procession advanced to the area beneath the Citadel*<sup>(3)</sup> ... *A group of Sultanic Mamlūk lancers, in iron cuirasses covered by coloured silk, were mounting horses with birkistiwānāt, coats of mail, and steel chamfrons exactly as in battles. They held lances to which Sultanic standards were attached and they played beneath the Citadel as in war. There were also a group of Mamlūk boys; each was twirling two lances in his hands while being standing on a horse. Some of them, while being in that state, were standing on a pair of clogs resting on edges of two swords. Throughout that show, they were preparing and firing large amounts of azyār al-naḡḡ, naḡḡ casks and suchlike beneath the Citadel ... The same was performed in the middle of Šawwāl ...*"<sup>(4)</sup>

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(1) Al-Saḡāwī, *al-Tibr al-masbūk*, I, 213; Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, *al-Riḡlah*, 37; Sa'īd 'Āšūr, *al-Muḡtama'*, 181; *al-'Ašr al-mamālīkī*, 321-322; Ibrāhīm Ḥilmī, *al-Maḡmal*, 170; Qāsim 'Abduh, *'Ašr al-mamālīk*, 215.

(2) About the celebratory demonstrations of *Maḡmal* Tour, . See for example: Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tašrīf al-ayyām wa-l-'uṣūr fī sīrat al-malik al-Manšūr*, released Murād Kāmil (Cairo: 1961), 145; Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa muḡḡḡik al-'abūs*, released by Arnod Furulik (Cairo: 2009), 62; al-Zāhirī, *Zubdat kašf al-mamālīk wa bayān al-ṡuruḡ wa-l-masālik*, released by 'Umar Tadmurī (Beirut: 2011), 167; Ibn Taḡrībirdī, *Hawādīṡ al-duḡūr*, I, 368-369; *al-Nuḡūm al-azāhirah fī mulūk mišr wa-l-qāhirah*, released by Ġamāl Miḡriz and Fahīm Šaltūt (Cairo: 2006), XV, 337; XVI, 68,268,298; Ibn Zāhirah, *al-Faḡā'il al-bāhirah*, 199-200; Ibn al-Ġay'ān, *al-Qawl al-mustazraf fī safar mawlānā al-malik al-Ašraf*, released by 'Umar Tadmurī (Beirut: 1948), 117,126; al-Ġazīrī, *al-Durar al-farā'id*, III, 1736-1737; Sa'īd 'Āšūr, *al-Muḡtama'*, 180-182,190; *al-'Ašr al-mamālīkī*, 321-322; D. Ayalon, "Notes on the Furūsiyya Exercises and Games in the Mamlūk Sultanate", *Mamlūk Military Society* (London: 1979): 49; Ġaylān 'Abbās, *al-'A'yād wa-l-iḡṡifālāt fī mišr al-islāmiyyah wa ḡuzūriḡā al-tārīḡiyyah munḡu al-faṡḡ al-'arabī ḡattā nihāyat 'ašr al-mamālīk al-ḡarākisah (21 – 923 A.H / 642 – 1517 A.D)* (PhD Thesis, Faculty of Tourism and Housing, Tour Guidance Department, Ḥilwān University: 1996), 84; Ibrāhīm Ḥilmī, *al-Maḡmal*, 170-172.

(3) It refers to the Citadel of the mountain which was built by al-Nāšir Salāḡ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī. Its name owes to its location on one of the hills of the Muḡaṡṡam. It had a great standing as it was the headquarters of the Mamlūk Sultanate. Therefore, the Mamlūk Sultans cared about its architectural development till it was held up as one of the best examples of magnificence and grandeur. About it, . See: Al-Qalqašandī, *Šubḡ*, III, 372-377; al-Maḡrīzī, *al-Mawā'iz wa-l-i'tibār fī ḡikr al-ḡiṡaṡ wa-l-āṡār*, released by Ayman Fu'ād, III (London: 2004), 637- 638, 644-698; al-Zāhirī, *Zubdat*, 86-88; Aḡmad 'Abd al-Rāziq, *al-'Imārah al-islāmiyyah fī mišr munḡu al-faṡḡ al-'arabī ḡattā nihāyat al-'ašr al-mamālīkī* (Cairo: 2009), 146-170.

(4) Al-Qalqašandī, *Šubḡ*, IV, 57-58.

## Birthdays<sup>(1)</sup>

Birthdays were so remarkable celebrations during the Mamlūk Sultanate<sup>(2)</sup>. They were held on the anniversary of the birth of Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings be upon him, and those of his Family members as well as famous pious people<sup>(3)</sup>. As a result of the belief that those pious people are blessed with supernatural wonders<sup>(4)</sup>, the public were keen on coming from everywhere<sup>(5)</sup> so as to attend these birthdays with their various religious, economic and entertaining manifestations<sup>(6)</sup>.

Mamlūk Sultans gave due care for celebrating these birthdays along with the common people.<sup>(7)</sup> For instance, Ibn Iyās noted in the events of 903 A.H / 1498 A.D that Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qāyṭibāy took part in the celebration of the birthday of Ismā'īl al-Inbābī<sup>(8)</sup>, saying: "*In his recklessness and playing at the night of Ismā'īl al-Inbābī, may Allah have mercy on him, Sultan al-Nāṣir... went down to Būlāq where he had a Nile cruise and made a wonderful naft ignition. That memorable night was distinguished with its high attendance and unique festivity. He spent it on the boat and made such deeds several times*"<sup>(9)</sup>.

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- (1) The birthday is a religious, public celebration held to honour one of the famous pious people. . See: J. W. Macpherson, *al-Mawālid fī Miṣr*, released by 'Abd al-Wahhāb Bakr (Cairo: 1998), 26, 65.
- (2) Muḥammad 'Abd al-Salām, *al-Ḥayāh al-ṭaqāfiyyah fī ṣa'īd miṣr ḥilāl al-'aṣr al-mamlūkī (648 – 923 A.H / 1250 – 1517 A.D)*, (PhD Thesis, History and Egyptian, Islamic Archaeology Department, Faculty of Arts, Alexandria University: 2009), 246.
- (3) Nabīl Ġamīl, *al-Iḥtifālāt*, 60.
- (4) The diffusion of Sufism in the Mamlūk period led to the belief of common people in the famous pious people. Many Mamlūk sultans have followed and adhered to this movement as well. . See: al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV/I, 724-727; Sa'īd 'Āṣūr, *al-Muġtama'*, 162-168, 234-239; Maḥāsin al-Waqqād, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ṣa'bīyyah*, 172-183, 255-259; 'Alyā' al-Babāwī, *al-A'yād*, 87-89.
- (5) Muḥammad Ḥasan, *al-Uṣrah al-miṣriyyah fī 'aṣr salāṭīn al-mamālīk* (Saudi Arabia: 2001), 91-92; 'Alā' Rizq, *Āmmat al-qāhirah*, 133; 'Alyā' al-Babāwī, *al-A'yād*, 85.
- (6) About Birthdays and the manifestations of their celebrations, see: Maḥāsin al-Waqqād, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ṣa'bīyyah*, 258; Muḥammad Ḥasan, *al-Uṣrah al-miṣriyyah*, 91-97; 'Alā' Rizq, *Āmmat al-qāhirah*, 133, 135-136; Muḥammad 'Abd al-Salām, *al-Ḥayāh al-ṭaqāfiyyah*, 246-249; Nabīl Ġamīl, *al-Iḥtifālāt*, 60-62; 'Alyā' al-Babāwī, *al-A'yād*, 85-94.
- (7) 'Abd al-Mun'im Māġid, *Nuẓum al-mamālīk*, II, 168; 'Alyā' al-Babāwī, *al-A'yād*, 93-94.
- (8) For more about Ismā'īl al-Inbābī and his birthday. See; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, III/II, 576, 587; Ibn Ḥaġar Ḥaġar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-ġumr bi-anbā' al-'umr*, released by Ḥasan Ḥabaṣī (Cairo: 1969), I, 350-351, 357; Ibn Šāhīn al-Zāhirī, *Nayl al-amal*, II, 257, 262; VII, 121-122; VIII, 228; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, I/II, 391; J. W. Macpherson, *al-Mawālid*, 27-30, 270-272; Luṭfi Naṣṣār, *Wasā'il al-tarfiḥ fī 'aṣr salāṭīn al-mamālīk fī miṣr* (Cairo: 1999), 149; Muḥammad Ġamāl, *A'māl al-ġiẓiyyah fī-l-'aṣr al-mamlūkī*, (PhD Thesis, History department, Faculty of Arts, Minufiya University: 2015), 134-135.
- (9) Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, III, 389; Ġaylān 'Abbās, *al-A'yād*, 162; Muḥammad al-Šištāwī, *Mutanazzahāt al-qāhirah fī-l-'aṣrayn al-mamlūkī wa-l-'uṭmānī* (Cairo: 1998), 274-275, 319-321; Luṭfi Naṣṣār, *Wasā'il al-tarfiḥ*, 284; Nabīl 'Abd al-'Azīz, *al-Malā'ib*, II, 209.

## Christian Feasts

### Christmas

Every year Christians celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Jesus the Christ, peace be upon him, in the 29<sup>th</sup> of Kihāk<sup>(1)</sup>. They believe that he was born on Monday so on the the eve of Sunday - the birth night - churches are decorated and its lamps are lit.<sup>(2)</sup>

Al-Maqrīzī witnessed the Christmas feast in Egypt in the 9<sup>th</sup> A.H /15<sup>th</sup> A.D century and described it, saying: "... *We saw that Christmas is regarded as a sublime season in Cairo and Egypt at large. A lot of money is spent on buying colourful candles and admirable statues. All Egyptian classes used to present them to their children and families ... They were used abundantly as well in decorating shops ...*"<sup>(3)</sup>.

In this concern, it is worth mentioning that playing with fire was one of the Christians' customs in the Christmas as shown in the following quotation of al-Maqrīzī: "*Christians are accustomed to play with fire in the Christmas*"<sup>(4)</sup>. This proves conclusively that the public especially the Christians used fire works in celebrating that feast.<sup>(5)</sup>

### Holy Saturday

During the Mamlūk period, there was a belief among Christians that on the Holy Saturday – the day before the Easter – the tomb of Jesus the Christ, peace be upon him, was shone by a heavenly light that enkindled the lamps of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem.

Mamlūk historical sources stated that this was one of the priests' tricks that they used to perform so as to deceive common people. At the Altar House, priests hung lamps

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(1) *Kihāk* is the fourth month of the Coptic calendar that composes of thirty days and lasts from the 27<sup>th</sup> of November to the 27<sup>th</sup> of December of the Julian calendar. See: al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, II, 375; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, I, 711-712, 732-733; Ibn Zahīrah, *al-Faḍā'il al-bāhirah*, 139; Murād Kāmil, *Ḥaḍārīt miṣr fi-l- 'aṣr al-qibṭī* (Cairo: no date), 198, 203.

(2) Al-Nūwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab fi funūn al-adab* (Cairo: 1926), I, 192; al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, II, 416; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, I, 717; Ibn Iyās, *Nuzhat al-umam fi-l- 'aḡā'ib wa-l-ḥikam*, released by Muḥammad Zinḥum 'Azab (Cairo: 1995), 236.

(3) Al-Maqrīzī, *al- Ḥiṭaṭ*, I, 717-718; Ibn Iyās, *Nuzhat al-umam*, 237; About the celebratory demonstrations of this feast. See also: Qāsim 'Abduh, *Ahl al-ḍimmah fi miṣr al- 'uṣūr al-wuṣṭā* (Cairo: 1979), 121, 164; Ġaylān 'Abbās, *al-A 'yād*, 122; Luṭfi Naṣṣār, *Wasā'il al-tarfīh*, 323; Nabīl Ġamīl, *al-Iḥtifālāt*, 74; 'Alyā' al-Babāwī, *al-A 'yād*, 99-101.

(4) Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, I, 717; Ibn Iyās, *Nuzhat al-umam*, 236; Nabīl 'Abd al-'Azīz, *al-Malā'ib*, II, 210; 210; 'Alyā' al-Babāwī, *al-A 'yād*, 101.

(5) The Christians of the Greater Syria were celebrating the Christmas in an exaggerated way as lamps were lit in churches and houses in addition to burning various types of gunpowder and *naḡfī*. See: Hasan al-Rammāh, *al-Furūsiyyah wa-l-manāṣib al-ḥarbiyyah*, released by A. Yūsuf al-Ḥasan (Aleppo: 1998), 41; Šams al-Dīn al-Dimašqī, *Nuḡbat al-dahr fi 'aḡā'ib al-bar wa-l-baḥr*, released by A. Mehren, (Leipzig: 1923), 281; Ibrāhīm Za'rūz, *al-Ḥayāh al-iḡtimā'iyah fi bilād al-šām fi-l- 'aṣrayn al-ayyūbī wa-l-mamlūkī* (PhD Thesis, Faculty of Arts, History Department, Damascus University: 1990), 178; Fayzah Ḥiḡāzī, *Ahl al-ḍimmah fi bilād al-šām fi al- 'aṣrayn al-ayyūbī wa-l-mamlūkī* (Master Thesis, History Department, Yarmouk University: 1992), 143, 180-181; 'Alyā' al-Babāwī, *al-A 'yād*, 101.

along which they extended a very fine iron strip coated with elderberry<sup>(1)</sup> oil and lily oil . Whenthe end of this iron strip was enkindled fire moved along it enlighteningthe lamps one by one. The attending people thought that they were enkindled by a fire that came from heaven. However, the real reason is that elderberry naturally catches fire quickly by the slightest touch.<sup>(2)</sup> Thus, it became apparent that Christians used one of the fire tricks in celebrating this occasion.

## II- National Ceremonies

### Caliphate Revival

After the murder of the Abbasid Caliph by the Mangols and the collapse of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad in 656 A.H / 1258 A.D, Mamlūk Sultans pursued to legitimize their rule through reviving the Abbasid Caliphate in Egypt. Consequently, after the vacancy of the Caliph position for about three years and half, sultan al-Zāhir Baybars (658 – 676 A.H / 1260 – 1277 A.D) succeeded in paying homage to one of the Abbasid sons - who escaped from the Mangols - and announced him a legitimate Caliph.<sup>(3)</sup> He celebrated in 659 A.H / 1261 A.D that great occasion<sup>(4)</sup>. Ibn Iyās depicted its demonstrations in following quotation: "... *Al-Malik al-Zāhir came down and went to the palace that was in the Citadel of al-Rawḍah*<sup>(5)</sup>. He invited al-Imām Aḥmad (the

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- (1) **Elderberry** is called *balasān* in Arabic. The public call it *balsam* instead. The best kind all over the world was cultivated at *al-Maṭariyyah* in Egypt. Its extracted oil has a sacred value for Christians who put it in the water of baptism into which the person should be immersed to show that he has become a member of the Christian Church. Therefore, Christian kings and rulers appreciated it so much to the extent that they bought it at the cost of gold. About it. See: al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, III, 287; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, I, 624-626; Ibn Zāhirah, *al-Faḍā'il al-bāhirah*, 108, 133, 151; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, IV, 149; Muḥammad al-Šištāwī, *Mutanazzahāt al-qāhirah*, 242-243, 351.
- (2) Al-Nūwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, I, 193; al-Nūwayrī al-Skandarī, *al-Ilmām bi-l-i'lām fīmā ġarat bihi al-aḥkām wa-l-umūr al-maqḍiyyah fī wāqī'at al-askandiriyyah*, released by 'Azīz Suryāl (India: 1970), III, 359; al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, II, 417-418; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, I, 720; al-'Aynī, *Iqd al-ġumān fī tāriḥ ahl al-zamān*, released by Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo: 1992), IV, 268-269; Ibn Iyās, *Nuzhat al-umam*, 239; 'Alyā' al-Babāwī, *al-A'yād*, 110-111; About the celebratory demonstrations of this feast. See also: Sa'īd 'Āšūr, *al-Muġtama'*, 204-205; Qāsim 'Abduh, *Ahl al-ḍimmah*, 122; Maḥāsin al-Waqqād, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ša'biyyah*, 237-238; Nabīl Ġamīl, *al-Iḥtiḫālāt*, 75.
- (3) Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāyah wa-l-nihāyah*, released by 'Abdullah al-Turkī (Cairo: 1998), XVII, 425-428; al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, III, 264-269, 278-281; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV/I, 199-201; *al-Sulūk*, I/II, 409; Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *al-Rawḍ al-zāhir*, 194-199; D. Ayalon, "Studies on the Transfer of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate from Baġdād to Cairo", *Arabica* (1960): 41-59; Sa'īd 'Āšūr, *al-Muġtama'*, 154-156; *al-'Aṣr al-mamālīkī*, 342-347; 'Abd al-Mun'im Māġid, *Nuzum al-mamālīk*, 32-41.
- (4) Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *al-Rawḍ al-zāhir*, 92; al-Nūwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, XXX, 25; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, I/II, 451; Muḥammad al-Ḥamawī, *Tāriḥ al-Uṣṭūl al-'arabī* (Damascus: 1945), 117-118; Sa'īd 'Āšūr, *al-'Aṣr al-mamālīkī*, 345; *al-Zāhir Baybars*, 51; 'Uṭmān 'Aṣrī, *al-Uṣṭūl wa-l-baḥariyyah 'ala 'aṣr salāṭīn al-mamālīk fī miṣr* (Master Thesis, Faculty of Arts, History Department, Cairo University: 1970), 55; Fāyid 'Āšūr, *al-Tanzīmāt al-'askariyyah al-maġūliyyah wa-l-mamlūkiyyah* (PhD Thesis, Faculty of Arts, History Department, 'Ain Shams University: 1972, 464; Qāsim 'Abduh, *al-Nīl wa-l-muġtama' al-miṣrī fī 'aṣr salāṭīn al-mamālīk* (Cairo: 1978), 90; Ġaylān 'Abbās, *al-A'yād*, 205.
- (5) **Al-Rawḍah** Isle is considered the most ancient Nile island formed in Cairo. The Mamlūk Sultans paid paid due care to this island because it was regarded as the most beautiful park not only at their period but also throughout the Islamic history of Egypt. About it. See: Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, *al-Riḥlah*, 28; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muṣāḥarāt al-bāhirah bayna 'arā'is mutanazzahāt al-qāhirah*, released by Muḥammad al-Šištāwī, 1999, 128-142; al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, III, 339; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, III, 568-589; al-Zāhirī, *Zubdat*, 89; al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍarah*, II, 352-361; Ibn Zāhirah, *al-Faḍā'il al-bāhirah*, 202;

Caliph) there. He offered him generous hospitality. *Al-šawānī*<sup>(1)</sup> played in the Nile forward and backward before him. Drums, pipes and *nufūt* were used constantly. It was truly a spectacular day"<sup>(2)</sup>.

## Victory

Mamlūk Sultans engaged in a lot of battles throughout their reign and they were fond of celebrating victories. For instance, many campaigns were sent for prevailing the domination of the Mamlūk Sultanate in the Nubian territories<sup>(3)</sup>. The ruler of Nubia rebelled during the reign of Sultan al-Manšūr Qalawūn so he sent a detachment with a new ruler. The rebellious could not resist especially after being let down by his princes and the priests who announced their allegiance to the Mamlūk leader. On that occasion, a great celebration was held in 689 A.H / 1290 A.D.<sup>(4)</sup> Al-Nuwayrī talked about it, saying: "... Princes assembled at *Dunqulah*<sup>(5)</sup>. Soldiers took up their arms... *Al-ḥarārīq*<sup>(6)</sup> at the Nile were decorated and *al-zarrāqūn* played with *naft*. Princes made a feast in *Asūs Church* the largest church in *Dunqulah*. After that, they crowned the ruler whom the Sultan sent and let him swear allegiance to the Sultan."<sup>(7)</sup> In that way, this

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Sa'īd 'Āšūr, *al-Muḡtama*, 102-103; Muḥammad al-Šištāwī, *Mutanazzahāt al-qāhirah*, 52-76, 276-277, 339-346.

- (1) *Šawānī* is the plural form of the Arabic word *šīnī* and *šawnah*. It was one of the oldest, biggest and mostly used warships. It was considered to be an indispensable device of the fleet. About it. See: al-'Umarī, *al-Ta'rīf*, 371; Muḥammad al-Ḥamawī, *al-Uṣṭūl*, 32,56; Su'ād Māhir, *al-Baḥariyyah fi miṣr al-islāmiyyah wa ātāruhā al-bāqiyah* (Egypt: 1967), 352-353; 'Uṭmān 'Ašrī, *al-Uṣṭūl*, 103; Darwīš al-Nuḥaylī, *al-Sufun al-islāmiyyah 'alā ḥurūf al-mu'ḡam* (Alexandria: 1974), 83-85; Ibrāhīm Sa'īd, *al-Baḥariyyah fī 'aṣr salāṭīn al-mamālīk* (Cairo: 1983), 229-230; Šafā' al-Hindī, *Tiqniyyat al-asliḡah al-ayyūbiyyah wa-l-mamlūkiyyah wa taṭawwurihā* (6<sup>th</sup> A.H / 12<sup>th</sup> A.D – 10<sup>th</sup> A.H / 16<sup>th</sup> A.D centuries) (Master Thesis in Archaeology, Postgraduate Faculty, Jordan University: 2001), 74; Artūr Isrāyilyān, *Fan al-ḡarb fī al-'aṣr al-mamlūkī al-awwal bayna al-naẓariyyah wa-l-ṭaṭbīq* (PhD Thesis, Faculty of Arts, History Department, Damascus University: 2007), 161.
- (2) Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, I/I, 320.
- (3) About Nubia. See: Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *al-Rawḡ al-zāhir*, 416; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīḡ Ibn al-Furāt*, released by Qusṭanṭīn Zurayq (Beirut: 1942), VII, 45-51; al-Qalqašandī, *Šubḡ*, V, 275-278; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV/I, 203; Ibn Šāhīn al-Zāhirī, *Nayl al-amal*, I, 376; Ibn Zāhirah, *al-Faḡā'il al-bāhirah*, 166-167; Karam al-Šāwī, *Mamālīk al-nūbah fī-l-'aṣr al-mamlūkī idmiḡlālahā wa suqūṭahā wa ataruhu fī intišār al-Islām fī Sudān wādī al-nīl* (Cairo: 2006), 84-116.
- (4) Ibn Minkilī, *al-Aḡkām al-mulūkiyyah wa-l-ḡawābit al-nāmūsiyyah fī fan al-qitāl fī-l-baḡr*, released by 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Abd al-Dāyim (PhD Thesis, Faculty of Arts, History Department, Cairo University: 1974), I, 55-56; Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tašrīf al-ayyām*, 154; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīḡ Ibn al-Furāt*, VIII, 91-92; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, I/III, 751-752; 'Uṭmān 'Ašrī, *al-Uṣṭūl*, 39; Qāsim 'Abduḡ, *al-Nīl*, 97; Ibrāhīm Sa'īd, *al-Baḥariyyah*, 97-98; Muḥammad Ḥamzah, *al-Sulṭān al-Manšūr Qalāwūn* (Cairo: 1998), 97; Karam al-Šāwī, *Mamālīk al-nūbah*, 111-116.
- (5) *Dunqulah* is the capital of Nubia during the Mamlūk period. al-Qalqašandī, *Šubḡ*, V, 275; Ibrāhīm Sa'īd, *al-Baḥariyyah*, 96.
- (6) *Ḥarārīq* and *ḡarrāqāt* are the plural forms of the Arabic word *ḡarrāqah* which originally denotes one of the most important warships that was used in carrying sultans, princes and high ranking officials during naval displays in the different occasions during the Mamlūk period. About it. See: al-'Umarī, *al-Ta'rīf*, 371; Muḥammad al-Ḥamawī, *al-Uṣṭūl*, 34-36; Su'ād Māhir, *al-Baḥariyyah*, 339-340; 'Uṭmān 'Ašrī, *al-Uṣṭūl*, 98-99; Darwīš al-Nuḥaylī, *al-Sufun al-islāmiyyah*, 32-37; Aḡmad al-'Abādī and al-Sayyid Sālim, *Tārīḡ al-baḡariyyah al-islāmiyyah fī miṣr wa-l-šām* (Cairo: 1981), 248-249; Ibrāhīm Sa'īd, *al-Baḥariyyah*, 107-109.
- (7) Al-Nūwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, XXXI, 44-45.

military expedition succeeded in prevailing security in Nubia and subordinating it to the Mamlūk Sultanate as it was before.

## Celebration of Civil Achievements

### I- Constructing Buildings

The Mamlūk period witnessed the building of various architectural constructions including mosques, madrasas and palaces. Meanwhile, Sultans were eager to have great celebrations after their accomplishment<sup>(1)</sup>.<sup>(2)</sup> For instance, Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn held a big celebration for constructing al-Ablaq palace<sup>(3)</sup> in 714 A.H / 1314 1314 AD<sup>(4)</sup>. Ibn Iyās wrote about it: "*After founding the huge palace, the Sultan ordered a banquet to be arranged at that day... Then, at the end of the night, singers and musicians were brought and a great illumination was made. He stayed thereat that night. In addition, a naft ignition was burned in al-Ramlah. It was a unique, royal night...*".<sup>(5)</sup> These words included obvious indications that fire works were used in celebrating the foundation of architectural buildings during this period.

### II-Constructing Ships

Mamlūk historical sources confirmed that Mamlūk sultans were concerned with constructing ships especially that of the fleet<sup>(6)</sup> to the extent that some of them supervised its foundation by themselves<sup>(7)</sup>.

(1) 'Alyā' al-Babāwī, *al-A'yād*, 245-246.

(2) 'Alyā' al-Babāwī, *al-A'yād*, 245-246.

(3) About al-Ablaq palace. See: al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, III, 373,375-376; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭat*, III, 652,669-652,669-671; al-Zāhirī, *Zubdat*, 86; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, I/I, 485; Luṭfī Naṣṣār, *Wasā'il al-tarḥīh*, 292.

(4) Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, II/I, 129; 'Alī Ibrāhīm, *Dirāsāt fī tāriḥ al-mamālīk al-baḥariyyah wa fī 'aṣr al-Nāṣir Muḥammad biwaḡhin ḥāṣ* (Cairo: 1948), 365; 'Abd al-Mun'im Māḡid, *Nuḡum al-mamālīk*, II, 168; Ḡaylān 'Abbās, *al-A'yād*, 202; Usāmah Ḥasan, *al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn* (Cairo: 1997), 45.

(5) Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, I/I, 445.

(6) About fleet in the Mamlūk period. See: Ibn Minkilī, *al-Aḥkām al-mulūkiyyah*, I, 25-33; Muḥammad al-Ḥamawī, *al-Uṣṭūl*, 27,87-88,115-117,137-138; Su'ād Māhir, *al-Baḥariyyah*, 113-133; 'Uṭmān 'Aṣrī, *al-Uṣṭūl*, 25-47,55-60; Fāyid 'Aṣūr, *al-Tanzīmāt al-'askariyyah*, 457-465; D. Ayalon, "The Mamlūks and Naval Power", *Studies on the Mamlūks of Egypt* (London: 1977), 1-12; Aḥmad al-'Abādī and al-Sayyid Sālim, *al-Baḥariyyah*, 213-214,218,220-226,266-268,294-340; Ibrāhīm Sa'īd, *al-Baḥariyyah*, 34-39,74-75,92-102; Ṭāriq al-Ḥamadānī, "al-Sufun al-baḥariyyah al-'arabiyyah wa naṣāṭātihā fī al-baḥr al-aḥmar wa-l- muḥīṭ al-hindī fī maṭla' al-qarn al-sādis 'aṣar", *al-Mawrid*, 4<sup>th</sup> Issue, (1983), XII, 16-21; Ḥālid al-Sālim, *Mawānī' al-baḥr al-aḥmar wa aṭarahā fī tiḡārat dawlat al-mamālīk* (PhD, Faculty of Arts, History Department, Yarmouk University: 2004), 361-365; Hānī Fahrī, *al-Niḡām al-'askarī fī dawlat al-mamālīk* (Master Thesis, Faculty of Arts, History Department, Gaza University: 2007), 99-102; 'Alā' Rizq, *Dirāsāt fī tāriḥ 'aṣr salāṭin al-mamālīk*, (Cairo: 2008), 137-168; Maḥmūd Ḥālid, *al-Naṣāt al-baḥarī lidawlat al-mamālīk fī al-baḥr al-mutawassiṭ* (Master Thesis, Faculty of Arts, History Department, Damascus University: 2012), 65-92; Ṭāriq Ḡalāl, *al-Ḡayṣ fī al-'aṣr al-mamlūkī* (Cairo: 2012), 103-105; 'Alī Ibrāhīm, *al-Ḡayṣ wa-l-baḥariyyah fī 'aṣr al-mamālīk*, *Rasā'il al-taqāfah al-ḥarbiyyah* (Cairo: no date), 38-45

(7) See for instance: Ibn Ṣaddād, *Tāriḥ al-Malik al-Zāhir*, released by Aḥmad Ḥaṭīṭ (Cairo: 2009), 100, 312; Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *al-Rawḍ al-zāhir*, 92,387; Baybars al-Dawādār, *Zubdat al-fikrah fī tāriḥ al-ḥiḡrah*, released by Zubaydah 'Aṭā (Cairo: 2001), 134-136,395; Abū al-Fidā, *al-Muḥtaṣar fī aḥbār al-baṣar*, released by Muḥammad 'Azab and Yaḥyā Ḥusayn (Cairo: 1998), IV, 12; al-Nūwayrī, *Nihāyat*

Besides, they were greatly interested in celebrating such accomplishments. Concerning this, Ibn Iyās elaborated on describing the profound celebration that was held by Sultan al-Ġawrī in 918 A.H / 1512 A.D, saying: "...The Sultan brought the grand boat, *al-Ġalyūn*, which he erected... It was berthed at the Nilometre. Lamps were suspended from its poles... At that night, the Nilometre was lighted by five quintals of oil and ten thousand lamps. Then, the Sultan made a *naft* ignition costing about one hundred and seventy dinars which is the same expense of that of *al-Mahmal* that was made at *al-Ramlah* in front of the Citadel. *Naft* was taken from Cairo in a procession preceded with drums and pipes. There were 50 *qullā' al-naft*, *naft* containers, 60 *mi'zanah*, minarets, 10 *azyār*, casks, 40 *ġarraḥ*, jars, 300 *ṣawārīḥ kibār*, large firecrackers, 1200 *ma'wiyyāt*<sup>(1)</sup>, water pieces, 10 *šaġarāt*, trees, 20 *tanānīr*, chandeliers, 2000 *qīṭa'*, pieces, and 40 *šu'al*, blazes. Reaching the bank, *naft* was put in 50 boats which were lined up in front of the Nilometer ... It was burned before the Sultan ... At that moment, all princesses stood. That unique night was really incomparable ... It was distinguished with its festivity and high attendance ... Even young women were prompted to leave their boudoirs to watch that stunning illumination and marvellous *naft* ignition...<sup>(2)</sup>".

This text presented by Ibn Iyās is considered to be one of the most significant historical remarks about fire works ultimately. He provided us with a detailed depiction of the *naft* ignition and its prominent tools as well as its expenses. It is obvious that fire works were one of the most important celebratory demonstrations used during naval displays to mark erecting ships throughout that period<sup>(3)</sup>.

### Celebrating Recovery

Mamlūks historical sources are replete with many indications proving that the recovery of sultans and high ranking people as well as prominent *ḥawandāt*<sup>(4)</sup> was a

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*al-arab*, XXX, 179-180; Ibn al-Furāt, *Ayyubids, Mamlūkes and Crusaders, Selections from the Tārīḥ al-duwal wa-l-mulūk of Ibn al-Furāt*, translated by U. and M. C. Riley-Smith (Cambridge: 1971), I, 199, 202; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, I, 473; III, 615-618; *al-Sulūk*, I/II, 447; III/I, 113; Ibn Ḥaġar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-ġumr*, III, 342, 346-348, 366; al-'Aynī, *Iqd al-ġumān*, released by Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo: 1988), II, 60, 79; released by 'Abd al-Rāziq al-Ṭantāwī, 1989, (825 – 850 A.H), 254; al-Zāhirī, *Zubdat*, 141, 238-244; Ibn Taġrībirdī, *al-Nuġūm al-azāhirah*, VII, 154-155, 157; XI, 35-36; XIV, 275-276; Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa-l-abdān fī tawārīḥ al-zamān*, released by Hasan Ḥabaṣī (Cairo: 1973), III, 71-72; al-Ṣaḥāwī, *al-Tibr al-masbūk*, I, 125, 156-157; Ibn Šāhīn al-Zāhirī, *Nayl al-amal*, I, 378, 385; II, 228, 231; IV, 167, 175; VI, 64-65, 86-87; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, I/II, 27-28; II, 362; IV, 139, 212, 244, 246, 355, 365-366.

- (1) Mamlūk military manuscripts mentioned *ma'wiyyāt* which are probably *naft* pieces that do not extinguish by water but in fact its fire appears when they are broken on water surface. See: Ḥasan al-Rammāḥ, *al-Frūsiyyah*, 67-68, 120; Anonyme, *'Iyārāt al-naft al-muḥtāġ ilayhā fī-l-ḥurūb*, manuscript no. 28 *funūn ḥarbiyyah*, Institute of Arab Manuscripts, fols. 102-103. Mamlūks also knew *'iyār māwī* which is a gunpowder recipe that is also inextinguished by water.
- (2) Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, IV, 276-279; Qāsim 'Abduh, *al-Nīl*, 91; Ibrāhīm Sa'īd, *al-Baḥariyyah*, 71-72; Muḥammad al-Šištāwī, *Mutanazzahāt al-qāhirah*, 285.
- (3) Ibn Minkilī, *al-Aḥkām al-mulūkiyyah*, I, 33; 'Abd al-Mun'im Māġid, *Nuẓum al-mamālīk*, I, 198; Qāsim 'Abduh, *Aṣr al-Mamālīk*, 331-332.
- (4) See for instance: Abū al-Fidā, *al-Muḥtaṣar*, IV, 119; Ibn al-Wardī, *Tatimmat al-muḥtaṣar fī aḥbār al-baṣar*, released by Aḥmad al-Badrāwī (Lebanon: 1970), II, 417; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, II/I, 257; II/II, 318; Ibn Ḥaġar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-ġumr*, II, 37; III, 225, 227; al-'Aynī, *Iqd al-ġumān*, released by 'Abd al-Rāziq al-Ṭantāwī (Cairo: 1985), (815 – 824 A.H), 386; Ibn Taġrībirdī, *Ḥawādīṭ al-duḥūr*, I, 517; *al-*

cause deserving prolonged celebrations. There were various manifestations for these celebrations such as putting embellishments, arranging banquets, giving charities and other deeds<sup>(1)</sup>.

Ibn Taġrībirdī narrated a recovery celebration arranged in 859 A.H / 1455 A.D for Ḥawand Zaynab<sup>(2)</sup>, the wife of Sultan al-Ašraf Īnāl (857 – 865 A.H / 1453 – 1461 A.D) saying: "*Ḥawand Zaynab, the Sultan's wife, regained her health... and when her mood improved, congratulating forms of drums, reed pipes and others were offered to her, her attendants got so pleased and visitors came to see her especially after hurling various types of naft such flowers, rockets and others ... Knowing about this naft, people from everywhere directed towards Bulāq bank. Bulāq's wide streets and banks were overcrowded. This occasion resembled the Maḥmal Tour days or the plenitude of the Nile or even more. However, the naft display did not deserve and most audience regretted coming*".<sup>(3)</sup> Ibn Iyās highlighted this celebration, saying: "... *The stunning naft ignition that was launched for her cure made young women leave their boudoirs to watch it. They spent a special night in Būlāq...*"<sup>(4)</sup>.

It is obvious that Ibn Taġrībirdī expression "hurling various types of naft such as flowers, rockets and others" coincides with Ibn Iyās expression "naft ignition" which confirmed that the naft ignition indicates fire works that were used in various occasions during the Mamlūk period.

### III- River Celebrations

#### Nile Plenitude and Dam Opening

Egyptians deeply dignify the Nile as it is considered to be the source of life in Egypt.<sup>(5)</sup> Tafur, the famous traveler who also visited Egypt during the 9<sup>th</sup> century A.H/

*Nuġūm al-azāhirah*, VIII, 88; IX, 94; XIV, 104; Ibn Šāhīn al-Zāhirī, *Nayl al-amal*, II, 114, 331; IV, 59-60; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, I/II, 169; Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-ḥillān fī ḥawādiṯ al-zamān*, released by Muḥammad Muštafā (Cairo: 1962), I, 165, 262.

(1) Sa'īd 'Āšūr, *al-Muġtama'*, 194-195; Nabīl 'Abd al-'Azīz, *al-Malā'ib*, II, 211-212; Ḥayāt al-Ḥaġġī, *Aḥwāl al-'āmmah fī ḥukm al-mamālīk* (Kuwait: 1994), 26-27; Ġaylān 'Abbās, *al-A'yād*, 199-202; Luṭfi Naššār, *Wasā'il al-tarfiḥ*, 66; Maḥāsīn al-Waqqād, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ša'biyyah*, 230-231; 'Alā' Rizq, *'Āmmat al-qāhirah*, 144; Tāriq Maṅšūr and Maḥāsīn al-Waqqād, *al-Naft istiḥdāmuḥu wa taṭawwuruḥu 'inda al-muslimīn (64 – 923 A.H / 684 – 1517 A.D)* (Cairo: 2006), 42; Nabīl Ġamīl, *al-Iḥtiḫālāt*, 102-104; 'Alyā' al-Babāwī, *al-A'yād*, 243-245

(2) About Ḥawand Zaynab. See: Al-Saḥāwī, *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi' li'ahl al-qarn al-tāsi'* (Beirut: 1992), XII, 44 - 45

(3) Ibn Taġrībirdī, *Ḥawādiṯ al-duḥūr*, I, 449-450; Ibn Šāhīn al-Zāhirī, *Nayl al-amal*, V, 436; Sa'īd 'Āšūr, *al-Muġtama'*, 130; Aḥmad 'Abd al-Rāziq, *La femme au temps des Mamlouks en Egypte, IFAO*, V, (Le Caire: 1973), 4-5; *al-Mar'ah fī mišr al-mamlūkiyyah* (Cairo: 1999), 20-21; Fayzah Maḥmūd, *Marāsīm al-zawāġ fī mišr wa bilād al-šām min al-'ašr al-fātimī ḥattā mihāyat 'ašr dawlat al-mamālīk* (Master Thesis, Faculty of Arts, History Department, Yarmouk University: 2003), 80-81; Nabīl 'Abd al-'Azīz, *al-Malā'ib*, II, 211

(4) Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, II, 324; *Šafaḥāt lam tunšar min badā'i' al-zuhūr fī waqā'i' al-duḥūr*, released by Muḥammad Muštafā (Cairo: 1951), 26. See also: Tāriq Maṅšūr and Maḥāsīn al-Waqqād, *al-Naft*, 42.

(5) About the Nile. See: al-Nūwayrī, *Nihāyat al-arab*, XIX, 321-322; al-Qalqašandī, *Šubḥ*, III, 289-297; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, I, 132-144; al-Zāhirī, *Zubdat*, 85-86; al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-muḥāḍarah*, II, 315-317; Ibn Zāhirah, *al-Faḍā'il al-bāhirah*, 157-177, 185-186; Maḥmūd Rizq, *al-Nīl fī 'ašr salāṭīn al-mamālīk* (Cairo: 1965), 8-15; Muḥammad al-Šištāwī, *Mutanazzahāt al-qāhirah*, 15-18.

15<sup>th</sup> century A.D,described it as follows: "*The water of the Nile is the best in the world and seems in truth to be water of Paradise*"<sup>(1)</sup>.

Consequently, Egyptians gave due care for measuring the Nile level<sup>(2)</sup> constantly. As soon as it reached the plenitude level<sup>(3)</sup>, a great national festival used to be held in which all social classes participated.<sup>(4)</sup>

Mamlūks were keen on celebrating this occasion<sup>(5)</sup> that was held through two stages: *tahlīq al-miqyās*, anointing the nilometre<sup>(6)</sup> and *kasr al-ḥalīḡ*, opening the dam.<sup>(7)</sup>

Al-Qalqašandī presented a detailed description for that occasion in the following quotation: "*Know that the Sultan may go to the dam's opening ... head to the Nilometre ... and make a banquet there ... The guardian of the Nilometre*"<sup>(8)</sup> takes the bowl of the

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(1) Pero Tafur, *Travels and Adventures 1435-1439*, translated by Malcolm Letts (London:1926): 70; Qāsim ‘Abduh, *al-Nīl*, 121.

(2) Egyptians knew many nilometres for measuring the level of the Nile. About these nilometres, . See: al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, III, 297-298; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭat*, I, 150-163; Ibn Iyās, *Nuzhat al-umam*, 82-92; Ibn Zāhīrah, *al-Fadā’il al-bāhīrah*, 148,178-179; Pero Tafur, *Travels*, 79-80; Maḥmūd Rizq, *al-Nīl*, 33-35; Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Rāziq, *al-‘Imārah al-islāmiyyah*, 29-30; W. Popper, "The Cairo Nilometre", *NSI*, ed. by Fuat Sezgin, Frankfurt 2001, XLIV, 145-155.

(3) Plenitude is often the Nile level of sixteen cubits as it was considered the eagerly awaited level where the occasion of formal ceremony took place. When the Nile was in flood, villages were drowned. When it decreased barrenness and famine prevail.. See: Ibn Battūtah, *al-Riḥlah*, I, 31-32; al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, III, 293,299-300; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭat*, I, 155, 158,162; II, 552; Maḥmūd Rizq, *al-Nīl*, 43, 50; W. Popper, "The Cairo", 204-228.

(4) Qāsim ‘Abduh, *al-Nīl*, 43; ‘Aṣr al-mamālīk, 302-303; Ibrāhīm Sa‘īd, *al-Baḥariyyah*, 68; Āminah Maḥmūd, *Ḥaywāt al-mar’ah fī al-dawlah al-mamlūkiyyah fī miṣr waal-šām (648-923 A.H / 1250-1517 A.D)* (Master Thesis, Faculty of Arts, History Department, Yarmouk University: 1997), 128-129; Maḥāsīn al-Waqqād, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ša‘biyyah*, 231.

(5) Ibn Šaddād, *al-Malik al-Zāhir*, 158; Ibn Taḡrībīrdī, *al-Nuḡūm al-azāhirah*, XI, 233; Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’ al-zuhūr*, I/1, 324; Ibn al-Šayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, III, 199; Sa‘īd ‘Āšūr, *al-Zāhir Baybars*, 172-173; Muḥammad al-Šištāwī, *Mutanazzahāt al-qāhirah*, 305-306; ‘Alyā’ al-Babāwī, *al-A’yād*, 239-243.

(6) During the Mamlūk period, the level of the Nile was measured by the nilometre situated at *al-Rawḍah Rawḍah* Isle. About that Nilometre. See: al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, III, 298; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭat*, III, 588-589; al-Zāhīrī, *Zubdat*, 89; Maḥmūd Rizq, *al-Nīl*, 45-48; Qāsim ‘Abduh, *al-Nīl*, 42; ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Māḡid, *Nuḡūm al-mamālīk*, II, 129; J.C.Ardagh, "Nilometres", *NSI* (Frankfurt: 2001), XLIV, 62-72; F.S Richards, "Nilometre on Roda Island", *NSI* (Frankfurt: 2001), XLIV, 80-83; W. Popper, "The Cairo Nilometre", *NSI*, XLIV, 156-196; Creswell, "The Cisterns of Qairawān and the Nilometre on Rōḍa Island", *NSI* (Frankfurt: 2001), XLIV, 412-428; Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Rāziq, *al-‘Imārah al-islāmiyyah*, 30-33.

(7) About the demonstration of this celebration. See: al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, IV, 47-48; Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 57; Maḥmūd Rizq, *al-Nīl*, 51,53-55; Qāsim ‘Abduh, *al-Nīl*, 43-46; ‘Aṣr al-mamālīk, 302-305; Aḥmad al-‘Abādī and al-Sayyid Sālim, *al-Baḥariyyah*, 227-228; Ibrāhīm Sa‘īd, *al-Baḥariyyah*, 67-72; Ġaylān ‘Abbās, *al-A’yād*, 219, 224, 234-236; Hudā Luṭfī, "Coptic Festivals of the Nile: Aberrations of the Past?", *The Mamlūks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, ed. By Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann (Cambridge: 1998), 269-273; W. Popper, "The Cairo Nilometre", 210-213, 222-227; Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Rāziq, *al-‘Imārah al-islāmiyyah*, 34-35; Nabil Ġamīl, *al-Ihtifālāt*, 113-122,139; ‘Alyā’ al-Babāwī, *al-A’yād*, 234-243.

(8) The guardian of the Nilometre was an official with entire control of all matters connected with the Nilometre structure including its upkeep and repair, the daily determination and announcement of the height of the Nile during the period of its rise and the performance of certain functions connected with the annual ceremony at the attainment of plenitude. See: W. Popper, "The Cairo Nilometre", 197.

*dissolved saffron and swims in... the Nilometre ... to anoint the column ... The Sultan's ḥarrāqah along with those of the princes that were greatly embellished ... followed by countless number of boats carrying audience sail into the mouth of the gulf<sup>(1)</sup>. The Sultan in his great ḥarrāqah known as al-Ḍahabiyyah, the princes' ḥarārīq play ... and hurl with naḥḥ cannons ... The Sultan's ḥarrāqah proceeds ... The dam is opened in his attendance ...*"<sup>(2)</sup>.

## Martyr Day

The Martyr Day was a Coptic feast that took place at the eighth of Bashans<sup>(3)</sup> in Šubrā<sup>(4)</sup>. This celebration was related to the Christians' claim that the Nile River did not increase annually unless "a finger of a martyr", a predecessor saint, is thrown with its coffin into the Nile. Thus, being correlated with the Nile plenitude, all Egyptians were keen on celebrating that occasion. They used to gather from all over Egypt so as to enjoy the various amusement forms that were held in that great national festival.

Mamlūk historical sources are full of marks about this feast at that period<sup>(5)</sup>. Al-Maqrīzī for example said: "*It was one of the most charming days for the Egyptian people*"<sup>(6)</sup>. Ibn Iyās described this occasion as follows: "*Senior copts... used to get into boats to witness the moment of throwing the finger into the Nile River. Candles and lamps that were lit on their boards illuminated the bank... People got so amazed by the impressive show of burning nufūt... The Martyr Day was one of the most well-attended, stunning feasts in Cairo...*"<sup>(7)</sup>.

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- (1) The dam that was opened at the attainment of plenitude is on the gulf that was called the gulf of Cairo. See: al-Qalqašandī, *Šubḥ*, III, 302-303, 340; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, I, 190-199; Muḥammad al-Šištāwī, *Mutanazzahāt al-qāhirah*, 187-198, 299-301.
- (2) Al-Qalqašandī, *Šubḥ*, IV, 47-48; Ibn Zāhīrah, *al-Faḍā'il al-bāhirah*, 200, 208-209, 213-215; Qāsim 'Abduh, *al-Nīl*, 44-45; Ġaylān 'Abbās, *al-A'yād*, 219, 234-235; Muḥammad al-Šištāwī, *Mutanazzahāt al-qāhirah*, 306-308; Nabīl 'Abd al-'Azīz, *al-Malā'ib*, II, 205; 56-57; Nabīl Ġamīl, *al-Iḥtiḫālāt*, 117-118, 120-122; 'Alyā' al-Babāwī, *al-A'yād*, 237-239.
- (3) **Bashans** is the ninth month of the Coptic calendar that composes of thirty days and lasts from the 26<sup>th</sup> of April to the 26<sup>th</sup> of May of the Julian calendar. See: al-Qalqašandī, *Šubḥ*, II, 377; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, I, 711-712, 736-737; Ibn Zāhīrah, *al-Faḍā'il al-bāhirah*, 141; Murād Kāmil, *Ḥaḍārit miṣr*, 199, 203.
- (4) Šubrā here refers to Šubrā al-Ḥayyām which is a suburb in Cairo. The church that had the finger of the martyr located there. When it was teared down and that finger was burned, the Martyr Day was annulled decisively. About it. See: al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, I, 183, 185; Ibn Šāhīn al-Zāhirī, *Nayl al-amal*, I, 268.
- (5) See for example: al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, I, 183-185; *al-Sulūk*, II/II, 451-452; al-'Aynī, *Iqd al-ḡumān*, IV, 267-268; Ibn Taḡrībīrdī, *al-Nuḡūm al-azāhirah*, VIII, 202-203; al-Saḥāwī, *al-Tibr al-masbūk*, I, 52-53; al-Suyūṭī, *Husn al-muḥāḍarah*, II, 274; Ibn Šāhīn al-Zāhirī, *Nayl al-amal*, I, 267-268; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, I/I, 565-567; *Nuzhat al-umam*, 112-115.
- (6) Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, I, 183.
- (7) Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, I/I, 566; Ġaylān 'Abbās, *al-A'yād*, 236; Muḥammad al-Šištāwī, *Mutanazzahāt al-qāhirah*, 314; Nabīl 'Abd al-'Azīz, *al-Malā'ib*, II, 209-210; 'Alyā' al-Babāwī, *al-A'yād*, 119.

## IV- Family Celebrations

### Marriage

Marriage<sup>(1)</sup> is one of the most significant family pleasant occasions that received remarkable attention in the Mamlūk period. It starts with the engagement in which the matchmaker played a profound role in finding the suitable bride who matched the groom's descriptions. Ibn Dānyāl clarified the reason behind the groom's need for her, saying: "*She knows every free woman, every whore and every good one in Egypt and Cairo*"<sup>(2)</sup>. After the engagement period, the prenuptial ceremony was held in which the marriage contract was concluded<sup>(3)</sup>. After that, the bride's trousseau<sup>(4)</sup> was prepared in order to be transferred to the marital house in a big procession. Then, they held wedding celebration that lasted for several days on which wedding feasts, songs and other manifestations of happiness and delightment took place<sup>(5)</sup>.

Mamlūks spent lavishly on the wedding parties this can be easily observed through contemplating their vivid descriptions in the Mamlūk historical sources.<sup>(6)</sup> For example, in 727 A.H / 1327 AD, Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn married off one of his daughters to Prince Qawsūn<sup>(7)</sup>, the cup bearer<sup>(8)</sup>. Al-Maqrīzī described their wedding as follows: "... *The wedding party lasted for seven days during which five thousand*

(1) About Marriage. See: Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Rāziq, *La femme*, 123-174; *al-Mar’ah*, 65-66.

(2) Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Rāziq, *La femme*, 59; *al-Mar’ah*, 37,66-67; Maḥāsin al-Waqqād, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ša’biyyah*, 146-147,239-241; Fayzah al-Wikīl, *al-Šuwār (ḡihāz al-‘arūs fī mišr) fī ‘ašr salāṭīn al-mamālīk* (Cairo: 2001), 410-412

(3) See: Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Rāziq, "Aqd zawāḡ aḡad mamālīk dawlat al-kunūz al-islāmiyyah", *Faculty of Arts Magazine*, Emirates University: 1988), IV, 9-20; *La femme*, 129-133; *al-Mar’ah*, 72-76; Maḥāsin al-Waqqād, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ša’biyyah*, 241-242; Fayzah al-Wikīl, *al-Šuwār*, 413-422,424-428

(4) About trousseau. See: Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Rāziq, *La femme*,138-152; *al-Mar’ah*, 77-80; Maḥāsin al-Waqqād, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ša’biyyah*, 242; Fayzah al-Wikīl, *al-Šuwār*, 43-306,444-453

(5) About the celebratory demonstrations of marriage. See: Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 76-79,106-107; Āminah Maḥmūd, *Haywāt al-mar’ah*, 80-98; Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Rāziq, *La femme*, 157; *al-Mar’ah*, 80-88; Luṭfī Naṣṣār, *Wasā’il al-tarḡīh*, 149-150; Maḥāsin al-Waqqād, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ša’biyyah*, 243; Fayzah al-Wikīl, *al-Šuwār*, 429- 443; Muḥammad Hasan, *al-Ussrah al-mišriyyah*, 110; Fayzah Maḥmūd, *Marāsīm al-zawāḡ*, 106-143; Hibah Maḥmūd, "al-Zawāḡ fī usar salāṭīn al-mamālīk", *AnIsl*, XLII(2008), 25-45; Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Salām, *al-Ḥayāh al-ṭaqāfiyyah*, 251; Nabīl Ġamīl, *al-Iḥtiḡālāt*, 130; Ḥusām Aḥmad, *al-Zawāḡ al-siyāsī fī mišr fī ‘ašr dawlat al-mamālīk al-baḡariyyah (648-784 A.H / 1250 – 1382 A.D)*(Master Thesis, Faculty of Arts, History and Archaeology Department, Alexandria University: 2012), 190-202; ‘Alyā’ al-Babāwī, *al-A’yād*, 158-191

(6) See for instance: Ibn Šaddād, *al-Malik al-Zāhir*, 166-168; al-‘Aynī, *Iqd al-ḡumān*, II, 154-156; (815 - 824 A.H), 174; Ibn Taḡrībirdī, *Ḥawādīṭ al-duḡūr*, 204-205; *al-Nuḡūm al-azāhirah*, VII, 165-166; IX, 89-90, 211-212; al-Saḡāwī, *al-Tibr al-masbūk*, III, 12-13; Ibn Šāḡīn al-Zāhirī, *Naylal-amal*, I, 213, 409; II, 214; III, 254; V, 301; VIII, 70,72-73; Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Rāziq, *al-Mar’ah*, 81-84; Fayzah al-Wikīl, *al-Šuwār*, 433-440.

(7) About Qawsūn al-Sāqī al-Nāṣirī. See: al-Šafadī, *A’yān al-‘ašr wa a’wān al-našr*, released by ‘Alī Abū Abū Zayd and others (Damascus: 1998), IV, 136-141.

(8) Al-Šafadī, *A’yān al-‘ašr*, IV, 137-138; Ibn Kaṭīr, *al-Bidāyah wa-l-nihāyah*, XVIII, 278; Ibn Taḡrībirdī, *al-Nuḡūm al-azāhirah*, IX, 211-212; Muḥammad ‘Āṣī, *Isrāf salāṭīn al-mamālīk* (Cairo: 1994), 54; Fayzah al-Wikīl, *al-Šuwār*, 433-434; Fayzah Maḥmūd, *Marāsīm al-zawāḡ*, 128-129; Ḥusām Aḥmad, *al-Zawāḡ al-siyāsī*, 175,194-195; ‘Alyā’ al-Babāwī, *al-A’yād*, 177.

sheep, one hundred cows, fifty horses, and innumerable hens and geese were slaughtered... Moreover, Prince Qağlīs<sup>(1)</sup> spent eighty thousand dirhams on establishing a tower of gunpowder and naft at the Citadel... "<sup>(2)</sup>.

## Circumcision

Circumcision was considered one of the important family occasions that different social classes gave due care during the Mamlūk period. On the day of the ceremony the child was sent to the bath with his new clothes. Then, he was lifted on the back of a very ornamented horse and taken in a procession along streets surrounded by people carrying swords. The family of the child threw a great party. The stereotype was that the barber was conventionally responsible for circumcising children at these ages. Relatives and friends used to attend these occasions and offer courtesy money in the circumcision bowl.<sup>(3)</sup>

For instance, in 886 A.H / 1481 A.D, the circumcision party of the boys of the Judge and Secretary Ibn Muzhir<sup>(4)</sup> was held at *al-Raṭlī* Pond.<sup>(5)</sup> Ibn Iyās described it, saying: "The secretary ordered all the pond inhabitants to light a big illumination in their houses and started to distribute ten rotls of oil and a table carrying excellent food of that feast for each house. They paid exaggerated attention to the illumination... to the extent that the pond looked shiny. He made an astonishing naft ignition of which the like was never seen before, young women were prompted to leave their boudoirs to watch it... Such dazzling illumination and naft ignition lasted for three successive days. This was a very unique event that had never happened before. Four hundred boats full of people sailed in the pond ..."<sup>(6)</sup>.

After this enumeration of the different celebrations that were held during the Mamlūk period, it is obvious that fire works played an important role as one of the most significant manifestations of these celebrations.

## II- Fireworks in Entertainment

Throughout history, the Egyptian people are famous for their humourness and tendency for amusing and entertaining. Ibn Baṭūṭah described them as being "*fond of*

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(1) About Prince Sayf al-Dīn Qağlīs. See: Ibn al-Ğazrī, *Hawādīṭ al-zamānwa anbā'ih wa waḥyiyāt al-akābir wa-l-a'yān min abnā'ih, al-ma'rūf bi-tārīḥ Ibn al-Ğazrī*, released by 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmūrī (Beirut: 1998), II, 478; al-Şafadī, *A'yān al-'aṣr*, II, 107; V, 257

(2) Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, II/I, 288; *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV/I, 253

(3) About circumcision, . See: Ibn Sūdūn, *Nuzhat al-nuḥūs*, 54, 75, 82-83, 110-111, 114; Sa'īd 'Āšūr, *al-Muğtama'*, 124-125; *al-'Aṣr al-mamālīkī*, 320; Āminah Maḥmūd, *Ḥaywāt al-mar'ah*, 121-122; Maḥāsin al-Waqqād, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ša'biyyah*, 138-139, 245; Muḥammad Ḥasan, *al-Uṣrah al-miṣriyyah*, 113; Nabīl Ğamīl, *al-Iḥtiḫālāt*, 131; 'Alyā' al-Babāwī, *al-A'yād*, 196-199.

(4) About Abū Bakr Ibn Muzhir. See: Ibn al-Ğazrī, *Tārīḥ Ibn al-Ğazrī*, I, 74; al-Şaḥāwī, *al-Daw' al-lāmi'*, XI, 88 – 89, 271; al-Suyūṭī, *Naẓm al-'iqyān fī a'yān al-a'yān*, released by Filīb Ḥattā (Beirut: 1927), 143.

(5) Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Muḥāḥarāt al-bāhirah*, 23-24.

(6) Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, III, 186-187; Doris Abouseif, *Azbakiyya and its Environs from Azbak to Ismā'īl, AnIsl-Suppl.*, VI, (Le Caire: 1985), 21-22; Ğaylān 'Abbās, *al-A'yād*, 299; Muḥammad al-Şištāwī, *Mutanazzahāt al-qāhirah*, 289-290; Luṭṭī Naṣṣār, *Wasā'il al-tarḥīḥ*, 150-151, 174; 'Alyā' al-Babāwī, *al-A'yād*, 197.

singing and merriment"<sup>(1)</sup>. Piloti de Crete said: "The water of the Nile is endowed with some characteristic that make people feel happy, merry and shelter them from worry and sorrow".<sup>(2)</sup>

## Outings

Mamlūk Sultans liked going out for relaxation and pleasure. Sultan al-Naṣir Ḥasan for instance went on a journey in 762 A.H / 1360 AD<sup>(3)</sup>, about which Ibn Iyās said: "The Sultan crossed over and directed towards Kūm Barā<sup>(4)</sup> in the spring ... feeling pleasant there, he remained for three months ... enjoying the consummate comfort. Every night, he listened to music ... and watched shadow play in addition to naft ignitions ..."<sup>(5)</sup>

## Acrobatics

Acrobatics were considered to be one of the entertainments that were widespread during the Mamlūk period. People were keen on witnessing the performance of acrobatics that required skill and nimbleness. Thus, they gathered from all over the country to watch its wonderful arts<sup>(6)</sup>.

Mamlūk historical sources reported that in 828 A.H / 1425 A.D a Mamlūk tied a rope at *al-Rumaylah* between the minaret of Sultan Ḥasan's *madrasah* and the roof of *ṭabaqāt al-Ašrafīyah*<sup>(7)</sup> at the Citadel to walk along. He presented a lot of acrobatics and hurled by using *mukḥulah*, cannon, and *qawsal-riġl*, leg bow. Sultan al-Ašraf Barsbāy, princes as well as a huge crowd watched the show of this ropewalker.<sup>(8)</sup> Al-Zāhirī said about this

(1) Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, *al-Rihlah*, I, 28; Sa'īd 'Āšūr, *al-Muġtama'*, 102; Qāsim 'Abduh, *Ašral-mamālīk*, 289, 337; Muḥammad al-Šištāwī, *Mutanazzahāt al-qāhirah*, 269; Maḥāsin al-Waqqād, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ša'biyyah*, 247; Nabīl Ġamāl, *al-Iḥtiḫālāt*, 143.

(2) Sa'īd 'Āšūr, *al-Muġtama'*, 102; *al-Zāhir Baybars*, 164; Muḥammad al-Šištāwī, *Mutanazzahāt al-qāhirah*, 269-270; Luṭfi Naṣṣār, *Wasā'il al-tarfiḥ*, 280.

(3) Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV/I, 284; Muḥammad Ġamāl, *A'māl al-ġiẓīyah*, 120.

(4) *Kūm Barā* is in Giza. About it. See: Ibn Duqmāq, *al-Intiṣār li-wāsiṭat 'aqd al-amṣār* (Beirut: 1976), I, 132; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV/I, 284; Muḥammad Ġamāl, *A'māl al-ġiẓīyah*, 21.

(5) Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, I/I, 572-573; Luṭfi Naṣṣār, *Wasā'il al-tarfiḥ*, 350; Nabīl 'Abd al-'Azīz, *al-Malā'ib*, II, 212.

(6) Al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, IV/II, 713-714, 716-717; Ibn Šāhīn al-Zāhirī, *Nayl al-amal*, VIII, 171; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, II, 105; Sa'īd 'Āšūr, *al-Muġtama'*, 107; Aḥmad 'Abd al-Rāziq, "Wasā'il al-tasliyah 'inda al-muslimīn", *Dirāsāt fi-l-ḥadārah al-islāmiyyah* (Cairo: 1985), I, 100-101; Luṭfi Naṣṣār, *Wasā'il al-tarfiḥ*, 278-289; Muḥammad al-Šištāwī, *Mayādīn al-qāhirah fī al-'aṣr al-mamlūkī* (Cairo: 1999), 34-37; Maḥāsin al-Waqqād, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ša'biyyah*, 144, 251-252; Zakā' al-Anṣārī, *Anmāṭ al-ḥikāyah al-ša'biyyah fī-l-qarn al-tāsi' al-ḥiġrī 'aṣr salāṭīn al-mamālīk (800-900 A.H)* (PhD thesis, Faculty of Arts, Arabic Language Department, Cairo University: 2004), 33; Samāḥ al-Sallāwī, *al-Ġāliyyāt al-aġnabiyyah fī miṣr fī al-'aṣr al-mamlūkī* (Cairo: 2014), 116.

(7) The *ṭabaqah* refers to one of the twelve Sultanic Mamlūk *ṭibāq* of the Citadel. Each one was like a quarter that could accommodate one thousand Mamlūks in its dwellings. About *ṭibāq*. See: al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭaṭ*, III, 691-695; al-Zāhirī, *Zubdat*, 87-88; Sa'īd 'Āšūr, *al-Muġtama'*, 58.

(8) Ibn Ḥaġar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā' al-gumr*, III, 348; al-'Aynī, *Iqd al-ġumān*, (825-850 A.H), 256-257; Ibn al-Šayrafī, *Nuḥat al-nufūs*, III, 73-74; Ibn Šāhīn al-Zāhirī, *Nayl al-amal*, IV, 192; Qāsim 'Abduh, *Ašral-mamālīk*, 337; Maḥāsin al-Waqqād, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-ša'biyyah*, 251-252; Luṭfi Naṣṣār, *Wasā'il al-tarfiḥ*, 278; Muḥammad al-Šištāwī, *Mayādīn al-qāhirah*, 35; R. Irwin, "Gunpowder and Firearms in the Mamlūk Sultanate Reconsidered", *the Mamlūks in Egyptian and Syria Politics and Society, the Medieval Mediterranean Peoples, Economies and Cultures*, LI (Boston: 2004), 122.

incident: " ...A foreigner who came to Egypt and embraced Islam – tied a rope between a minaret and the roof of *ṭabaqat al-Ašrafiyyah* which is the highest *ṭabaqah* of the Citadel. The inbetween distance reaches about a mile. While walking along it on his hands and feet, he kept on launching *naft* and hurling by using a *ḡarḡ* bow. When he reached the middle of the rope, he threw himself. All the gathered Egyptians screamed. Meanwhile, he clung to a fine robe that he had tied to the walking robe. He ascended up, shouted and invoked peace and blessing on Prophet Muḡammad... "<sup>(1)</sup>. The aforementioned information clarified that the expression "hurled by using a *mukḡulah*" refers to hurling *naft* which means that fire works were used in acrobatic shows. Besides, the acrobat usage of *mukḡalah* while being on a rope is an ample evidence that Mamlūks knew light, portable *makāḡil*. It is worth mentioning that there were various means of entertainment during the Mamlūk period in which fire works played a dominating role.

### III- Fireworks in Power Show-Off

#### Processions

Sultans, princes and dignitaries were fond of processions as they demonstrate strength and reverence. Mamlūk historical sources illustrated the magnificence and splendour of these parades. Thus, all the society classes were quite keen on witnessing such processions<sup>(2)</sup>. Ibn Iyās provided us with many recitations about some processions. For instance, he described the parade of Sultan Muḡammad Ibn Qāyṭibāyīn 903 A.H / 1497 A.D, saying: "...He used to wander in a procession everyday after the evening prayer along with his cousins preceded by two round lanterns and four flambeaux... and many dark slaves with *makāḡil* of *naft*... "<sup>(3)</sup>.

#### Guarding Ports

Mamlūks were seriously concerned with guarding Alexandria which was one of the most important coastal cities having a strategic site on the Mediterranean<sup>(4)</sup>. Al-Nuwayrī Nuwayrī al-Skandarīn the following quotation illustrated some of its guarding manifestations in 766 A.H / 1365 A.D: "*The Sultan deputy at Alexandria, Prince Ḥalīl Ṣalāḡ al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arrām*<sup>(5)</sup> left it to Honoured *Hiḡāz* to perform pilgrimage... He put a

(1) Al-Zāhirī, *Zubdat*, 94.

(2) About processions. See: ‘Alī Ibrāhīm, *al-Mamālīk*, 357-358; Sa‘īd ‘Āšūr, *al-Muḡtama’*, 76-80; Nabīl Ġamīl, *al-Iḡṭifālāt*, 98-102, 149; Manāl ‘Abd al-Maḡīd, *Ḥaḡārat miṣr al-islāmiyyah fī al-‘aṣr al-mamlūkī*, 25-26.

(3) Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i’ al-zuhūr*, III, 383, 387; D. Ayalon, *Gunpowder and Firearms in the Mamlūk Kingdom* (London: 1956), 68-69; Luṭfī Naṣṣār, *Wasā’il al-tarḡīḡ*, 142, 284; ‘Alā’ Rizq, *‘Āmmat al-qāhirah*, 126; Ṭarīq Maṣṣūr and Maḡāsīn al-Waqqād, *al-Naḡṭ*, 43; Nabīl ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, *al-Malā’ib*, II, 213.

(4) About Alexandria. See: al-Qalqaṣandī, *Ṣubḡ*, III, 407-408; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Ḥiṭat*, I, 392 - 407, 473 - 474; 474; al-Zāhirī, *Zubdat*, 103; Maḡmūd Ḥalīd, *al-Naṣāṭ al-baḡarī*, 98-102; Muḡammad Ibrāhīm, *Nuwwāb al-salṭanah al-mamlūkīyyah bi-madīnat al-askandariyyah wa aḡam āṭārahumaḡal- mi-‘māriyyah wa-l-faniyyah (767 – 923 A.H / 1365 – 1517 A.D)* (Master Thesis, Faculty of Arts, Archaeology Department, ‘Ain Shams University: 2015), 21.

(5) About Ibn ‘Arrām. See: Muḡammad Ibrāhīm, *Nuwwāb al-askandariyyah*, 449, 452, 454, 457-459, 461-462.

prince called Ġanaġrā<sup>(1)</sup> on behalf of him. When Ġanaġrā entered Alexandria, he saw its volunteered patrols guarding its harbour... with their strained ġarḥ bows, flying silk flags, mazārīq, lances... and enflaming naḡḡ with its blazing fire. In their colourful clothes, they seem like roses in a garden. Seeing them at that state, Ġanaġrā cried and said: "These are the owners of the Paradise."...He stayed there from Šawwāl 766A.H / 1365 AD... to Muḡarram... He kept on observing those guards who alternate guarding the port once a week. He watched the zarrāqūn who throw off naḡḡ with its... flying sparks as well as spirals that rotate with various colours of fire: greenness, yellowness, whiteness and redness. Thus, he became so delighted from night to day ... "<sup>(2)</sup>. The aforementioned quotation has a quite important historical significance as it testified the usage of various sorts of fire works with their numerous colours in guarding the port of Alexandria so as to declare the strength of the harbour's garrison who were responsible for repelling hostile attacks<sup>(3)</sup>.

### Delegates

Being a very great state at that time, the Mamlūk Sultanate was a destination for envoys, messengers and delegates from all over the world<sup>(4)</sup>. Sultans were concerned with welcoming<sup>(5)</sup> them so kindly and honourably. They were also keen on demonstrating strength and greatness of the Mamlūk Sultanate especially before their delegates<sup>(6)</sup>.

Mamlūk historical sources are replete with such situations that assured the hospitality that delegates received during the Mamlūk period. In 915 AH / 1509 AD, an envoy from the Ottoman Sultan came to Egypt and he was offered a special hospitality as cited by Ibn Iyās: "He (Sultan al-Ġawrī) made him peculiar things that had never been done to any other king at all"<sup>(7)</sup>. He proved that in the succeeding quotations. At his arrival: "... Boats even the grand ḡarrāqah were prepared (on the Sultan's order)... for the envoy of the Ottoman Sultan... A naḡḡ ignition was made so as to be hurled before him in the Nile when sailing ... "<sup>(8)</sup>. In his honour, the Sultan gave orders for the Citadel to be decorated with sultanic standards and arms and for big cannons to be lined up at the gate of the

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- (1) Prince Ġanaġrā has no biography. See: Muḡammad Ibrāhīm, *Nuwwāb al-askandariyyah*, 84.
- (2) Al-Nūwayrī al-Skandarī, *al-Ilmām*, II, 130-132; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, III/I, 414-415; Nabīl ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, *al-Malā‘ib*, II, 202-203; Muḡammad Ibrāhīm, *Nuwwāb al-askandariyyah*, 83, 100-102.
- (3) In this discourse, it is worth mentioning that this garrison was not as strong as it sounded so Cyprus launched a violent campaign upon it in 767 A.H / 1365 A.D. Consequently, Alexandria turned from being just a province to a governorate. See: al-Nūwayrī al-Skandarī, *al-Ilmām*, II, 114-118, 134; al-Qalqašandī, *Šubḡ*, IV, 24; Muḡammad Ibrāhīm, *Nuwwāb al-askandariyyah*, 86-87, 99-125.
- (4) Muḡammad al-Šištāwī, *Mayādīn al-qāhirah*, 38.
- (5) Mamlūks had dedicated a certain post called *al-mahmandār* for receiving delegates and messengers. . See: al-Qalqašandī, *Šubḡ*, IV, 22; V, 459; ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Māġid, *Nuẓum al-mamālīk*, II, 47.
- (6) About demonstrations of receiving messengers. See: Pero Tafur, *Travels*, 74-76; Sa‘īd ‘Āšūr, *al-Muġtama‘*, 76-78; Fāyid ‘Āšūr, *al-Tanzīmāt al-‘askariyyah*, 430-434; ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Māġid, *Nuẓum al-mamālīk*, II, 154-157; Muḡammad al-Šištāwī, *Mayādīn al-qāhirah*, 38-42, 77-82; Samāḡ al-Sallāwī, *al-Awdā‘ al-ḡadāriyyah fī miṣr wa-l-šām fi-l-‘aṣr al-mamlūkī* (Cairo: 2014), 108-112.
- (7) Ibn Iyās, *Badā‘i‘ al-zuhūr*, IV, 186.
- (8) Ibn Iyās, *Badā‘i‘ al-zuhūr*, IV, 152.

arsenal<sup>(1)</sup>. In this manner, al-Ġawrī spared no effort in demonstrating the might of the Mamlūk Sultanate before envoys, messengers and delegates so as to inspire awe and respect in the neighbourhood<sup>(2)</sup>.

### Beduin Tribes

Beduin tribes were causing immense trouble and turmoil throughout the entire Mamlūk period. They were carrying out attacks on villages and countries and committing highway robbery.<sup>(3)</sup>

As for the Mamlūk Sultanate, it was resisting them by sending campaigns to eliminate their insurgency and spoilage<sup>(4)</sup>. For instance, in 918 A.H / 1512 A.D in the reign of Sultan al-Ġawrī, tidings were prevailed that seven of those Beduin tribes had allied on common terms of insubordination. When he made sure of these news, he got prepared for facing them, declaring: "...I myself will go to face that... He ordered for a *naft* ignition to be enflamed ... and got more determined to perform this mission ..."<sup>(5)</sup>. In this way, fire works were a means of showing the power and owe of the state in the course of its resistance against beduin tribes.

Thus, there is no doubt that Mamlūks were keen on showing strength and solemnity throughout their Sultanate. In this respect, fire works played a great role in power show off.

After this detailed enumeration of the occasions that witnessed fire work displays, it became obvious that Fire works were used in various celebrations such as: religious festivals, national ceremonies, river celebrations as well as family occasions. They were not only used for celebration but also for amusement and power show off.

Mamlūk period was distinguished by the presence of many entertainment places. Thus, fireworks were used on land and sea alike. They were lit in streets, hippodromes, Nile banks, sea beaches, ponds as well as islands. It is worth noting that fireworks were enkindled by day and night likewise.

Mamlūk historical sources tackled the enormous costs of these fire works. al-Baqā'ī censured the shocking extravagancy of using *naft* during festivities, saying: "*Immense amounts of money were gone in vain. There is no power nor might except with Allah*".<sup>(6)</sup>

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(1) Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, IV, 154; D. Ayalon, *Gunpowder*, 58; 'Abd al-Raḥmān Zakī, "Ibn Iyās wa istiḥdām al-asliḥah al-nāriyyah fī ḍaw' mā katabahu fī kitāb badā'i' al-zuhūr", *Ibn Iyās dirāsāt wa buḥūt*, ed. by Aḥmad 'Abd al-Karīm (Cairo: 1977), 118-119.

(2) D. Ayalon, *Gunpowder*, 57-58.

(3) About the rebellion of Beduin Tribes. See: Sayyid 'Abd al-'Āl, "Ṭawarāt al-'irbān wa aṭarahā fi-l-iqtisād al-miṣrī zaman salāfin al-mamālīk", *al-Mu'arriḥ al-'arabī Magazine*, 20<sup>th</sup> Issue (2012), 395-413.

(4) Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *al-Rawḍ al-zāhir*, 51; al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, I/III, 920-922; II/I, 129; Sa'īd 'Āšūr, *al-Muḡtama'*, 52-54; Qāsim 'Abduh, *al-Nīl*, 96; Muḥammad Ġamāl, *A'māl al-ḡīziyyah*, 26-29, 35-36, 41, 109-110.

(5) Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, IV, 256-257; Muḥammad Ibrāhīm, *Nuwwāb al-askandariyyah*, 182.

(6) Al-Baqā'ī, *Tārīḥ al-Baqā'ī*, released by Muḥammad Sālim, II (Riyadh: 1993), 49.

On the other hand, enjoying the magnificent fire works displays was not only restricted to Sultans, princes and dignitaries but also common people as well. Mamlūk historical sources confirmed that public were fond of attending such occasions. Ibn Iyās indicated that people hurry for attending such displays even if it was a mere rumour. He said: "*It was spread that the Sultan would launch ... a naft ignition; so vast crowds assembled to view it. However, naft did not come true*"<sup>(1)</sup>.

It is noticed that fire works were used on a larger scale during the Circassian Mamlūk period than Bahārī Mamlūk period. Despite the political, economic and social difficulties that faced the Mamlūks during the Circassian period especially by the end of their Sultanate, Sultan al-Ašraf al-Ġawrī is deemed to have used fire works in different occasions more than any other Sultan.

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(1) Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, IV, 356; Nabīl 'Abd al-'Azīz, *al-Malā'ib*, II, 214.