

The Determining Role of the Zāhiriyya Faction in the Second Reign of al-Nāşir Faraj

Nâsır Ferec'in İkinci Saltanatında Zāhiriyye Hizbinin Belirleyiciliği

Yusuf ÖTENKAYA 



Sorumlu Yazar/Corresponding Author

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Yusuf ÖTENKAYA

Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit Üniversitesi

İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Fakültesi, Tarih Bölümü,
Zonguldak, Türkiye

ORCID: [0000-0001-6721-4888](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6721-4888)

e-mail: yusufotenkaya@beun.edu.tr

Başvuru/Submitted: 08.02.2025

Kabul/Accepted: 13.10.2025

Atıf: Ötenkaya, Yusuf, “Nâsır Ferec'in İkinci Saltanatında Zāhiriyye Hizbinin Belirleyiciliği”, *Ortaçağ Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 8/2 (Aralık 2025): 684-706.

Citation: Ötenkaya, Yusuf, “The Determining Role of the Zāhiriyya Faction in the Second Reign of al-Nāşir Faraj”, *Ortaçağ Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 8/2 (December 2025): 684-706.

Lisans/License:



OPEN  ACCESS

Öz- Bu çalışma, en-Nâsır Ferec'in ikinci saltanatı (1405–1412) dönemindeki karmaşık siyasî ve askerî dinamikleri; merkezi otoritenin dönüşümü, hilâfetin işlevindeki değişim ve seçkin askerî grupların rolü çerçevesinde ele almaktadır. Bu dönemde Memlûk Devleti'nin genel istikrarsızlığı üzerine hatırı sayılır bir literatür mevcut olmakla birlikte, Ferec'in iktidarını pekiştirmek için başvurduğu hususi araçlar konusunda literatürde önemli bir boşluk bulunmaktadır. Bu makale, söz konusu boşluğu doldurmayı hedefleyerek Sultan Berkûk'un memlûklarının Mısır'daki iç siyasî yapı üzerindeki belirleyici rolünü ortaya koymaktadır. Araştırma, ilk saltanatı hizipçi mücadelelerle şekillenen Ferec'in, ikinci saltanatında Mısır'da daha merkezi bir himaye politikasına yöneldiğini göstermektedir. Ancak bu dönüşüm Suriye'de gerçekleşmemiştir. Suriye'deki naipler arasında süregelen mücadeleler ve hizipleşme, güçlü emirler olan Şeyh el-Mahmûdî ve Nevruz'un Ferec'e karşı ittifak oluşturmaya yol açmıştır. Bu muhalefet, halifenin sembolik otoritesi üzerinden meşrulaştırılmış ve böylece dinî meşruiyetin merkezi otoriteye karşı kullanıldığı bir süreç ortaya çıkmıştır. Dönemin çağdaş kronikleri temel alınarak yürütülen tarihsel-analitik yöntemle, makale; Ferec'in sert politikalarının, askerî gruplaşmaların ve bölgesel güçlerin artan özerkliğinin, Memlûk merkezi otoritesinde bir çözülmeye yol açtığını öne sürmektedir. Sonuç olarak, el-Nâsır Ferec'in ikinci saltanatı, geç dönem Memlûk Devleti'nin güç yapısını yeniden şekillendiren ve uzun vadeli parçalanmanın zeminini hazırlayan kritik bir dönem olarak öne çıkmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler– Orta Çağ Tarihi, Memlûklar, İktidar, İsyan, Zāhiriyye, Nâsır Ferec.

Abstract – This paper examines the complex political and military dynamics during the second reign of al-Nasir Faraj (1405–1412) focusing on the transformation of central authority, the evolving function of the caliphate, and the role of elite military groups. While considerable scholarship exists on the general instability of the Mamluk state in this period, there remains a significant gap in the literature concerning the specific means through which Faraj attempted to consolidate his power. This paper addresses that gap by investigating the decisive role played by the mamluks of his father, Barquq, in the internal political landscape of Egypt. The research reveals that, although factionalism had characterized Faraj's first reign, his second reign marked a transition toward a more centralized patronage system in Egypt. However, this shift was not replicated in Syria, where competing regents continued to struggle for dominance. The failure to establish stable control in Syria led to continued fragmentation and the eventual formation of an alliance against Faraj by powerful amirs such as al-Shaykh al-Mahmûdî and Nawruz. Their opposition was legitimized through the symbolic authority of the caliph, highlighting how religious legitimacy was strategically employed to challenge central rule. Utilizing a historical-analytical method based on contemporary chronicles, the paper argues that Faraj's harsh policies, internal military realignments, and the growing autonomy of regional powers collectively precipitated a breakdown in Mamluk central authority. Ultimately, the second reign of al-Nasir Faraj emerges as a critical episode that redefined the power structure of the late Mamluk state and laid the groundwork for its prolonged fragmentation.

Keywords– Medieval History, Mamluks, Power, Rebellion, Zāhiriyya, al-Nāşir Faraj.

Yayın Tarihi	26 Aralık 2025
Hakem Sayısı	Ön İnceleme: İki İç Hakem (Editör-Yayın Kurulu Üyesi) İçerik İncelemesi: Üç Dış Hakem
Değerlendirme	Çift Taraflı Kör Hakemlik
Benzerlik Taraması	Yapıldı-İntihal.Net
Etik Bildirim	ortacagarastirmalaridergisi@gmail.com
Çıkar Çatışması	Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir.
Finansman	Herhangi bir fon, hibe veya başka bir destek alınmamıştır.
Telif Hakkı & Lisans	Yazarlar dergide yayımlanan çalışmalarının telif hakkına sahiptirler ve çalışmaları CC BY-NC 4.0 lisansı altında yayımlanır. https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/deed.tr
Date of Publication	26 December 2025
Reviewers	Single Anonymized - Two Internal (Editor board member) Double Anonymized - Three External
Review Reports	Double-blind
Plagiarism Checks	Yes – İntihal.Net
Complaints	ortacagarastirmalaridergisi@gmail.com
Conflicts of Interest	The Author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest.
Grant Support	No funds, grants, or other support was received.
Copyright & License	Author(s) publishing with the journal retain(s) the copyright to their work licensed under the CC BY-NC 4.0. https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/deed.tr

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The reign of al-Nâşir Faraj (1399–1412) marks a critical period in the history of the Mamlūk Sultanate, characterized by political instability, internal power struggles, and the gradual erosion of central authority. This study examines the factors that undermined Faraj's ability to consolidate absolute sovereignty, particularly in Syria, during his second reign, despite his partial control over Egypt. It also explores the broader implications of these dynamics for the Mamlūk state's administrative and military structures, as well as the role of religious legitimacy in shaping political authority.

Following the death of al-Malik al-Zâhir Barqûq in 1399, al-Nâşir Faraj ascended to the throne as a minor, leading to a power vacuum and intense rivalries among the Zâhiriyya amirs, the faction loyal to Barqûq. The early years of Faraj's reign were marked by political and economic crises, including power struggles among the amirs, the Timurid invasion, famines caused by the low Nile flow, Bedouin revolts, and difficulties in tax collection. These challenges were exacerbated by the lack of unity among

the Zāhiriyya amirs, who sought to exploit Faraj's nominal authority to further their own ambitions. The rivalry between the Turkish and Circassian mamlūks further complicated matters, culminating in Faraj's temporary deposition in 1405 and the brief ascension of his brother, 'Abd al-'Aziz. This episode underscores the fragility of Faraj's authority and the extent to which the amirs were willing to manipulate the sultanate to protect their own interests.

Faraj's second reign, beginning in 1405, was similarly fraught with challenges. Although he managed to reassert partial control over Egypt, his efforts to dominate Syria were repeatedly thwarted by the Zāhiriyya mamlūks and regional amirs. The Zāhiriyya faction, which had been a cornerstone of Barqūq's regime, consistently constrained Faraj's authority, creating significant obstacles during his Syrian campaigns. Faraj's attempts to replace the Zāhiriyya mamlūks with his own loyalists further alienated this powerful group, leading to widespread discontent and fragmentation within his administration. The rebellions of prominent amirs such as Jakam, al-Shaykh al-Mahmūdī, and Nawrūz al-Khāfizī in Syria not only challenged Faraj's military authority but also questioned the legitimacy of his rule. These amirs leveraged the concept of *khusdāshīya* (comradeship among mamlūks) to rally support against Faraj, highlighting the deep-seated divisions within the Mamlūk elite.

One of the most significant developments during Faraj's second reign was the instrumentalization of the caliphate as a counterweight to his authority. The opposition to Faraj's rule culminated in the proclamation of Caliph al-Musta'īn as sultan, a move that underscored the symbolic importance of religious legitimacy in Mamlūk political discourse. The caliphate's role in legitimizing the resistance against Faraj, particularly in Damascus, reveals how religious authority could be wielded to challenge and limit the power of the sultan. This transformation not only weakened Faraj's position but also reshaped the dynamics of power within the Mamlūk state, paving the way for greater autonomy among regional amirs.

The siege of Damascus in the final days of Faraj's reign epitomized the collapse of his authority. Abandoned by his supporters and defeated by the combined forces of al-Shaykh al-Mahmūdī and Nawrūz, Faraj's downfall was sealed by the caliph's endorsement of his opponents. This event highlights the extent to which Faraj's harsh policies and inability to maintain unity among the mamlūks eroded his power base. The amirs' willingness to switch allegiances in pursuit of their own interests further underscores the individualistic and opportunistic nature of Mamlūk politics. Faraj's reign thus serves as a case study in the fragility of centralized authority in the Mamlūk state and the challenges of maintaining control over a fractious elite.

In conclusion, al-Nāṣir Faraj's reign represents a turning point in the history of the Mamlūk sultanate, marked by the weakening of central authority and the rise of regional power centers. The persistent power struggles among the amirs, the fragmentation of the military class, and the instrumentalization of the caliphate all contributed to the erosion of Faraj's authority and the destabilization of the state. Faraj's inability to consolidate control over Syria, despite his partial dominance in Egypt, reveals the limitations of his rule and the broader structural weaknesses of the Mamlūk system. Ultimately, the events of Faraj's reign laid the groundwork for the long-term decline of the Mamlūk state, as the amirs' pursuit of individual interests undermined the cohesion and stability of the sultanate. This study underscores the complex interplay of political, military, and religious factors that shaped the trajectory of the Mamlūk state during a critical period of its history.

INTRODUCTION

Following the death of al-Malik al-Zâhir Barqûq (d. 801/1399), al-Nâsir Faraj was proclaimed sultan. The first phase of his sultanate was characterized by political-economic problems such as power struggles among the great amirs, distrust between them, attempts by the regents (*nâ'ibs*) of Syria to take over Egypt, the Timurid invasion, famines due to the low flow of the Nile, Bedouin revolts and the failure to collect taxes regularly.¹ During this six-year period, al-Nâsir Faraj was nominally sultan due to his childhood and the power struggle among the Zâhiriyya amirs. In this period, it seems that Faraj was mostly exploited for the sake of the amirs' own ambitions. Indeed, after Barqûq's death, there were serious divisions among the amirs.² According to Peter M. Holt's analysis, there was no unity among the Zâhiriyya amirs during this period.³ Ibn Taghrîbî states that conflict arose among the amirs following Barqûq's appointment of Aytamush al-Bajâsî, the *atâbak al-'asâkir*, as *mudabbir al-dawla*.⁴ Though this issue was resolved in a short time, the power struggle among the amirs persisted throughout the reign of al-Nâsir Faraj. Amidst this rivalry, al-Nâsir Faraj's favoritism toward the Turkish mamlûks fueled the grievances of the Circassian faction; their subsequent assassination attempt ultimately forced his abdication. Thus, al-Nâsir Faraj was deposed by the great amirs and replaced by his brother 'Abd al-'Azîz.⁵ This shows how the great amirs, who held the rule in their hands, could pursue a harsh policy when their own power was threatened. This was very much in evidence in the last days of al-Nâsir Faraj's first reign. At the same time, it is understood that the efforts of the great amirs to appoint a ruler were essentially the result of a kind of political struggle among themselves. This power became the determiner of the ruler, with the potential to damage the existing power network. In other words, the existence of alignment among the amirs reflexively led to power struggles. The faction that prevailed in this struggle ultimately gained the power to determine the ruler.

However, it appears that the relationship between the Egyptian regime and Syrian amirs reached a critical juncture at the onset of al-Malik al-Mansûr 'Abd al-'Azîz's reign. Nawrûz al-Khâfîzî, appointed as the regent (*nâ'ib*) of Damascus by the Egyptian regime, was ultimately defeated by al-Shaykh al-Mahmûdî. Despite considerable support, Syria's divergence from the Egyptian influence was deemed intolerable by Atâbak Baybars. This turn of events shifted the balance in favor of Faraj in the ensuing days. Indeed, upon receiving news of Faraj's survival, a number of mamlûks aligned themselves with Yashbak al-dawâdâr's retinue and took up arms against Baybars, the *atâbak al-'asâkir*. The conflict between the factions persisted at the entrance to Qal'at al-Jabal, ultimately enabling Faraj to enter the citadel without resistance. Consequently, following a two-month interregnum, al-Nâsir Faraj was restored to the throne.⁶

This paper explores the factors underlying al-Nâsir Faraj's failure to consolidate absolute sovereignty over Syria, despite maintaining partial control over Egypt during his second reign. The enduring dominance and coercive influence exerted by the Zâhiriyya mamlûks persistently curtailed Sultan Faraj's authority, posing significant impediments throughout the course of his Syrian campaigns. Moreover, the rebellions instigated by regents across Syria compelled Faraj to exercise restraint, largely due to the prevailing sense of camaraderie (*khusdâshîya*). Sultan Faraj's stringent policies towards the Zâhiriyya mamlûks, alongside his efforts to replace them with his own mamlûks, ultimately led to the

¹ Sir William Muir, *The Mameluke or Slave Dynasty of Egypt 1260-1517* (London: Smith, Eider & Cooperation, 1896), 125; Stanley Lane Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages* (New York: Charles Scribner's Son, 1901), 334; Ibrahim Alî Tarhân, *Miṣr fî 'asri Dawlat al-Mamālîk al-Jarākasa* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahdat al-Miṣriyya, 1959), 25-26; Hakim Amin 'Abd al-Sayyid, *Qiyām al-Dawlat al-Mamālîk al-Thāniyya* (Cairo: al-Maktabat al-Arabiyya, 1966), 132-133; Jean-Claude Garcin, "The Regime of the Circassian Mamlûks", *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge, 2006), 1/292; Patrick Wing, "The Syrian Commercial Elite and Mamluk State-Building in the Fifteenth Century", *Trajectories of State Formation across Fifteenth-Century Islamic West-Asia*, ed. Jo Van Steenberg (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 307; Yusuf Ötenkaya, "Chaos and Order in the Mamlûk Politics: Intra-Factional Conflicts during the First Reign of al-Nâsir Faraj", *The Historian* 87/2 (2025), 150.

² Tarhân, *Miṣr*, 26; Mufid al-Zaydi, *al-Asr al-Mamlûkî* (Jordan: Dar al-Usama, 2009), 105.

³ P. M. Holt, "Al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh", *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, (Brill, 1993), 7/270.

⁴ Jamāl al-Dîn Abî al-Mahâsin Yûsuf ibn Taghrîbî, *al-Manhal al-sâfi wa'l-mustawfa ba'd al-wâfi*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amin (Cairo: Hay'at al-Miṣriyya Amme li'l-Kitâb), 3/147.

⁵ Tarhân, *Miṣr*, 27; J. Wansbrough, "Faraj", *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, (Brill, 1991), 2/781; Zaydi, *al-Asr al-Mamlûkî*, 106; Carl F. Petry, *The Mamluk Sultanate: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 73.

⁶ Muir, *The Mameluke*, 125; Poole, *A History of Egypt*, 334; Tarhân, *Miṣr*, 28.

fragmentation of his authority. This work will analyze the extent to which Faraj's power during his second reign was curtailed by the rising influence of the Zāhiriyya faction.

1. Al-Nāṣir Faraj's Seizure of Power

Although Baybars, the *atābak al-'asākir*, assumed control over Egypt following the dismissal of al-Nāṣir Faraj, he was unable to secure the level of sovereignty he desired in Syria. The main purpose of the Egyptian government was to capture Jakam and al-Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī. This effort, however, proved unsuccessful, as reports soon arrived indicating that Nawrūz al-Khāfīzī, appointed as regent (*nā'ib*) of Damascus, had been defeated by Jakam and al-Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī.⁷ This, of course, could have been detrimental to their ability to hold on to power.⁸ Conversely, Yashbak al-dawādār expressed significant satisfaction with the Egyptian regime's failure, seeing it as an opportunity to restore al-Nāṣir Faraj to the throne. He consulted with the amirs on this matter, discreetly formulating plans and establishing a foundation for Faraj's reinstatement. Meanwhile, it became evident that a substantial faction among the amirs favored Faraj's return. Additionally, several mamlūks overtly declared their willingness to support Faraj should he reappear.⁹

Recognizing that the situation had shifted in his favor, Faraj departed from the house of Qādī Sa'd al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn Ghurāb accompanied by his entourage, and proceeded directly to the residence of Sūdun al-Ḥamzāwī. There, he summoned the amirs and the *al-mamālīk al-sultāniyya* (sultan's mamlūks). Thanks to the military support, Faraj made his way towards Qal'at al-Jabal. In response, Baybars, the *atābak al-'asākir*, along with Sūdun al-Mārdinī and Inalbay, began to prepare for battle, strengthening the Citadel as much as possible against a potential siege. Upon the approach of Faraj's army, Baybars and his allies immediately went on the defensive and launched an arrow volley. Meanwhile, when Faraj realized that Baybars' supporters were reluctant, he headed towards the gate of the castle. As soon as Sūmay al-Ḥasanī al-Zāhīrī, the *ra'su nawba*, saw Faraj, he immediately ordered the gate to be opened without any hesitation. Thus, Faraj took control of the Qal'a and settled in Qasr al-sultānī. Meanwhile, Baybars and Inalbay b. Kajmas continued to fight with Faraj's amirs in Bab al-silsila. However, they could not persevere against Faraj's army and had to retreat and leave Cairo. Soon after, Sūdun al-Tayyar, the *amīr majlis*, easily captured Baybars and brought him to Faraj. Sultan Faraj ordered him to be imprisoned in Alexandria. Inalbay and Sūdun al-Mārdinī remained in hiding. Thus, the sultanate of his brother al-Malik al-Mansūr 'Abd al-Azīz came to an end.¹⁰ This indicates that political rivalry in the Mamlūk state was shaped not only by military power but also by alliances and opportunism among the amirs. The return of al-Nāṣir Faraj reveals how the amirs were able to turn the political ground in their favor by pursuing their personal interests in the struggle for power. Indeed, the fact that Yashbak al-dawādār saw the failure of Egypt as an opportunity for al-Nāṣir Faraj's return to the throne proves that opportunism was effective in the politics of the period. At the same time, al-Nāṣir Faraj's rapid gathering of support and the capture of Qal'a shows how fragile power relations were and how military superiority could be achieved through momentary changes.

As a result of al-Nāṣir Faraj's seizure of power, on 7 Jamada II 808/30 November 1405, Yashbak al-Sha'bānī was appointed as the *atābak al-'asākir* in place of Baybars, Sūdun al-Ḥamzāwī was appointed as the *dawādār* in place of Sūdun al-Mārdinī, and Jarkas al-Musārī al-Qāsimī was appointed as the *amīr ahūr* in place of Sūdun al-Muḥammadī. Qādī Sa'd al-Dīn Ibrāhīm ibn Ghurāb, on the other hand, was assigned as the *ra'su mashwara* and given the rank of the *amīr mīa*.¹¹

Having relatively secured his power in Egypt, al-Nāṣir Faraj was eager to establish control in Syria. He appointed al-Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī as regent of Damascus in place of Nawrūz al-Khāfīzī. Nawrūz was sent to Jerusalem as a *baṭṭāl* (unemployed). Jakam was appointed regent of Aleppo in place of Allān Jillīq. Timurtash al-Muḥammadī was ordered to come to Egypt. Amīr Salamish was replaced by Sūdun

⁷ Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Manhal*, 6/270.

⁸ Taqī al-Dīn Ahmad ibn 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Qādir al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk li-ma'rifat al-duwal al-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad 'Abd al-Qadir 'Atā (Beirut: Dar al-Kutūb al-'Ilmiyya, 1997), 6/147.

⁹ Jamāl al-Dīn Abī al-Mahāsīn Yūsuf ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa'l-Qahira*, ed. Fahim Muḥammad Shaltūt (Cairo, 1970), 13/44-45; Ötenkaya, "Chaos and Order in the Mamlūk Politics", 178.

¹⁰ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/150; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/46-47; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Manhal*, 6/142.

¹¹ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/150; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Inbā'u'l-ḡumr bi-abnā'i'l-'umr*, ed. Hasan Habashi (Cairo, 1994), 2/323; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/48.

min Zāda as regent of Gaza.¹² Thus, Sultan Faraj was generous to the amirs who paved the way for his rule. In fact, at the end of Faraj's first reign, Jakam and Shaykh had clearly rebelled and even threatened the sultan by marching on Egypt. Therefore, it was expected that he would pursue a harsh policy against both of them. However, their victory over Nawrūz in Syria changed the balance in Egypt and facilitated the second reign of al-Nāṣir Faraj. Probably for this reason, Jakam and Shaykh's rule in Syria was accepted. It is also plausible that their backing was merely temporary, aimed at preserving a delicate equilibrium of power pending the consolidation of central authority in the region.

2. Jakam's Domination in Syria

Following his formal appointment by Sultan Faraj, Jakam, accompanied by al-Shaykh, arrived in Aleppo. During this period, Nawrūz sent an envoy to convey his apologies and request forgiveness. After Jakam established his authority in Aleppo, al-Shaykh returned to Damascus. In recognition of Jakam's successes, Faraj awarded him the regency of Aleppo as well as that of Tripoli. He then reassigned the former regent (*nā'ib*) of Tripoli, Baktamur Jillīq, to serve as amir of Damascus. Upon his arrival in Aleppo, Jakam incorporated Nawrūz al-Khāfīzī and Allān Jillīq into his retinue.¹³ This policy pursued by Jakam indicates that regional leaders in the Mamlūk state sought to establish an alternative rule against the policies of the central authority by consolidating local power networks. Moreover, the appointment of Baktamur as the amir of Damascus by al-Nāṣir Faraj shows that he wished to control al-Shaykh, the regent of Damascus.

In Sha'bān 808/January 1406, Sultan Faraj appointed Amīr Tulu as the regent of Safad instead of Baktamur al-Ruknī. He appointed Timurtash al-Muḥammadī as the regent of Hama. However, with respect to the Turkmans, Timurtash was regarded as a destabilizing amir whose actions fostered discord, rendering him an unwelcome presence in the region. Indeed, when Timurtash's arrival in Hama was announced, Amīr Fāris ibn Ṣāḥib al-Bāz al-Turkmānī, the regent of Antioch, launched an assault in the region. Timurtash was unable to resist him and had to flee to Hims. He then sent an envoy to al-Shaykh, who allowed him to come to Damascus.¹⁴ Despite Timurtash's retreat, the Turkman raids continued to exert significant pressure on this region. Consequently, Jakam and Nawrūz mobilized forces and launched a counteroffensive against the Turkmans, ultimately achieving a decisive victory.¹⁵ Nevertheless, it appears that Jakam was not content with his current position. Consequently, he turned upon Amīr Fāris ibn Ṣāḥib al-Bāz al-Turkmānī, and dealt him a significant defeat, resulting in his death. This victory allowed Jakam to acquire substantial booty, solidifying his influence in Syria. However, Jakam's expanding authority throughout Syria proved intolerable to Nuayr ibn Hiyār, the amir of the Arabs. In response, Nuayr launched an attack against Jakam but suffered a decisive defeat and was subsequently imprisoned in the castle of Aleppo.¹⁶

Nonetheless, it was reported that Allān Jillīq had abandoned Jakam, the regent of Aleppo and Tripoli, and arrived in Damascus. In the meantime, Faraj sent an envoy to Nawrūz al-Khāfīzī and ordered him to go to Jerusalem as a *battāl*, but Jakam ignored this order and did not separate Nawrūz from his entourage. Thereupon, Sultan Faraj officially announced that he had dismissed Jakam as regent of Aleppo and Tripoli. In his place, Timurtash al-Muḥammadī was appointed regent (*nā'ib*) of Aleppo and Allān Jillīq was appointed regent of Tripoli. 'Umar al-Haydabānī was appointed regent of Hama. The *taqlid* of their appointment was sent to them by al-Shaykh, the regent of Damascus. Probably for this reason, there was a rift between Jakam and al-Shaykh. Thusly, al-Shaykh fought with Jakam in the Rastan¹⁷ region on Dhu al-Hijjah 5, 808/May 24, 1406. In this fierce battle, Allān Jillīq and Amīr Tulu, the regent of Safad, who were on al-Shaykh's side, were killed.¹⁸ Al-Shaykh and Timurtash al-Muḥammadī were defeated and had to retreat to Damascus, then returned to Cairo, unable to stay there

¹² Ibn Taghrībardi, *al-Nujūm*, 13/48-49; Shams al-dīn Abū al-Hayr Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Uthman ibn Muḥammad al-Sahāwī, *al-Daw' al-lāmi' li-ahli al-karn al-tāsi'*, ed. 'Abd al-Latif Ḥasan 'Abd al-Rahman (Beirut: Mansurat al-Dar al-Maṭba'at al-Hayat, 2003), 3/76.

¹³ Ibn Taghrībardi, *al-Nujūm*, 13/50-51.

¹⁴ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/157.

¹⁵ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/158.

¹⁶ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/158; 'Asqalānī, *Inbā'u'l-gumr*, 2/325-326; Ibn Taghrībardi, *al-Manhal*, 4/320; P. M. Holt, "The Position and Power of the Mamlūk Sultan", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 383/2 (1975), 571.

¹⁷ It is the name of a region between Hama and Hims. See. Shihab al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allah Yāqūt ibn 'Abd Allah al-Khamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, (Beirut: Dar Sādir, 1977), 3/43.

¹⁸ 'Asqalānī, *Inbā'u'l-gumr*, 2/326; Ibn Taghrībardi, *al-Nujūm*, 13/51-52.

any longer for fear of Nawrūz. Thereupon, Damascus came under the control of Jakam and Nawrūz.¹⁹ Although Faraj's dismissal of Jakam from the regency and his new appointments in his place showed his desire to restore the power of the central authority, this did not have the expected effect. The conflict between Jakam and al-Shaykh indicates that these struggles were shaped not only by military victories but also by interpersonal rivalries. In the end, Jakam's defeat of al-Shaykh and his allies, and his control of Damascus demonstrate how decisive military power and political maneuvering were for local dominance. However, it also proves how weak and fragmented the central authority was. The central authority's appointments were unable to break Jakam's power.

Sultan Faraj maintained close oversight of developments in Syria, where his appointed deputies continually struggled to curb the influence of Jakam and Nawrūz. On Muharram 11, 809/June 28, 1406, Sultan Faraj appointed al-Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī as the regent (*nā'ib*) of Damascus, bolstering his position with supplies of goods and weaponry.²⁰ After staying in Damascus for a while, Jakam appointed Nawrūz as the regent of Damascus. Sūdun al-Muḥammadī, who had been imprisoned by al-Shaykh, was released and joined Nawrūz. Subsequently, it was reported that the *qādī* of Hama opposed Sultan Faraj and prayed to God to support Jakam and grant him victory. This development triggered widespread alarm in Egypt, precipitating a sharp inflation in the prices of essential commodities as markets reacted to the looming specter of war. Meetings were held with Yashbak al-Sha'bānī, the *atābak al-'asākir*, and most of the other amirs, including al-Shaykh, Timurtash al-Muḥammadī, Hayir Bak, the regent of Gaza, Altinbugha al-Uthmānī, the *khājib al-hujjāb* of Damascus, Yunus al-Khāfizī, the regent of Hama, and Sūdun al-Zarif, the regent of Karak. In return for their obedience to al-Nāṣir Faraj, he treated them generously. Meanwhile, it was received that Jakam's troops had captured Safad, Karak, Subayba and Gaza.²¹ It shows that Sultan Faraj was trying to strengthen the central authority by establishing domination in Syria. However, the inability of the regents appointed by Faraj to maintain authority in the region once again reveals the weak and fragmented structure of the Mamlūk rule. The fact that Jakam took control of Damascus and appointed Nawrūz as regent shows how effective local regents were in their attempts to advance their own political interests.

On the other hand, Sultan Faraj equipped al-Shaykh and Timurtash and sent them to Syria. Sūdun al-Ḥamzāwī, the *dawādār kabīr*, and Sūdun al-Tayyar, the *amīr silah* were dispatched in support. On Rabi I 12, 809/August 27, 1406, Faraj also moved to Ridaniya.²² From there, he moved towards Damascus with his troops. Under Jakam's command, Nawrūz al-Khāfizī finalized his military mobilization and deployed Sūdun al-Muḥammadī and Uzbek al-dawādār to Ramla, located northeast of Gaza. Meanwhile, Inalbay ibn Kajmas and Yashbak ibn Azdamur, who had fled from al-Nāṣir Faraj in Cairo, arrived in Damascus and pledged allegiance to Nawrūz.²³ This underscores the inherent volatility and precarious nature of power dynamics within the state, while simultaneously highlighting the multifaceted internal and external obstacles that hindered Sultan Faraj's attempts to centralize authority.

Faraj's army began to advance rapidly towards Damascus and Nawrūz, realizing that he could not stand against it, was forced to retreat. Thus, Sultan Faraj entered Damascus with his army on 7 Rabi II/26 September. After staying for a few days, he set off for Aleppo. Jakam, accompanied by Nawrūz and Timurbugha al-Mashtūb, was forced to leave Aleppo and retreated beyond the Euphrates. So, Sultan Faraj captured Aleppo after Damascus. He then ended his Syrian campaign and returned to Damascus on 24 Jamada II/12 November.²⁴ He appointed Jarkas al-Musārī', amīr ahur, as the regent of Aleppo and Sūdun Baqja as the regent of Tripoli. Meanwhile, after Faraj's departure from Aleppo, a group of mamlūks and the people of Aleppo obviously supported Jakam and rebelled against Jarkas al-Musārī', the regent (*nā'ib*) of Aleppo. Thereupon, Jarkas al-Musārī', whom Faraj had appointed as the regent of Aleppo, was forced to withdraw from the region.²⁵ In the meantime, reports indicated that Nawrūz had

¹⁹ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/161-162; 'Asqalānī, *Inbā'u'l-ġumr*, 2/326; Ibn Taghrībardi, *al-Nujūm*, 13/53.

²⁰ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/173; al-Khatib al-Jawharī 'Alī ibn Dawūd al-Sayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa al-abdān fī tawārih al-zamān*, ed. Hasan Habashi (Cairo: Matbaat al Dar al-Kutub, 1971), 2/224-225.

²¹ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/173; Ibn Taghrībardi, *al-Nujūm*, 13/53-54; Zayn al-dīn Muḥammad Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr fī waḳā'i' al-duḥūr* (Cairo, 1960), 1/760-761; Murat Zengin, "Memlūklü Devlet Adamı Emir Çekem ve İsyanları", *History Studies* 11/5 (2019), 1867.

²² Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/174; Sayrafī, *Nuzhāt al-nufūs*, 2/225; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 1/760-761.

²³ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/175.

²⁴ Sayrafī, *Nuzhāt al-nufūs*, 2/226-227; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 1/762-763.

²⁵ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/175-176; Ibn Taghrībardi, *al-Nujūm*, 13/54-56; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 1/764.

arrived in Hama, while Jakam had returned to Aleppo. Consequently, Sultan Faraj resolved to return to Cairo, departing from Damascus on Jumada II 16, 809/November 28, 1406. This decision was largely influenced by dissent within his army, as several mamluks sought an immediate return to Egypt, creating obstacles for the Sultan and pressing for the termination of the campaign.²⁶ Although Faraj quickly captured Damascus and then moved on to Aleppo to consolidate his rule in the region, these successes did not bring a long-lasting and lasting order. The ability of rival factions under Jakam and Nawrûz to withdraw and reconstitute their forces —despite Faraj's intermittent military successes— demonstrates the inherently unstable nature of political authority and martial dominance in this region. Moreover, the fact that Faraj was forced to return to Cairo under pressure from dissidents in his own army shows that there was strong internal opposition to his leadership as well. It suggests that the military victories over Syria were unsustainable and that Faraj's efforts to restore central authority were constantly undermined by internal and external resistance. Faraj's withdrawal resulted in a lack of stability in this region, and the control of Syria returned to the hands of Jakam and Nawrûz.

Nevertheless, al-Shaykh, Timurtash al-Muḥammadî, and Altinbugha al-Uthmânî, with the backing of al-Nâsir Faraj, entered Safad. Meanwhile, seizing the opportunity presented by the power vacuum, Nawrûz's supporters instigated a revolt in Damascus. With the aid of the Nawrûziyya faction, they reestablished control over Damascus. By Rajab/January 1407, Nawrûz had returned to Damascus.²⁷ In the meantime, Sûdun al-Ḥamzâwî attempted to mediate peace between al-Shaykh and Nawrûz. Nawrûz, upon being informed by Jakam, accepted al-Shaykh's peace proposal. However, al-Shaykh subsequently occupied the castle of Safad and seized property belonging to Sûdun al-Ḥamzâwî. Upon learning of these happenings, Sûdun fled to Damascus and sought refuge with Nawrûz. Meanwhile, Nawrûz al-Khâfîzî refrained from engaging in conflict with al-Shaykh, focusing instead on the reconstruction of Damascus castle.²⁸ He also wanted to establish his sovereignty in the neighboring regions of Syria. Thus, on Sha'bân 24/February 3, he appointed Inalbîy ibn Kajmas, who had taken refuge with him earlier, as the regent of Gaza and Asanbay as the *kâshif* (pathfinder) of Ramla. Along with them, he had also sent Yashbak ibn Azdamur and Sûdun al-Ḥamzâwî. Sûdun al-Jalab was appointed as the regent of Karak. All of the prisoners Sultan Faraj had imprisoned in Karak were released and sent to Damascus.²⁹ With these appointments, it is seen that Nawrûz took steps to strengthen his authority in this region. Also, it is thought that he tried to secure Syria by placing the amirs who opposed Faraj on the border lines.

Nonetheless, Sultan Faraj struggled to assert his authority in Damascus. In response, he appointed Tamraz al-Nâsirî and Amîr Aqbay to address the situation, and they departed from Cairo on Ramadan 10, 809/February 18, 1407. Meanwhile, an army dispatched from Damascus had succeeded in capturing Gaza. Amîr Tamraz paused briefly in Bilbis with his entourage; however, on Shawwâl 17/March 7, he was compelled to return to Cairo with Aqbay and their accompanying forces.³⁰ Jakam then officially proclaimed his sultanate on Shawwâl 21/March 11 at the Aleppo castle. Except from Safad, Jakam's name was mentioned in the *khuṭba* from the Euphrates to Gaza under the name of al-Malik al-'Âdil.³¹ This was because al-Shaykh had captured Safad and announced that he would remain loyal to Sultan Faraj. Nawrûz, the regent (*nâ'ib*) of Damascus, obeyed Jakam and accepted his sultanate. He then appointed Baktamur Jillîq as the regent of Safad with the approval of al-Malik al-'Âdil Jakam. Meanwhile, the amirs of Damascus sent news to Faraj and asked him to organize a new expedition. On the other hand, al-Malik al-'Âdil Jakam sent a message to the bedouins and the farmers in Egypt, asking them not to pay tribute to Sultan Faraj.³² It is clear that Sultan Faraj had difficulties in establishing his authority over Syria during this period. Jakam's declaration of his sultanate in Aleppo and Nawrûz's pledge of allegiance to him is an indication of the division within the Mamlûk state. The failure of the reinforcements sent from Cairo to restore stability in Syria underscores the limited effectiveness of Egypt's interventions. Nevertheless, al-Shaykh's ability to maintain his position in Safad indicates that Sultan Faraj still retained a degree of political legitimacy in the region.

²⁶ Al-Maqrîzî, *al-Sulûk*, 6/175-176; Ibn Taghrîbî, *al-Nujûm*, 13/54-56.

²⁷ Maqrîzî, *al-Sulûk*, 6/178; Ibn Iyâs, *Badâ'i' al-zuhûr*, 1/766.

²⁸ Maqrîzî, *al-Sulûk*, 6/179; Ibn Taghrîbî, *al-Nujûm*, 13/57-58; Ibn Iyâs, *Badâ'i' al-zuhûr*, 1/766.

²⁹ Maqrîzî, *al-Sulûk*, 6/180.

³⁰ Ibn Taghrîbî, *al-Nujûm*, 13/58.

³¹ Ibn Taghrîbî, *al-Nujûm*, 13/58; Ibn Iyâs, *Badâ'i' al-zuhûr*, 1/769; Poole, *A History of Egypt*, 334; Wansbrough, "Faraj", 2/781; Zengin, "Emir Çekem", 1869.

³² Ibn Taghrîbî, *al-Nujûm*, 13/58.

Conversely, Sultan Faraj was compelled to undertake another campaign towards Syria. On Dhu al-Hijjah 29/June 6, *al-mamālīk al-sultaniyya* received their allocated alimony (*naḥaqa*). Despite the distribution of 30 *mithqāl* and 1,000 *fulūs* per mamlūk, they initially declined the payment. Nonetheless, in response to pressure exerted by the amirs, the opposing factions were ultimately pacified. Concurrently, reports confirmed Jakam's death in Āmid on Dhū al-Qa'dah 17, 809/April 25, 1407. It was reported that Jakam had launched a military campaign against Qara Yūlūk Uthmān, advancing as far as Bi'ra, which he subsequently besieged and captured. During this campaign, he executed Amir Guzul, the regent of Bi'ra. In response, Qara Yūlūk's envoys approached Jakam, seeking his submission and urging him to end the campaign and return to Aleppo. They pledged to provide substantial goods and livestock, as well as to pronounce a *khutba* in his name in Diyarbakir. However, Jakam refused to accept these and reached near Mardin. Here, the Artuqīd al-Malik al-Zāhir Majid al-Din Isa came to Jakam and formed an alliance with him. Finally, Qara Yūlūk also completed his counter preparations. A fierce war took place between the two sides. Jakam was slain in this battle by Ibrāhīm ibn Qara Yūlūk Uthmān. With the killing of Jakam, his followers were dispersed in a short time.³³

3. Al-Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī-Nawrūz al-Khāfīzī Struggle

Following Jakam's death, a power vacuum emerged in the region. In Muharram 810/June 1407, 'Alī Beg of the Dulkadirids, along with supporting Turkman and Arab amirs, initiated a siege on Aleppo. Timurbugha al-Mashtūb, acting as Aleppo's regent, mounted a determined defense. On Muharram 9/June 16, the siege forces failed to secure victory. Notably, 'Alī Beg had initially demanded the release of his son, who was held captive in Aleppo's castle, but when this request was denied, he intensified the siege efforts. Concurrently, Ajal ibn Nuayr, the amir of the Arabs, besieged Hama. Despite these assaults, Timurbugha al-Mashtūb maintained his control over Aleppo and ultimately emerged victorious, consolidating his authority over what Jakam had previously controlled.³⁴

Although the issue surrounding Jakam had been resolved, it is evident that Sultan Faraj sought to launch another campaign toward Damascus, as his control over Syria remained tenuous. On Muharram 19/June 26, al-Nāṣir Faraj departed for Ridaniya, accompanied by Yashbak al-Sha'bānī, Ibn Taghrībardi al-Bashbughawī, and Amīr Baygūt. By Safar 2/July 9, he advanced from Ridaniya towards Damascus. Meanwhile, Nawrūz al-Khāfīzī sought to confront the weakened al-Shaykh. However, al-Shaykh, unable to secure adequate support, was confined to Safad and implored Faraj to expedite his arrival in Syria. Nawrūz al-Khāfīzī laid siege to al-Shaykh for several days but ultimately withdrew to Damascus without success. Anticipating a potential assault, Nawrūz dispatched an envoy to Faraj, seeking assurance of safety and expressing his willingness to recognize al-Shaykh's authority as well as to submit to Sultan Faraj's sovereignty in the region. Receiving no favorable response, Nawrūz subsequently appealed to al-Shaykh, requesting mediation. He proposed that al-Shaykh relay to Faraj his offer that he should assume the regency of Damascus, with Nawrūz governing as the regent of Aleppo. Al-Shaykh, however, did not trust Nawrūz in this matter and tried to exploit Faraj's Syria expedition for his own interests. When Faraj approached Damascus, Nawrūz was forced to flee the region. Faraj announced that he had appointed al-Shaykh as the regent (*nā'ib*) of Damascus. When Faraj arrived in Gaza, Nawrūz had fled to Barza. Thus, al-Shaykh's mamlūks entered Damascus without any conflict.³⁵ Subsequently, Faraj also arrived in Damascus and was personally welcomed by al-Shaykh and Friday prayers were held in the Umayyad Mosque. Later, the qādī, vizier and *kātib* of Damascus were arrested. On Safar 25, 810/August 1, 1407, Sultan Faraj had Amīr al-Shaykh and Yashbak al-Sha'bānī, *atābak al-'asākīr*, arrested and imprisoned in the castle of Damascus. A large group loyal to al-Shaykh and Yashbak realized the situation in time and managed to escape. So, he appointed Baygūt as regent of Damascus, Amīr Fāris al-dawādār as *khājib al-hujjāb* of Damascus, and 'Umar al-Haydabānī as regent of Hama in place of al-Shaykh.³⁶ While Faraj's appointment of al-Shaykh as regent upon his arrival in Damascus offered a short-term solution, in the long run, it shows how unstable such appointments were. The arrest of al-Shaykh and other amirs may be interpreted as an attempt to reassert centralized authority; however, the

³³ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/184-185; Ibn Taghrībardi, *al-Nujūm*, 13/59-60; Sayrafī, *Nuzhāt al-nufūs*, 2/230-231; Zengin, "Emir Çekem", 1870; Esra Çıplak, "Ortaçağ'da Mülkiyet ve Kişilik İhlalleri: Burcî Memlûk Sultanı Ferec b. Berkûk Örneği", *Tarih ve Gelecek Dergisi* 7/1 (2021), 429.

³⁴ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/189; 'Asqalānī, *Inbā'u'l-gumr*, 2/380; Ibn Taghrībardi, *al-Nujūm*, 13/61-62.

³⁵ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/191-192; Ibn Taghrībardi, *al-Nujūm*, 13/62-63.

³⁶ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/193; Ibn Taghrībardi, *al-Nujūm*, 13/64; Sayrafī, *Nuzhāt al-nufūs*, 2/239.

subsequent flight of many of his supporters casts doubt on Faraj's legitimacy and capacity for leadership. In addition to political instability, this also reveals that local forces in Syria have the potential to continuously resist the central authority. While Faraj struggles to establish a strong authority, the power struggles of local leaders and their allies in the process reveal how weak leadership and authority gap can lead to new conflicts.

On the other hand, Amîr Mantûk, the regent of the fortress of Damascus, released both amirs from prison on Rajab 3/August 8. He then fled with the two amirs, and no one was aware of this for a while. Mantûk then went to war with Baygût, the regent (*nâ'ib*) of Damascus, as soon as he had the opportunity. He defeated and slaughtered him in a short time and sent his head to Faraj. As a result of this, news came to Egypt that Yashbak, al-Shaykh and Jarkas al-Musâri' had formed an alliance with each other. Thereupon, Faraj sent a message to Nawrûz al-Khâfîzî in Aleppo and informed him that he had reappointed him as the regent of Damascus.³⁷ In the meantime, on Rabi II 7/September 11, Faraj appointed Baktamur Jillîq as regent of Damascus by proxy until the arrival of Nawrûz. However, when Faraj returned to Egypt, al-Shaykh, Yashbak and Circassian mamluks took Damascus from Baktamur and officially took control of the city. After taking control of Damascus, al-Shaykh arrested the amirs of Damascus appointed by Faraj and seized their property.³⁸

However, Nawrûz also launched an assault against Yashbak and Jarkas, who were pursuing Baktamur Jillîq following his flight to Ba'lbak. On Rabi' II 13/September 17, a fierce engagement ensued between the opposing forces, culminating in a decisive victory for Nawrûz, who captured numerous combatants. Among those slain were Yashbak al-Sha'bânî and Jarkas al-Musâri'. Subsequently, Nawrûz entered Damascus and assumed control of the city without resistance. He dispatched news of his triumph to Sultan Faraj, who reportedly received it with great satisfaction. On Rabi II 27/ October 1, Faraj gave Yashbak's *iqṭā'* to Amîr Taghrîbardî. Taghrîbardî's *iqṭā'* was given to Amîr Qardam al-khazinadâr. Subsequently, Taghrîbardî was appointed as *atâbak al-'asâkir* and Amîr Gumusbugha al-Musawwik as *amîr ahûr kabîr*.³⁹ In this way, it is understood that Faraj achieved his goal. Although Faraj knew that Yashbak supported him in his second reign, he had caused him serious problems in his first reign and limited his power. Moreover, it appears that Faraj's primary objective was not to assert direct control over the region, but rather to exacerbate the conflict among the Zâhiriyya amirs. It may be inferred that his intention was to generate a political and military vacuum in Syria by fomenting conflict among them.

In Muharram 811/June 1408, Sultan Faraj received news of a civil war between al-Shaykh and Nawrûz. On the one hand, al-Shaykh did not want to fight with Nawrûz, and on the other hand, he wanted to enter the city peacefully, stating that Sultan Faraj had appointed him as the regent of Damascus. Nawrûz was accompanied by his supporter, the regent of Hama, Yashbak b. Azdamur. It is known that al-Shaykh was in a fragile situation due to the small number of his forces. However, the situation changed when Sultan Faraj's supporting amirs in Damascus fought against Nawrûz. Indeed, when Nawrûz realized that he was defeated, he had to retreat to Aleppo. When he fled, Baktamur Jillîq and Amîr Qarqmâs entered the city. Subsequently, the people of Damascus were granted emanation and al-Shaykh was declared the regent (*nâ'ib*) of Damascus.⁴⁰ Al-Shaykh then immediately came to Dâr al-Sa'âda, where he ordered the arrest of Nakbay, the governor (*wâlî*) of Damascus, Amîr Argaz, and other members of the Nawrûziyya. Subsequently, Timurtâsh al-Muḥammadî arrived in Damascus, where al-Shaykh received him with notable generosity and entrusted both Baktamur Jillîq and Timurtâsh al-Muḥammadî with the task of confronting Nawrûz. What happened in this regard was transmitted to Egypt and Faraj expressed his satisfaction with the actions of al-Shaykh.⁴¹ Clearly, Sultan Faraj was pitting al-Shaykh and Nawrûz against each other. It would not be a favorable development for the Egyptian administration if the regents of the region formed an alliance with each other, as had been partially achieved, albeit for a short time, during the reign of Jakam. For this reason, it may be inferred that Faraj did not want to leave a powerful and influential amir in Syria against him.

³⁷ Maqrîzî, *al-Sulûk*, 6/193; Ibn Taghrîbardî, *al-Nujûm*, 13/64-65.

³⁸ Maqrîzî, *al-Sulûk*, 6/195; Ibn Taghrîbardî, *al-Nujûm*, 13/66.

³⁹ Maqrîzî, *al-Sulûk*, 6/195-196; Ibn Taghrîbardî, *al-Nujûm*, 13/67-68; Sayrafi, *Nuzhât al-nufûs*, 2/241-242.

⁴⁰ Maqrîzî, *al-Sulûk*, 6/204-205; 'Asqalânî, *Inbâ'u'l-gûmr*, 2/396; Ibn Taghrîbardî, *al-Nujûm*, 13/71-72; Ibn Iyas, *Badâ'i' al-zuhûr*, 1/766; Zaydî, *al-Aşr al-Mamlûkî*, 107.

⁴¹ Maqrîzî, *al-Sulûk*, 6/205; 'Asqalânî, *Inbâ'u'l-gûmr*, 2/396; Ibn Taghrîbardî, *al-Nujûm*, 13/73.

Nevertheless, Nawrūz al-Khāfīzī left Damascus and came to Aleppo, but Timurbugha did not feel safe with al-Mashtūb. Because al-Mashtūb was afraid of Faraj for his support to Nawrūz and did not want to cause a rift between him and al-Mashtūb. For this reason, Nawrūz soon left Aleppo on Rabi II 23, 811/September 15, 1408, and went to Malatya. Ibn Sahib al-Bāz al-Turkmānī kept Nawrūz al-Khāfīzī with him but soon had him arrested by deception.⁴² However, Nawrūz managed to escape from prison on Rajab 21, 811/December 10, 1408, and moved to Qal‘at al-Rūm. Meanwhile, some mamlūks in Damascus joined Nawrūz’s retinue.⁴³

Conversely, on Dhu al-Qadah 10, 811/March 27, 1409, Yashbak al-Musawī reported to Egypt that al-Shaykh, the regent (*nā’ib*) of Damascus, had defied his authority. In response, al-Shaykh convened the leading figures and qāḍīs of Damascus, affirming his continued allegiance to Sultan Faraj. Through Qāḍī Najm al-Din ‘Umar ibn Hajji, he petitioned Sultan Faraj for forgiveness and offered an apology for the delay in dispatching the Nawrūziyya amirs to Egypt. However, when the amirs were not sent, Sultan Faraj refused al-Shaykh’s apology and began preparations for a renewed campaign against Syria. Consequently, al-Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī soon relinquished his initial stance and resolved to send the amirs as requested.⁴⁴ Upon learning that Sultan Faraj was advancing toward Damascus, al-Shaykh abandoned his plan to send the amirs. Shortly thereafter, he expressed a desire for reconciliation with Nawrūz, demonstrating his goodwill by sending him 6,000 dinars. In response to this gesture, Nawrūz accepted al-Shaykh’s peace proposal.⁴⁵ By not opening two separate fronts against Sultan Faraj in the region, al-Shaykh avoided a potentially significant challenge. Had Nawrūz allied with Faraj and launched an attack on Damascus from the north, it could have severely threatened al-Shaykh’s position. Conversely, a potential alliance between al-Shaykh and Nawrūz could have also presented a serious threat to Sultan Faraj.

However, Timurtash al-Muḥammadi, the regent of Aleppo, wanted to fight Nawrūz. Baktamur Jillīq, the regent of Tripoli, supported him in this endeavor. Timurtash dispatched his nephew Taghrībardi, then *atābak* of Aleppo, to fight Nawrūz. At the same time, a large group of Turkmans was under his command. Taghrībardi, the *atābak* of Aleppo, and Baktamur Jillīq marched against Nawrūz. In battle, they defeated Nawrūz and forced him to retreat to Ayntab. The fierce battle between the vanguard units of both sides continued. Many of the Nawrūziyya were taken prisoner. Nawrūz was decisively defeated and so, Timurtash’s troops captured Ayntab. Timurtash returned to Aleppo and conveyed the latest developments to Sultan Faraj, who received the news with great satisfaction and expressed his approval accordingly.⁴⁶ It shows the difficulties of Sultan Faraj’s efforts to establish his authority and the complexity of the power struggle in Syria. Al-Shaykh’s insistence on not sending the amirs reveals his reluctance to recognize Sultan Faraj’s authority. However, in the face of Faraj’s preparations for the campaign, al-Shaykh changed his strategy and sought peace with Nawrūz, reflecting the flexible and pragmatic attitude of the local powers. The defeat of Nawrūz and the success of Timurtash strengthened Faraj’s control over Syria, albeit for a short time, and prevented al-Shaykh-Nawrūz alliance.

4. Al-Nāṣir Faraj’s Sovereignty in Syria

As a result of Timurtash al-Muḥammadi’s defeat of Nawrūz, al-Nāṣir Faraj had achieved his goal. At least he managed to prevent al-Shaykh-Nawrūz alliance. However, this victory was not enough for him to establish sovereignty in Syria. Therefore, he wanted to resolve al-Shaykh matter by organizing a new campaign to Damascus after this victory. The Syrian campaign was decided on Muharram 7, 812/May 22, 1409. Sultan Faraj left Qal‘at al-Jabal with his amirs and troops and first arrived in Ridaniya. From there, Taghrībardi, the *atābak al-‘asākir*, together with his amirs and troops, launched an operation towards Damascus. Sultan Faraj appointed Argun min Bashbugha, the *amīr ahur kabīr* as his deputy in his absence. Amīr Guzul al-Ajamī was appointed as the *khājib al-khujjāb*. When he arrived in Gaza, he dismissed Altinbugha al-Uthmānī, the regent of Gaza, and appointed Ināl al-Saslānī, *amīr ahūr thānī* in

⁴² Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/207; Ibn Taghrībardi, *al-Nujūm*, 13/73.

⁴³ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/212.

⁴⁴ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/218; ‘Asqalānī, *Inbā’u ‘l-gumr*, 2/398; Ibn Taghrībardi, *al-Nujūm*, 13/75; Ibn Iyas, *Badā’i ‘al-zuhūr*, 1/793.

⁴⁵ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/219.

⁴⁶ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/219; Ibn Taghrībardi, *al-Nujūm*, 13/76.

his place.⁴⁷ As Sultan Faraj was rapidly approaching, al-Shaykh realized that a war with Faraj was inevitable and, in al-Maqrizî's words, officially disobeyed Faraj by revealing what he had been hiding inside. He even asked the 'ulama for permission to wage war, and Shahab al-Dîn Ahmad ibn al-Hazbânî issued a *fatwa*, and thus he began preparations for the campaign.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, Amîr Qarqmâs, the nephew of Timurtash who had fled from Safad, implored al-Shaykh to engage in battle against Faraj, asserting that the latter's forces were numerically inferior and susceptible to defection. However, al-Shaykh thought it over and decided against it, preferring to flee. Thereupon, Jānim, the regent of Hama, arrived with his army and reported that Nawrūz was marching on the region with his troops. Meanwhile, Sultan Faraj arrived in Lajjūn in Safar/June. However, the Zâhiriyya mamlūks harbored profound resentment toward Sultan Faraj, and several among them were intent on inciting sedition. Al-Nâsir Faraj grew increasingly concerned that the *al-mamālik al-sultāniyya* (the sultan's mamlūks) and certain amîrs might align themselves with al-Shaykh al-Maḥmūdî. Despite this, Sultan Faraj was determined to march on Damascus. When he received news of this, al-Shaykh immediately left Damascus and retreated to Busra. In the meantime, Amîr Allān and some of the mamlūks had left Faraj's side and joined al-Shaykh's.⁴⁹ On 6 Safar/20 June, Faraj entered Damascus and proceeded to the Dār al-Sa'āda. Subsequently, he made a series of administrative appointments in the city. He designated Baktamur Jillîq as the new regent of Damascus, replacing al-Shaykh, and entrusted Timurtash al-Muḥammadî with the regency of Tripoli in addition to his existing post in Aleppo.⁵⁰ At the same time, the caliph and the qāḍî also participated in this military expedition. In Damascus, they made long speeches encouraging everyone to fight against al-Shaykh.⁵¹ On 29 Safar/13 July, the Caliph al-Musta'în Billah and the qāḍîs of Egypt and Damascus were present with him. They decided that al-Shaykh should be killed.⁵² Thus, al-Nâsir Faraj expelled al-Shaykh from the region and appointed Baktamur as regent (*nā'ib*) of Damascus. He also gave Tripoli to Timurtash al-Muḥammadî for his struggles against Nawrūz. This shows that Sultan Faraj adopted the principle of separation of powers in the region and did not want to leave any amir who could stand strongly against him.

On the other hand, Sultan Faraj made the necessary preparations in Damascus in Rabi I/July and marched against al-Shaykh. Clashes took place between his vanguard and al-Shaykh's vanguard. Al-Shaykh's army was defeated and retreated to Busra. Subsequently, Sultan Faraj headed towards Busra, but al-Shaykh had left there as well. Then Faraj said to Kâtib al-sir Fath Allah and Ustādār Jamal al-Din: "Did I not tell you? Al-Shaykh is a coward; he has no heart. Even if he had a hundred thousand warriors with him, he would not dare to fight me."⁵³ He then left Busra and headed towards Bukra. In the meantime, some of the *al-mamālik al-sultāniyya* were crossing over to al-Shaykh's side. They continued to cause problems for Faraj along the route of the expedition. Sultan Faraj said: "Even if ten mamlūk remain with me, I will continue to march with them against al-Shaykh."⁵⁴ Thus, he continued to pursue al-Shaykh with determination. First of all, he sent Amîr Tamraz against al-Shaykh. They were defeated at first and then joined the side of al-Shaykh. However, the struggle between the two sides continued in the vicinity of Sarhad. Faraj emerged victorious from this battle, capturing much of al-Shaykh's property and horses. Al-Shaykh again managed to escape. As a result, the Sarhad Mosque fell into the hands of Faraj. From the top of the minaret, they poured naphtha on al-Shaykh's soldiers. The fighting intensified and al-Shaykh took refuge in the Sarhad fortress with twenty of his retainers.⁵⁵ Together with the regents of Bilād al-Sham, Sarhad castle was heavily besieged. In order to complete the siege, 200 camel loads of catapults were ordered to be brought from Damascus. Upon witnessing these developments, al-Shaykh was seized with fear and promptly initiated correspondence with Taghrîbardî, the *atābak al-asākîr*, as well as with other amirs. In the meeting with Taghrîbardî, he generally demanded that the blood of Muslims should not be shed, emphasized the relations of camaraderie (*khusdāshīya*), and stated

⁴⁷ Maqrizî, *al-Sulūk*, 6/226-228; Ibn Taghrîbardî, *al-Nujūm*, 13/77; Sayrafî, *Nuzhāt al-nufūs*, 2/251-252.

⁴⁸ Maqrizî, *al-Sulūk*, 6/227; 'Asqalānî, *Inbā' u'l-gumr*, 2/420-421.

⁴⁹ Maqrizî, *al-Sulūk*, 6/228-229; 'Asqalānî, *Inbā' u'l-gumr*, 2/420-421; Ibn Taghrîbardî, *al-Nujūm*, 13/78; Sayrafî, *Nuzhāt al-nufūs*, 2/253-254.

⁵⁰ Shihāb al-dīn Abū al-Abbās Ahmad ibn Hījī, *Tārīḥu Ibn Hījī* (Beirut: Dar al Ibn Hazm, 2003), 2/878; Maqrizî, *al-Sulūk*, 6/231; Ibn Taghrîbardî, *al-Nujūm*, 13/79-80.

⁵¹ 'Asqalānî, *Inbā' u'l-gumr*, 2/421-423.

⁵² Ibn Hījī, *Tārīḥ*, 2/879.

⁵³ Ibn Taghrîbardî, *al-Nujūm*, 13/80-81.

⁵⁴ Ibn Taghrîbardî, *al-Nujūm*, 13/80-81.

⁵⁵ Ibn Hījī, *Tārīḥ*, 2/881; Maqrizî, *al-Sulūk*, 6/234; 'Asqalānî, *Inbā' u'l-gumr*, 2/423; Ibn Taghrîbardî, *al-Nujūm*, 13/82.

that he was from the *inniyyah* (younger brother). It was said that your words would not be refused by him.⁵⁶ Sultan Faraj was convinced to meet with al-Shaykh. Taghrībardī first condemned al-Shaykh for his actions. He explained what had happened to the people and how the cities had suffered because of him. Al-Shaykh apologized and asked for forgiveness from the Sultan Faraj. Thus, Sultan Faraj pardoned al-Shaykh and appointed him as the regent (*nā'ib*) of Tripoli. Thereupon, Faraj came to Damascus in Rabi II/August. Subsequently, he married his daughter to Baktamur Jillīq.⁵⁷ Thus, the problem of al-Shaykh was solved, albeit temporarily. It is also understood that the Zāhiriyya amirs played a critical role in the pardon of al-Shaykh by maintaining a friendly relationship. At the same time, the sultan's mamlūks' constant switching sides was instrumental in Faraj's lifting of the siege. Nevertheless, it is seen that Faraj tried to create a new network of patronage-based relations in Syria as an alternative to the relationship of camaraderie (*khusdāshīya*).

5. Chaotic Situation in Syria: The Struggle between the Regents

Although al-Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī had been forgiven and, through the mediation of the Zāhiriyya amīrs, appointed as regent (*nā'ib*) of Tripoli, he continued to maintain his connections with Damascus. During his return to Egypt, Sultan Faraj dispatched a warning to the Damascene authorities, urging heightened vigilance against al-Shaykh. Following Faraj's withdrawal, al-Shaykh attempted to enter Damascus on Jumādā I 10, 812/September 20, 1409, but was denied entry and consequently withdrew to Shakhhab. Under the cover of night, Baktamur Jillīq launched a surprise assault on al-Shaykh, provoking a skirmish between the advance detachments of the two factions. Upon learning of the attack, al-Shaykh promptly mobilized his troops and mounted a counteroffensive. In the ensuing engagement, Baktamur's forces were decisively defeated, compelling him to retreat to Safad with a small contingent of roughly one hundred cavalry and several amīrs, as the majority of the Damascene troops refrained from offering their support. Consequently, al-Shaykh entered Damascus without resistance. Meeting with the city's notables, he explained that his intent had not been to attack Damascus but to respond to Baktamur's aggression, and he requested they convey this to Faraj in a manner that would appease him. However, the notables refrained out of fear of Faraj's potential reaction.⁵⁸ As news reached Cairo that Damascus had fallen to al-Shaykh and that Baktamur had retreated to Safad, Faraj promptly sent an envoy to al-Shaykh, ordering him to proceed to Tripoli, where he held the position of regent. Upon arriving in Shakhhab, al-Shaykh defended his actions by claiming that Baktamur had attacked him first, necessitating his response in self-defense.⁵⁹ Al-Shaykh's struggle against Baktamur Jillīq and his capture of Damascus proves that regional powers could gain power by seizing opportunities and that the central rule was often challenged. All these indicate that Sultan Faraj's inability to maintain his dominance over the region and the zeal of local leaders like al-Shaykh to prioritize their own interests have deepened the political instability in Syria.

Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that Timurtash al-Muḥammadī, the regent of Aleppo, functioned as a key balancing force in the Syrian political landscape. He played an important role in preventing al-Shaykh's authority in the region. He informed Sultan Faraj that Nawrūz al-Khāfīzī and Yashbak b. Azdamur had arrived in Aleppo. He was personally welcomed by Timurtash and treated generously. He then sent a message to Faraj and suggested that he appoint Nawrūz as regent (*nā'ib*) of Damascus, Yashbak as regent of Tripoli and his nephew Taghrībardī as regent of Hama. The Sultan approved of this proposal, believing that it would have supremacy against al-Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī. On Sha'bān 4/December 12, he sent the *taqlid* and *tashrif* that Nawrūz had been officially appointed regent of Damascus and that he would remain obedient to Faraj and would never oppose him.⁶⁰ Timurtash's project seriously threatened al-Shaykh since a serious coalition had formed against him in Northern Syria. Unless this coalition was disbanded, his dominance could be completely destroyed in a possible Faraj attack.

After all, al-Shaykh appointed Sūdun al-Muḥammadī to Gaza and Janibak to Ramla. Subsequently, Faraj dispatched Yashbak al-Musawī to Gaza. Here he fought with Sūdun al-Muḥammadī but was

⁵⁶ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/234-235; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/84-85.

⁵⁷ Ibn Hījī, *Tārīḥ*, 2/886; Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/236; 'Asqalānī, *Inbā' u'l-gumr*, 2/424; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/86-88.

⁵⁸ Ibn Hījī, *Tārīḥ*, 2/891-892; Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/238; 'Asqalānī, *Inbā' u'l-gumr*, 2/424; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/89-90.

⁵⁹ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/239; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/96.

⁶⁰ 'Asqalānī, *Inbā' u'l-gumr*, 2/425; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/97.

defeated. As a result of this defeat, he had to retreat to Cairo. Allân, the regent of Safad, was also killed. As a result, al-Shaykh also gave Safad to Sûdun al-Muḥammadî.⁶¹

On Shawwal 8, 812/February 13, 1410, Amîr Shâhin al-dawādâr, Amîr Sûdun Baqja, and Altinbugha Qaramâshî, *khājib*, marched on Safad and tried to take it from Shâhin al-Zardakâsh. Meanwhile, in the first days of Dhu al-Qadah/March, troops supported by Faraj arrived in Safad. There were Shâhin, the regent of Safad, and Yashbak al-Musawî, the regent of Gaza, and they were supported by Amîr Barud Beg and Sûdun al-Muḥammadî, who were under the command of Nawrûz.⁶²

However, al-Shaykh had completed his preparations and was on his way to fight Nawrûz in Hama. Although al-Shaykh besieged Nawrûz in Hama, the siege continued for days. In response, Timurtash, the regent of Aleppo, came to Hama to help Nawrûz. A major battle ensued between the two factions on Dhû al-Hijjah 9, 812/April 14, 1410, resulting in significant casualties. During the confrontation, al-Shaykh succeeded in seizing Timurtash's *tablkhāna* and proceeded to destroy his banners. Immediately afterwards, he headed towards Hims. At the same time, he sent an envoy to Sultan Faraj and told him that he was obedient to him. He explained why he had to fight first Baktamur, then Nawrûz and Timurtash. He said that he had not planned all this, he was only defending himself. In the same way, he sent a message to Taghrîbardî and told him what had happened. Taghrîbardî did not say a word about it. Sultan Faraj also did not incline towards him in this matter.⁶³

On Dhu al-Hijjah 16/April 21, Timurbugha al-Mashtûb, Sûdun al-Muḥammadî, and Tamraz, the regent (*nâ'ib*) of Hama, launched an attack against Ajal ibn Nuayr with a large army, engaging in battle through the night. Al-Shaykh quickly mobilized to support Ajal. Meanwhile, Timurtash sent an urgent message to al-Nâsir Faraj, warning that without his assistance, many regions in Syria would likely fall under al-Shaykh's control. Indeed, most of the Turkmans had already pledged allegiance to al-Shaykh, and Antioch was reported to be under his rule as well. This posed significant challenges for both Nawrûz and Timurtash.⁶⁴ Al-Shaykh's struggles with Nawrûz and Timurtash indicate that the balance of power in Syria was rapidly changing, and the central authority was greatly weakened. Al-Shaykh's siege of Hama and his subsequent move to Hims shows his efforts to expand politically and the temporary successes he achieved in his struggle with his rivals. In the process, however, al-Shaykh lost the support of Faraj, even though he described his actions as defensive, and the intensity of the conflicts in the region increased. Sultan Faraj's stance of neutrality, coupled with the Turkmans' allegiance to al-Shaykh, highlights the emergence of an authority independent of central rule in Syria, underscoring the region's growing fragmentation.

6. Al-Shaykh-Nawrûz Alliance Against al-Nâsir Faraj

The growing influence of al-Shaykh al-Maḥmûdî over Syria became evident as he laid siege to Nawrûz and Timurtash in Hama. Meanwhile, reports of Sultan Faraj's advance toward Damascus caused alarm among the local leadership, particularly Nawrûz, who feared that a victory by Faraj would lead to his deposition. This led to a secret agreement between al-Shaykh and Nawrûz. Nawrûz would capture Timurtash al-Muḥammadî, while al-Shaykh would seize Timurtash's nephew, Qarqmâs. However, upon learning of this scheme, Timurtash escaped Nawrûz's grasp and sought protection with Ajal b. Nuayr. He alerted his nephew Qarqmâs, who also fled from al-Shaykh and found refuge in Antioch. In the resulting power vacuum, Nawrûz took control of Aleppo.⁶⁵ The increasing influence of al-Shaykh over Syria, Sultan Faraj's preparations for intervention and Nawrûz's anxiety show how quickly alliances and enmities in the region could change.

Nevertheless, Sultan Faraj began preparations for an expedition to Syria in Muharram 813/May 1410. He wanted to go against al-Shaykh al-Maḥmûdî and put an end to his rule once and for all. Among those who took part in the Syrian campaign were Baktamur Jillîq; Yalbugha al-Nâsirî, *khājib al-ḥujjâb*; Amîr Tugân al-Ḥasanî, *ra's nawbat al-kabîr*; Ḥayir Beg, the regent of Gaza; Altinbugha al-'Uthmânî, the regent of Safad; Shahîn al-Afram, *ra's nawba*; and Sungur al-Rûmî, the regent of Alexandria. Baktamur Jillîq and the amirs in his retinue advanced to Ridâniyya. Sultan Faraj himself set out on 4

⁶¹ Ibn Hîjî, *Tārîḥ*, 2/905; 'Asqalânî, *Inbâ'u'l-ḡumr*, 2/425.

⁶² Ibn Hîjî, *Tārîḥ*, 2/912-914.

⁶³ Maqrîzî, *al-Sulûk*, 6/250-251; 'Asqalânî, *Inbâ'u'l-ḡumr*, 2/428-429; Ibn Taghrîbardî, *al-Nujûm*, 13/98-100.

⁶⁴ 'Asqalânî, *Inbâ'u'l-ḡumr*, 2/429.

⁶⁵ Ibn Hîjî, *Tārîḥ*, 2/919; Ibn Taghrîbardî, *al-Nujûm*, 13/100-101.

Rabī' I/7 July, accompanied by Taghrībardī, the *atābak al-‘asākir*; Qanibay al-Muḥammadī, the *amīr majlis*; Qajak al-‘Isāwī; and Sūdun al-Asandamurī.⁶⁶ Before the expedition, Faraj made various expenditures for his mamlūks and other soldiers. He gave 20,000 dirhams to his sultan's retainers, 2,000 dinars to each of the amirs in the rank of *amīr mīa muqaddam alf*, and 500 dinars to each of the *tablkhāna amirs*. Before the expedition, he had left Argun min Bashbugha, the *amīr ahūr kabīr*, as regent in his place.⁶⁷ This was Faraj's sixth campaign in Syria. Although he achieved partial successes, he was never able to establish final sovereignty in Syria. This was largely due to the volatile political relations between the regents in Syria, the fact that the Zāhiriyya mamlūks posed a problem for Faraj, and the occasional sympathetic relations between them. All of this, of course, hampered Faraj's military campaigns.

However, when news of Sultan Faraj's arrival in Syria reached al-Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī, he left Damascus on Rajab 26/July 29. Meanwhile, Amīr Jānim, the regent (*nā'ib*) of Hama, also pledged allegiance to al-Shaykh. On Rabi I 27/July 30, Baktamur Jillīq entered Damascus. On Rabi I 28/July 31, Faraj entered Damascus.⁶⁸ Immediately, the people of Damascus were given a pledge of allegiance and informed that their property and lives would be protected. He ordered the soldiers not to go out on the streets and to stop shopping and announced that he appointed Shahin al-Zardakāsh as the regent of Damascus. Then, after making various appointments, he headed to Aleppo to settle the issue of al-Shaykh and Nawrūz. In the meantime, al-Shaykh sent an envoy to Sultan Faraj on Rabi I 15, 813/August 17, 1410, insisting that he had not renounced his obedience. Al-Shaykh, however, declared that he could not confront Sultan Faraj, fearing that such an act would lead to his arrest. He further affirmed that he would not take up arms against Faraj for as long as he lived. Additionally, he petitioned the Sultan to appoint him as regent of Albistan, Nawrūz as regent of Malatya, and Yashbak ibn Azdamur as regent of Ayntab. Sultan Faraj, however, rejected these requests.⁶⁹ Subsequently, he arrived in Aleppo in Jamada II/October. He did not encounter a battle here. Timurtash's nephew Amir Qarqmās and Amir Jānim min Ḥasanshāh, the regent of Hama, came to Faraj. Amir Jānim was given the regency of Tripoli, Qarqmās, the regency of Aleppo, and Qarqmās's brother Taghrībardī, the regency of Safad.⁷⁰

On Jamada II 4/October 4, reports arrived from Hims indicating that Sūdun al-Jalab had advanced with his forces to Karak, successfully capturing the city through a clever stratagem. Later, on Jamada II 21/October 21, al-Shaykh and Nawrūz engaged in battle with the Dulkadirids but suffered a significant defeat. This loss led to the dispersal of their troops, weakening their position and disrupting their regional influence.⁷¹ On Rajab 6/November 4, it was reported that Baktamur Jillīq had been appointed as the regent of Damascus. On the same day, Firuz al-khazinadār, a *tawāshī* of Sultan Faraj, arrived near Bab al-Naṣr and raised the sultan's banners, calling those loyal to gather under the sultan's banners. Among those slow to respond were Amīr Qanibay and Khājib Baqbay, who were subsequently arrested. Meanwhile, on Rajab 19/November 17, Taghrībardī, nephew of Timurtash, was reassigned from Safad to serve as regent of Aleppo, and Shahin al-Zardakāsh, previously na'ib al-ghayba in Damascus, took up the regency of Safad. It was then reported that Nawrūz and al-Shaykh had crossed into Ayntab, prompting the dispatch of an army in pursuit.⁷² On Sha'bān 5/December 3, it was reported that al-Shaykh had crossed into Sarhad, after a period during which his whereabouts were unclear. Al-Shaykh's influence was waning significantly, as many of his followers defected and sought refuge with Sultan Faraj. This shift highlighted the weakening of al-Shaykh's power and further solidified Faraj's authority over those who had once allied with al-Shaykh.⁷³ As al-Shaykh's followers turned to Faraj, his leadership was questioned and the support around him waned. While his coming under the banner of Sultan Faraj during this period indicates that he was once again strengthening his authority in the region, al-Shaykh's retreat to the Sarhad represents the beginning of a period of decline for him. The decline in the support

⁶⁶ Ibn Hījī, *Tārīḥ*, 2/936; Sayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 2/263-264; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/101; Sayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 2/264.

⁶⁷ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/258; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/101-102; Sayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 2/264.

⁶⁸ Ibn Hījī, *Tārīḥ*, 2/936; Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/261; 'Asqalānī, *Inbā'u'l-ḡumr*, 2/451; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/104; Ibn Iyas, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 1/804.

⁶⁹ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/263; 'Asqalānī, *Inbā'u'l-ḡumr*, 2/451; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/105-106; Ibn Iyas, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 1/804.

⁷⁰ 'Asqalānī, *Inbā'u'l-ḡumr*, 2/452; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/106.

⁷¹ Ibn Hījī, *Tārīḥ*, 2/943-944.

⁷² Ibn Hījī, *Tārīḥ*, 2/947-948.

⁷³ Ibn Hījī, *Tārīḥ*, 2/949-950.

around al-Shaykh during this period indicates that he lost political supremacy in the region and came under pressure from Faraj.

Meanwhile, Sūdun al-Jalab, who was aligned with the forces of Nawrūz and al-Shaykh, succeeded in capturing Karak. Upon receiving news of this development, Sultan Faraj promptly dispatched a message to Sūdun, informing him of his appointment as the regent of Karak in an attempt to secure his allegiance. Then, in Rajab/November 1410, he entered Damascus.⁷⁴ In Damascus, he managed to defeat six of al-Shaykh's followers. He then ordered them to be killed. Meanwhile, al-Shaykh and Nawrūz had arrived in Balqa with 250 cavalries. They then crossed over to Sarhad, but they could not stay there, so they traveled to Jerusalem and from there to Gaza on Sha'bān 26/December 24. Sūdun al-Jalab from Karak also gave them a lot of support. Faraj sent Baktamur after them. Baktamur, in turn, sent Shahin al-Zardakāsh to Cairo to inform him that al-Shaykh's army was coming.⁷⁵

It was reported that al-Shaykh and Nawrūz were heading towards Egypt. In response, high-level security measures were taken against al-Shaykh and Nawrūz at Qal'at al-Jabal and *istabl al-sultānī*. On Ramadan 8, 813/January 4, 1411, al-Shaykh began his march from Qatya towards Egypt.⁷⁶ In the meantime, Amīr Argun had arrested four mamlūks from Nawrūziyya. These were actually former sultan's mamlūks who had leaned towards Nawrūz. He had them imprisoned in a bastion in Qal'at al-Jabal.⁷⁷ In the meantime, they began to attack Qal'a and were subjected to intense arrow fire from the sultan's mamlūks defending it. Amīr Inal al-Saslānī, the *hajib al-thānī*, fought the Shaykhiyya and the Nawrūziyya in Bab al-Silsila but was defeated. Then, al-Shaykh announced that he had given the people amnesty, lowered prices, and ended oppression. The people, in turn, inclined towards him. In this way, he took control of the al-Malik Ashraf Sha'ban Madrasa. Subsequently, Madrasa of the Sultan Ḥasan was also captured.⁷⁸ As the rebels persisted in their looting of Cairo and seized various prisons, al-Shaykh secured control of Bab al-Silsila. Meanwhile, the insurgents asserted that their objective was not plunder; claiming that Sultan Faraj was dead, they demanded the enthronement of his son. However, Kāfur remained skeptical of these claims, prompting the rebels to threaten to burn down the gate. Kāfur was worried about this and was looking for ways to stall them, trying to prolong the process with various negotiations and waiting for the sultan's help.⁷⁹

On the other hand, help from the sultan's troops had arrived. Al-Shaykh's soldiers could not persevere and retreated to Bab al-Qarafa. The sultan's soldiers arrested some of al-Shaykh's retinue. It is seen that Nawrūz continued to fight for some time after Amīr Shaykh's escape. Baktamur, on the other hand, appointed Amīr Sūdun al-Himsī, who arrested many of the rebels. Baktamur Jillīq ordered the governor of Cairo to arrest those who acted in concert with the rebels. The governor of Cairo arrested them and ordered their hands to be cut off, and some were imprisoned. The rebels sought refuge in Shawbak, but the people drove them away. They then crossed to Karak, where they were received by Sūdun al-Jalab.⁸⁰

Baktamur Jillīq and Tugān al-Ḥasanī came to Damascus from Cairo, but they had not yet captured Shaykh and Nawrūz. Sultan Faraj remained in Damascus until Dhu al-Qadah 17/March 13, 1411. At that time, he appointed Baktamur as the regent (*nā'ib*) of Damascus and ordered his amirs and soldiers to march to Karak. Al-Shaykh and Nawrūz remained in Karak. A few days later, al-Shaykh, Amīr Sūdun and Qanibay al-Muḥammadi left the fortress and went to the baths of Karak with a small force. As soon as Amīr Shihab al-Dīn Ahmad, the governor (*wālī*) of Karak, became aware of this situation, he organized a sudden raid with his forces. He fought al-Shaykh and his supporters in front of the bathhouse. With the support of Nawrūz, they defeated Amīr Shihab al-Dīn. However, al-Shaykh was wounded by an arrow shot. They immediately came to Karak castle and saved their lives.⁸¹ In the meantime, Upon Faraj's arrival at Karak on Dhu al-Qadah 24/March 20 and his subsequent siege of the

⁷⁴ 'Asqalānī, *Inbā'u'l-gumr*, 2/453.

⁷⁵ Ibn Hījī, *Tārīḥ*, 2/951-952; 'Asqalānī, *Inbā'u'l-gumr*, 2/453-454; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/107; Ibn Iyas, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 1/806.

⁷⁶ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/271; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/108-109; Sayrafī, *Nuzhāt al-nufūs*, 2/268.

⁷⁷ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/271; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/109; Sayrafī, *Nuzhāt al-nufūs*, 2/268-269.

⁷⁸ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/272; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/110; Ibn Iyas, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 1/807.

⁷⁹ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/272-273; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/111-112; Sayrafī, *Nuzhāt al-nufūs*, 2/271; Ibn Iyas, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 1/807.

⁸⁰ Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/112-114; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Manhal*, 6/277; Ibn Iyas, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 1/807-808.

⁸¹ Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/115-116; Ibn Iyas, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 1/809.

city, al-Shaykh and Nawrūz, grasping the seriousness of their plight, appealed to Taghrībardī for intercession. Al-Shaykh offered his apologies and pledged his loyalty, attributing the conflict solely to the provocations of Baktamur Jillīq. He argued that his actions were purely in self-defense and not an act of disobedience against Sultan Faraj, while acknowledging Taghrībardī as the *amīr kabīr* and the most preeminent of his companions. However, Sultan Faraj refused to make peace this time and stated that he wanted to fight them to the end. Meanwhile, the communication between the two sides continued. It was proposed that Taghrībardī be made regent of Damascus and Nawrūz be made regent of Tripoli. This was because al-Shaykh and Nawrūz had acted in unison and stated that they would not tolerate Baktamur Jillīq to be in a higher position than them. They were reminded that they were higher in rank in the sultan's eyes. They said that if Taghrībardī became regent of Damascus, we would all be under his command. If this happened, they said, Sultan Faraj would never be opposed.⁸² The Sultan responded positively and discussed the matter with Taghrībardī. Although he did not want this at first, he had to accept it due to the insistence of the rebel amirs. Thus, Taghrībardī was appointed in place of Baktamur. Amīr Qarqmās was replaced by al-Shaykh as regent (*nā'ib*) of Aleppo. Nawrūz, on the other hand, was appointed regent of Tripoli in place of Jānim min Ḥasanshāh. Amīr Jānim was appointed as *amīr mīa* as well as *amīr majlis* in Egypt. Timurtash's nephew Taghrībardī, sayyid al-sagīr, remained as regent of Hama. Yashbak ibn Azdamur was to remain with Taghrībardī as the *atābak al-'asākir* in Damascus. Amīr Qanibay al-Muḥammadi was to remain in Aleppo as an amir alongside al-Shaykh. After the distribution of duties, Sultan Faraj stipulated to both al-Shaykh and Nawrūz that they should never leave their posts under any circumstances and that they should not move to any place or undertake any work without asking him. As a result of the negotiations, an agreement was concluded whereby the fortresses of Karak, Sarhad, and Sihyōn were formally surrendered to Sultan Faraj.⁸³ The quelling of al-Shaykh's insurrection exacted substantial political and military costs. Although the appointment of Taghrībardī as regent in Damascus fostered a momentary semblance of stability, this equilibrium proved ephemeral. Before long, reports indicated renewed mobilization by al-Shaykh, signaling that he was preparing to challenge the sultan's authority once again. This suggests that the authority Sultan Faraj had established in Syria was inherently unstable and ultimately lacked permanence.

7. Al-Nāṣir Faraj's Seventh Syrian Expedition

Al-Nāṣir Faraj arrived in Cairo on Muharram 12, 814/May 6, 1411, after completing the Karak expedition. On Safar 12/June 5, he sent 22 *baṭṭāl* (unemployed) amirs to various provinces of Damascus to receive *iqṭā'*. Likewise, he sent 200 mamlūks to the regent of Damascus.⁸⁴ Sultan Faraj then ordered the killing of some amirs imprisoned in Alexandria. These were Janibak al-Qaramī, Asandamur al-khājib, Sūdun al-Bajāsī and Qanibay. Faraj also ordered the arrest of nine of the amirs of *amīr mīa* and *ashrawāt*. Subsequently, he appointed Sunqur al-Rumī as the *ra's nawba al-kabīr* in place of Qanibay. He sent Tamraz al-Nāṣirī to Dimyat as a *baṭṭāl*.⁸⁵ On Rabi I 7/June 29, Hayir Beg, the regent of Gaza, and his retainers were arrested. Asanbugha al-Zardakāsh was appointed *amīr mīa* and later married Faraj's sister.⁸⁶ During this period, Sultan Faraj appears to have taken drastic measures to eliminate potential threats to his authority. Moreover, the appointment of trusted figures such as Sunqur al-Rumī and Asanbugha al-Zardakāsh to important positions reflects Sultan Faraj's desire to consolidate his power and neutralize his political rivals by establishing a new patronage network.

Meanwhile, reports emerged indicating that al-Shaykh and Nawrūz had once again risen in rebellion. In the same days, Sultan Faraj was reported to have had some amirs in Alexandria killed. He had some of the amirs arrested and five of them were killed by cutting them in half (*tawsīt*) and the rest were strangled. He also had some of his father's retainers (Zāhiriyya) killed. In addition, the children and relatives of the previously murdered Ustādār Jamal al-Dīn were also punished, and their property was confiscated.⁸⁷ It appears that Sultan Faraj ultimately resorted to a policy of mass execution without precedent in its scope and severity. The conciliatory stance he had adopted during the initial phase of

⁸² Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/278-279; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/116-118; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Manhal*, 6/278; Sayrafī, *Nuzhāt al-nufūs*, 2/273-275.

⁸³ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/278-279; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Nujūm*, 13/117-118; Ibn Taghrībardī, *al-Manhal*, 6/278; Sayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 2/274-275; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 1/809.

⁸⁴ Sayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 2/283.

⁸⁵ Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 1/810-812.

⁸⁶ Sayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 2/284-285.

⁸⁷ Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-zuhūr*, 1/812-814; Çıplak, "Ortaçağ'da Mülkiyet ve Kişilik İhlalleri", 430.

his reign had never constituted a sustainable rule; rather, it consistently undermined the foundations of his political authority. His particularly severe measures against the Zâhiriyya mamlûks prior to the Syrian campaign reflected a deliberate attempt to eliminate opposition factions preemptively and to reconstruct the administrative and military elite with figures whose loyalty to his person and regime could be assured.

However, Sultan Faraj's increasingly repressive policies culminated in the outbreak of a civil conflict in Cairo on Rajab 20/November 7, 1411. Amîr Jānim min Ḥasanshāh, in concert with a faction of amirs and mamlûks, launched a direct assault against the sultan. Faraj, having been forewarned of the conspiracy, swiftly took precautionary measures, compelling the insurgents to abandon their offensive and retreat. Thereupon, Faraj sent Tugān al-dawādār and Baktamur Jillīq al-Nāşirî after them. Some mamlûks and low-ranking amirs were arrested. Ākil, the *amîr ashāra*, and Sūdūn al-Abāyazidî, the *amîr ashāra*, were among those arrested. On Rajab 24/November 11, Tugān al-dawādār successfully returned from the expedition and succeeded in bringing back the head of Amîr Jānim.⁸⁸ In the following days, Sultan Faraj slaughtered 20 of his father's mamluks. He slaughtered 15 of them in front of Qal'a by cutting them in half (*tawsīt*). On the night of the same day, he had 100 of the Circassian mamlûks killed. Then he moved to Matriyya and had 10 mamlûk killed there. In Ramadan/December, Sultan Faraj announced that the Zâhiriyya mamlûks should come out and that they would be given amnesty. When they appeared, he had them arrested and imprisoned.⁸⁹ Thus, Sultan Faraj effectively forestalled the emergence of further insurrections in Cairo. Indeed, the severe reprisals inflicted upon the rebels, coupled with the regime's uncompromising intolerance toward dissent, served as a formidable deterrent against subsequent uprisings. While these measures temporarily consolidated his authority within Egypt, they simultaneously precipitated a gradual erosion of his broader political influence. Contemporary accounts suggest that the severity of his policies ultimately alienated many of the amirs and mamlûks in his entourage, prompting them to shift their allegiance to al-Shaykh.

On Sha'bān 1/November 18, Sultan Faraj ordered the killing of six amirs. Amîr Hizmān, the regent of Jerusalem, was one of them. He was one of those who had previously acted against Faraj in alliance with Yashbak ibn Azdamur. Aqbugha Ākil, the *amîr ashāra*, Amîr Argan and Amîr Sūdūn al-Zarif, Mugulbay, the *amîr ashāra*, and Ibn Qajmas Sayyid al-Muḥammad were among them. In Ramadan/December, al-Nāşir Faraj arrested a group of the mamlûks of al-Shaykh and Nawrūz al-Khāfizî. He also arrested about 50 of the julbān mamlûks. These were those who had abandoned Sultan Faraj in the campaign of 813/1410 and sought refuge with al-Shaykh. However, they later abandoned al-Shaykh and joined al-Faraj, but al-Faraj did not trust them and had them arrested.⁹⁰

However, it seems that al-Nāşir Faraj established authority in Egypt for a short period of time by resorting to coercion within eleven years after his return from Karak. During this time, he succeeded in forming a group of amirs loyal to him. But at the same time, unfavorable report was coming from Syria. Therefore, he had to organize a new campaign. Before the expedition, he had to be generous in order to mobilize his loyalists. For this purpose, on Dhu al-Qadah 24, 814/March 8, 1412, Faraj made various donations to his mamlûks. He gave 3,000 dinars to Baktamur Jillīq and Timurtash al-Muḥammadî, the *atābak al-'asākir*, 2,000 dinars to each of the amirs, 500-700 dinars to the *tablkhāna amirs*, and 100-200 dinars to the *ashrawat amirs*.⁹¹ He was accompanied by the Caliph al-Musta'in and four qādīs. He left Yalbougha al-Nāşirî as the *nā'ib al-ghayba* at Qal'at al-Jabal. He brought Amîr Altinbugha al-Uthmānî to *istabl al-sultānî*. He first visited his father's tomb and then went to Ridaniya. At this point, he issued a command that no one was to obstruct his passage. However, shortly thereafter, he was informed that a contingent of soldiers had positioned themselves ahead of him. In response, he ordered the execution of twenty of his late father's mamlûks. His state of inebriation during the journey did not go unnoticed, further fueling the resentment of those around him, who grew increasingly disdainful of his habitual drunkenness.⁹²

⁸⁸ Sayrafî, *Nuzhat al-nufûs*, 2/286.

⁸⁹ Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' u al-zuhûr*, 1/814; David Ayalon, "The Circassians in the Mamlûk Kingdom", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 69/3 (1949), 41.

⁹⁰ Sayrafî, *Nuzhat al-nufûs*, 2/287-288.

⁹¹ Sayrafî, *Nuzhat al-nufûs*, 2/291.

⁹² Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' u al-zuhûr*, 1/816-817.

On Muharram 4, 815/April 16, 1412, intelligence reports indicated that Sultan Faraj had begun advancing from Gaza toward Tripoli. This maneuver was undertaken in response to the mobilization of a considerable military force by Amīr Nawrūz in Tripoli, which demanded an immediate and decisive reaction. Moreover, it is recorded that prior to this campaign, Faraj had ordered the execution of a significant number of mamlūks stationed in Gaza, reflecting the increasingly coercive nature of his rule. These actions appear to have deeply embittered the mamlūk ranks, who consequently harbored profound resentment toward the sultan.⁹³ On Muharram 6/April 18, Sultan Faraj moved from Damascus to fight against al-Shaykh and Nawrūz. In the meantime, he was making propaganda in the Hama and Hims regions and trying to gain psychological superiority. Indeed, according to Li Guo, during Faraj's campaign, the people of Hama and Damascus sang and chanted in support of Faraj. Pro-regime propaganda directly targeted al-Shaykh. The people were chanting: "I am the sultan son of the sultan, al-Shaykh, you are just an amir."⁹⁴ This clearly emphasized that he was nothing compared to the sultan.

Al-Nāṣir Faraj proceeded as far as the region of Lajjūn. During this campaign, Fath Allah, the *kātib al-sir*, counselled the sultan to retreat and return to Damascus; however, Faraj disregarded this advice. Before the army could reach to Lajjūn, it began to disintegrate, with the majority of his troops abandoning him.⁹⁵ Indeed, according to the news that came on Muharram 19/May 1, Baktamur Jillīq, Tugān al-Ḥasanī al-dawādār al-kabīr, and Shāhin al-Afram had rebelled against Sultan Faraj and joined Nawrūz and al-Shaykh.⁹⁶ Only a small part of his army remained with him. Nevertheless, he continued to march against al-Shaykh and Nawrūz and was defeated at Lajjūn. As a result of this defeat, he had to retreat to Damascus. On the other hand, the soldiers of al-Shaykh and Nawrūz had taken Caliph al-Musta'in and Fath Allah, *kātib al-sir*. Al-Nāṣir Faraj's property, horses and camels were also captured. After their victory, al-Shaykh, Nawrūz, and Baktamur Jillīq presented themselves as the *amīr kabīr* and announced that they would carry out any order they wanted. Later, Fath Allah, *kātib al-sir* was persuaded and the events that had taken place were conveyed to Egypt through him. This news was written by the mouth of Caliph al-Musta'in himself and signed by him.⁹⁷ Al-Nāṣir Faraj's erratic maneuvers at Lajjūn severely undermined both the confidence in his leadership and the cohesion of his army. His obstinate decision to remain encamped there, disregarding repeated counsel to withdraw to Damascus, further alienated his amirs and led many to defect to opposing factions. The subsequent endorsement of these dissident amirs by Caliph al-Musta'in dealt a decisive blow to Faraj's political standing, gravely diminishing both his authority and the prestige of the sultanate.

Following his defeat at al-Lajjūn, Sultan al-Nāṣir Faraj, gravely wounded and in a dire state, sought refuge within the citadel of Damascus. Wasting no time, he convened the qāḍīs and notable figures of the city, offering numerous promises in an attempt to rally their support and bolster resistance on his behalf. Meanwhile, Timurtash al-Muḥammadī arrived in Damascus and was appointed regent of the city by Faraj on Muharram 16, 815/April 28, 1412, thereby replacing Amīr Taghrībardī. Shortly thereafter, Amīr ahūr Argun, Amīr Sungur, and the remainder of the sultan's forces also reached Damascus. Faraj then immediately began new preparations. He aimed to find support from the Turkmans. At the same time, he took defensive measures against the siege of the castle and catapults were placed on every bastion of the castle.⁹⁸

Nevertheless, al-Shaykh and Nawrūz wanted to seize Damascus and put an end to Faraj's rule. Indeed, they arrived in front of Damascus on Muharram 18/April 30. Faraj sent Amīr Sūdun al-Muḥammadī and Amīr Sūdun al-Jalab against them. In the battle that took place between the two sides in front of Damascus, Faraj's army was defeated for the second time.⁹⁹ On Muharram 24/May 6, the captives apprehended at Lajjūn were brought before al-Shaykh and Nawrūz for judgment. Among them was Amīr Bulāt Akshāq, the *shādd al-sharabhāna*. He was executed in a particularly brutal manner—

⁹³ Sayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 2/303.

⁹⁴ Li Guo, "Protest Songs from the Streets of Mamluk Cities", *Egypt and Syria under Mamluk Rule: Political, Social and Cultural Aspects*, ed. Amalia Levanoni (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 17.

⁹⁵ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/315; Muir, *The Mameluke*, 127; Wansbrough, "Faraj", 2/781.

⁹⁶ Sayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 2/304.

⁹⁷ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/315-316; Sayrafī, *Nuzhāt al-nufūs*, 2/305; P. M. Holt, "Al-Musta'in", *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, (Brill, 1993), 7/723; Kâzım Uzun, "Saltanat Makamında Bir Halife: el-Müstâin Billah'ın Halifeliliği (1406-1414) ve Memlûk Devleti Sultanlığı (1412)", *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi* 40/70 (2021), 194.

⁹⁸ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/317; Sayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 2/306.

⁹⁹ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/317.

his body being severed in two—in retribution for his prior role in ordering the execution of the Zâhiriyya mamlûks. Bulât, *amîr 'alam*, was also slain in the same way. On Muharram 25/May 7, the Caliph al-Musta'în officially announced that he had deposed Faraj from the sultanate.¹⁰⁰ Since opposing caliph's decisions was considered blasphemy, no one dared to stand by al-Nâsir Faraj. They had thus succeeded in alienating the people of Damascus. Nevertheless, they were explicitly told that if they fought on Faraj's side, they would be declaring war on Allah and His Messenger. Immediately afterwards, following the pledge of allegiance to the Caliph after Friday prayers, Baktamur Jillîq was appointed regent (*nâ'ib*) of Damascus, while Timurtash's nephew Qarqmâs was appointed regent of Aleppo. Amîr Sûdun al-Jalab was appointed regent of Tripoli.¹⁰¹

On the other hand, al-Shaykh and Nawrûz intended to strike the final blow and eliminate Faraj. For this purpose, they laid siege to Damascus from all sides. The struggle between the two sides continued for days. Timurtash al-Muhammadi, seeing that things were going badly and Faraj was weakened, fled under the pretext of seeking help. The soldiers then said: "Who are we fighting for now that Timurtash has fled?"¹⁰² In the meantime, Faraj realized that he had lost and said to the mamlûks around him: "Go for your own benefit!"¹⁰³ Thus, he was left with very few men in the castle of Damascus. Meanwhile, on Safar 9/May 21, Amîr Guzul entered the city from Bab al-Naşr. Thus, he said that they had dismissed Faraj and that the qâdî had ruled on the matter, clearly stating the harm of his heresy and blasphemy. At the same time, he announced that Caliph al-Musta'în had been declared sultan. People gathered on all sides and chanted *that the Caliph alone was the sultan of the Muslims*.¹⁰⁴ This shows that Faraj had suffered a dramatic collapse, not only militarily, but also in terms of authority and legitimacy. Timurtash al-Muhammadi's flight shattered the morale of Faraj's army and caused a crisis of loyalty among the soldiers. The fact that Faraj told the mamlûks to leave to pursue their own interests can be read as an indication of his desperation and points to the collapse of his claim to leadership from within. Ultimately, the call for allegiance to the caliph indicates that Faraj was purged religiously and politically and that authority passed to al-Shaykh and Nawrûz through the intermediary of Caliph al-Musta'în.

However, in the face of the defeats, there was not much more that Faraj could do. The elite amirs and soldiers had deserted him. At his most desperate moment, he turned to al-Shaykh Bab al-Naşr and captured it in a short time. Great acts of looting took place. Finally, Faraj was forced to leave the castle and surrendered to al-Shaykh on Safar 11, 815/May 23, 1412. The next day, the jurists of Egypt and Damascus convened and issued a *fatwa* that Faraj should be killed for the atrocities he had committed.¹⁰⁵ In fact, when Faraj surrendered, he was assured that his life would be spared. However, they later ruled that this promise was invalid.¹⁰⁶ The killing of Faraj was extremely painful. They stripped him of his clothes and dragged his body on the ground. After killing him, they threw his body into the garbage pit under the castle in Damascus.¹⁰⁷ After his assassination, the following *hadith* was narrated: "Those who derive their power from rebellion against God will find their plans ultimately thwarted, until the Day of Judgment."¹⁰⁸

On Safar 25/June 6, the amirs gathered in the presence of Caliph al-Musta'în and according to the decision taken there, Nawrûz was appointed to the regent of Damascus. Accordingly, Damascus, Aleppo and Hama were to be completely under Nawrûz's command. He had the authority to appoint any amir he wanted and could distribute *iqṭā'* as he wished. Al-Shaykh, on the other hand, was to remain in Egypt as *tadbîr al-mamlaka* and stay with the caliph. Immediately afterwards, news was sent to various regions, and it was clearly stated that obedience to the Caliph al-Musta'în as sultan was obligatory and

¹⁰⁰ Maqrîzî, *al-Sulûk*, 6/319.

¹⁰¹ Maqrîzî, *al-Sulûk*, 6/320.

¹⁰² Sayrafî, *Nuzhat al-nufûs*, 2/307.

¹⁰³ Sayrafî, *Nuzhat al-nufûs*, 2/308.

¹⁰⁴ Maqrîzî, *al-Sulûk*, 6/323; Ibn Taghribardî, *al-Manhal*, 6/284; Sayrafî, *Nuzhat al-nufûs*, 2/308; Sahâwî, *al-Ḍaw' al-lâmi'*, 10/205; Uzun, "Saltanat Makamında Bir Halife", 195-196.

¹⁰⁵ Maqrîzî, *al-Sulûk*, 6/324; Sayrafî, *Nuzhat al-nufûs*, 2/309; Holt, "Al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh", 7/271.

¹⁰⁶ Poole, *A History of Egypt*, 334; Daniel Beaumont, "Political Violence", *Mamluk Studies Review* 8/1 (2004), 207.

¹⁰⁷ Amalia Levanoni, "The Mamluk Conception of the Sultanate", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26 (1994), 385; Beaumont, "Political Violence", 223; Özgür Kavak, "Hal, İstifa ve İhtilal: İslam Devletlerinde İktidarın El Değiştirmesi Üzerine Bazı Tespitler", *Divan: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 24/47 (2019), 161; Petry, *The Mamluk Sultanate*, 73.

¹⁰⁸ Maqrîzî, *al-Sulûk*, 6/325.

that he should be obeyed.¹⁰⁹ The decisions taken after the killing of Faraj were also reported to Cairo and it was said: “Today there is no oppression. People are safe in their property and lives.”¹¹⁰

CONCLUSION

This paper examines the complex power relations during the second reign of al-Nāṣir Faraj within the framework of the political and military effects of the period. Faraj’s reign stands out as a period of instability in the state’s internal relations and administrative structure. In particular, the Mamlūk amirs’ frequently changing alliances and their sudden maneuvers in the struggle for power both weakened al-Faraj’s reign and threatened the overall functioning of the state. Although al-Nāṣir Faraj succeeded in partially dominating the Zāhiriyya amirs in Egypt during his second reign, the same could not be realized in Syria. Indeed, the opposition to Egyptian rule by prominent amirs such as Jakam, al-Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī and Nawrūz can be considered not only as military resistance but also as a movement challenging the legitimacy of the central authority. These continuous struggles throughout Faraj’s reign led to the gradual fragmentation of the power structure in Egypt and Syria, the two most important regions of the Mamlūk state.

Faraj’s reign is extremely important in terms of the weakening of the centralist structure of the Mamlūk state, the more independent actions of some regents in Syria, and finally, the prominence of the caliphate as a counterweight to the political authority. The use of the caliphate as a means of legitimization against Faraj’s authority once again demonstrates the symbolic importance of the Islamic tradition in state administration. In the last days of Faraj, especially with the use of the caliphate by the al-Shaykh and Nawrūz, the Damascus-based resistance was prevented. At least, after the defeat of Lajjūn, Faraj was prevented from taking the people and Turkmans with him and fighting again in Damascus. This was because opposing the decision taken by Caliph al-Musta‘īn could be considered blasphemy. The proclamation of Caliph al-Musta‘īn as sultan can be considered not only as a victory against Faraj but also as a transformation in which power was reshaped within the framework of its religious legitimacy. This reveals how religious legitimacy was instrumentalized in the administrative structure and political discourse of the Mamlūk state and the role of the caliphate in limiting political power. The power vacuum that emerged with the weakening of Faraj’s authority accelerated the attempts of other amirs to protect their own interests and increased internal strife.

Al-Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī and Nawrūz’s political and military moves against Faraj revealed the inadequacy of central authority in the Mamlūk state. The siege of Damascus in the last days of al-Nāṣir Faraj resulted in the abandonment of Faraj’s supporters, and the victory of al-Shaykh al-Maḥmūdī and Nawrūz was grounded in the authority of the caliph. This development explains how Faraj’s style of rule was received negatively by the amirs and the people, and how the lack of central authority allowed regional powers to act autonomously within the state. Moreover, the defeat of Faraj in Syria reveals how quickly the amirs could change their positions in line with their own interests and how they could use the caliphate as a tool to gain advantages in their favor.

However, the events analyzed in this paper reveal that the power mechanisms in Mamlūk society were based on individual interests and power rather than loyalty. Al-Nāṣir Faraj’s extraordinarily harsh policy against the Zāhiriyya faction, his father’s mamlūks, especially in the last years of his rule, caused a serious break in his power as a result of having most of them killed, and caused some amirs and mamlūks to switch sides. In the process, this situation caused the amirs loyal to al-Nāṣir Faraj to change sides and weakened the internal dynamics of the military and administrative structure of the Mamlūk state. Therefore, the dissolutions within the military class, which ensured the survival of the state, damaged both the central authority and social stability. In this context, the failure to achieve a permanent stability in the power structure of the Mamlūk state emerges as one of the biggest problems not only in the Faraj period but also in the following periods.

In the light of all these incidents, it can be said that Faraj’s reign was not only a period of civil war for the Mamlūk state, but also a period in which the cornerstones of the administrative structure were questioned. The rise of the caliphate as an element of authority against the sultanate, together with

¹⁰⁹ Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 6/328; Poole, *A History of Egypt*, 335; Petry, *The Mamluk Sultanate*, 77; Holt, “Al-Musta‘īn”, 7/723.

¹¹⁰ Sayrafī, *Nuzhat al-nufūs*, 2/310.

Faraj's weakening power, supported the efforts of the amirs to declare their independence. In this sense, the fall of Faraj reshaped the dynamics of the Mamlūk state's power structure and led to the emergence of a series of new focus of power against the central authority.

Overall, Faraj's reign exposes the political and military weaknesses of the Mamlūk state and shows how local leaders could gain power against the central authority. The struggles of amirs such as al-Shaykh al-Mahmūdī and Nawrūz against Faraj should be considered not only as a military resistance but also as a movement questioning the legitimacy of the central authority. The power conflicts in this period revealed the amirs' desire to act independently against the central authority, and this situation laid the foundations for the collapse of the Mamlūk state. The end of Faraj's reign and the rise of al-Shaykh and Nawrūz to legitimate power by using the caliphate reveals a transformation that paved the way for the state's long-term weakening.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ‘Abd al-Sayyid, Hakim Amin. *Qiyām al-Dawlat al-Mamālīk al-Thāniyya*. Cairo: al-Maktabat al-Arabiyya, 1966.
- ‘Asqalānī, Ibn Ḥajar. *Inbā’u’l-ġumr bi-abnā’i’l-‘umr*. ed. Hasan Habashi. Cairo, 1994.
- Ayalon, David. “The Circassians in the Mamlūk Kingdom”. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 69/3 (1949), 135–147.
- Beaumont, Daniel. “Political Violence”. *Mamluk Studies Review* 8/1 (2004), 201–225.
- Çıplak, Esra. “Ortaçağ’da Mülkiyet ve Kişilik İhlalleri: Burcî Memlûk Sultanı Ferec b. Berkûk Örneği”. *Tarih ve Gelecek Dergisi* 7/1 (2021), 414–435.
- Garcin, Jean-Claude. “The Regime of the Circassian Mamlûks”. *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, V.1, ed. Carl F. Petry, 290–317. Cambridge, 2006.
- Guo, Li. “Protest Songs from the Streets of Mamluk Cities”. *Egypt and Syria under Mamluk Rule: Political, Social and Cultural Aspects*, ed. Amalia Levanoni, 17–24. Leiden: Brill, 2021.
- Holt, P. M. “Al-Mu’ayyad Shaykh”. *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 7/270–271. Brill, 1993.
- Holt, P.M. “Al-Musta’in”. *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 7/123–124, Brill, 1993.
- Holt, P. M. “The Position and Power of the Mamlūk Sultan”. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 38/2 (1975), 237–249.
- Ibn Hījī, Shihāb al-dīn Abū al-Abbās Ahmad. *Ta’rihu ibn Hījī*. Beirut: Dar al Ibn Hazm, 2003.
- Ibn Iyās, Zayn al-dīn Muḥammad. *Badā’i’ al-zuhūr fī waqā’i’ al-duhūr*. Cairo, 1960.
- Ibn Taghrībardī, Jamāl al-Dīn Abī al-Mahāsīn Yūsuf. *al-Manhal al-ṣāfi wa al-mustawfā ba’d al-wāfi*. ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amin. Cairo: Hay’at al-Miṣriyya Amma li’l-Kitāb, n.d.
- Ibn Taghrībardī, Jamāl al-Dīn Abī al-Mahāsīn Yūsuf. *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī Mulūk Miṣr wa’l-Qahira*. ed. Fahim Muḥammad Shaltūt. Cairo, 1970.

- Kavak, Özgür. “Hal’, İstifa ve İhtilal: İslam Devletlerinde İktidarın El Değiştirmesi Üzerine Bazı Tespitler”. *Divan: Disiplinlerarası Çalışmalar Dergisi* 24/47 (2019), 141–196.
- Levanoni, Amalia. “The Mamluk Conception of the Sultanate”. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26 (1994), 373–392.
- Maqrizī, Tāqī al-Dīn Ahmad ibn ‘Alī ibn ‘Abd al-Qādir. *al-Sulūk li-ma‘rifat al-duwal al-mulūk*. ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir Atā. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1997.
- Muir, Sir William. *The Mameluke or Slave Dynasty of Egypt 1260–1517*. London: Smith, Eider & Cooperation, 1896.
- Ötenkaya, Yusuf. “Chaos and Order in the Mamlūk Politics: Intra-Factional Conflicts during the First Reign of al-Nāṣir Faraj”. *The Historian* 87/2 (2025), 149–180.
- Petry, Carl F. *The Mamluk Sultanate: A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022.
- Poole, Stanley Lane. *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*. New York: Charles Scribner’s Son, 1901.
- Sahāwī, Shams al-dīn Abū al-Hayr Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr ibn Uthman ibn Muḥammad. *al-Ḍaw’ al-lāmi’ li-ahli al-ḫarn al-tāsi’*. ed. ‘Abd al-Latif Hasan ‘Abd al-Rahman. Beirut: Manshurat al-Dar al-Ma‘arat al-Hayat, 2003.
- Sayrafī, al-Khatīb al-Jawharī ‘Alī ibn Dawūd. *Nuzhat al-nufūs wa al-abdān fī tawārih al-zamān*. ed. Hasan Habashi. Cairo: Matba‘at Dār al-Kutub, 1971.
- Tarhān, Ibrahim ‘Alī. *Miṣr fī ‘asr Dawlat al-Mamālīk al-Jarākasa*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahdati al-Miṣriyya, 1959.
- Uzun, Kâzım. “Saltanat Makamında Bir Halife: el-Müstain Billah’ın Halifeliği (1406–1414) ve Memlûk Devleti Sultanlığı (1412)”. *Tarih İncelemeleri Dergisi* 40/70 (2021), 190-205.
- Wansbrough, J. “Faradj”. *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2/781–82. Brill, 1991.
- Wing, Patrick. “The Syrian Commercial Elite and Mamluk State-Building in the Fifteenth Century”. *Trajectories of State Formation across Fifteenth-Century Islamic West-Asia*, ed. Jo Van Steenbergen, 306–318: Brill, 2020.
- Yāqūt ibn ‘Abd Allah al-Khamawī, Shihab al-Dīn Abū ‘Abd Allah. *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*. Beirut: Dar Sādir, 1977.
- Zaydi, Mufid. *al-‘Aṣr al-Mamlūkī*. Jordan: Dar al-Usama, 2009.
- Zengin, Murat, “Memlûklu Devlet Adamı Emir Çekem ve İsyanları”. *History Studies* 11/5 (2019), 1855–1873.