

The Turkmen Identity Crisis in the fifteenth-century Middle East

The Turkmen–Turkish Struggle for Supremacy

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“The harm which was caused by the Turkmen Swār to the locals and the region was much worse than what Timur-lane had inflicted on the area.”¹

Ibn Aja

These were the lines of the chief justice (qādi) of the Mamluk army d. 881/1476, who witnessed the Mamluk campaign against the Dulkadirid Turkmen to restore Anatolia to their suzerainty. The study of the Turkmen history is a key element in the Middle East today which still requires extensive research to understand these diverse elements scattered from the Black Sea and Caspian Sea in the north to Iraq, Syria, and the Levant in the south, as well as from Turkey in the west to Eastern Iran in the east. The Turkmen were always the forgotten minority in the area despite their large population. In the absence of official records, their numbers cannot be calculated, but it is widely accepted that they exceed three millions in Iraq, and one million in Syria and other countries.

The Turkmen identity still causes a serious problem today, and since the invasion of Iraq in 2003 the Republic of Turkey (founded by Turkmen) has closely monitored its relatives in Iraq who are threatened by the Kurds and is ready to launch a war if the Iraqi Turkmen were harmed. From my frequent travels in the Levant, I witnessed Turkmen villages in Northern Syria, and in remote areas such as around the foothill of Krak des Chevaliers: an unexpected place to be inhabited mainly by Christians and a clear testament to their deep penetration of the Middle East.

¹ Ibn Aja, *al-ʿIrāk bayn al-Māmalik wa al-Uthmānyyūn al-Atrāk*. ed. M. Dahman, Damascus 1986, 145.

The appearance of the Turkmen in the Middle East could be divided into two stages: the first in the eleventh century, when the Saljuq Oghuz tribe led a massive Turkmen federation to immigrate from Central Asia westwards into Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Anatolia. The battle of Manzikert in 1071 opened the gate to waves of Turkmen immigration which started the Turkification process of Anatolia.² The second stage took place under many Turkmen princes (beys) fleeing before the Mongol terror and entering Anatolia, Iraq, Northern Iran in large numbers in the thirteenth–fourteenth centuries.³ The principal Turkmen elements were the Ottoman Oghuz in central and eastern Anatolia, the Qaramanids in central Anatolia, the Qara Qoyūnlū in Iraq, Eastern Anatolia, and Azerbaijan, the Āq Qoyūnlū in Iraq, Eastern Anatolia, and Azerbaijan, and finally the Dulkadirids. It is worth pointing out that such vast immigration pushed forward and displaced diverse Kurdish tribes as far north as the Armenian region.⁴ That added to the identity and settlement problem in the Middle East, still unresolved today.

Since the first four Turkmen powers have received attention by scholars such as V. Minorsky, J. Woods, and H. Inalcik among others, this article focuses on the Dulkadirid Turkmen and attempts to examine aspects of their history. It should be pointed out that the early stages of the Dulkadirids remains obscure, and the Mamluk documentation on the fifteenth century remains the prime source of this information, prior to the Ottoman source materials from the end of the fifteenth century. The Turkmen administration did not develop enough to produce many documents, or suffered heavy losses and a great part is not extant.

The Dulkadirids 740–921/1339–1515, were Turkmen⁵ tribes from central Asia, arriving to Eastern Anatolia in the fourteenth century when escaping from the Mongols. Their settlements were between two other Turkish powers, the Ottomans to the west, and the Mamluks to the north, east and south. They developed politically into the fifteenth century to rule the Principality of Albistan and Maʿrash to the west of the Euphrates.⁶ This new Turkish element would be a cause of uncertainty between the Ottomans and the Mamluks later on.

From the few mentioned stories on their early relations with the Mamluks, it seems that they paid homage to the Mamluk sultanate⁷ which was governing a large part of Eastern Anatolia. Such homage was necessary in order to survive,

² B. Spuler, "The disintegration of the Caliphate in the East," in *The Cambridge history of Islam*, vol. IA, 149–150.

³ O. Turan, "Anatolia in the period of the Seljuks," in *The Cambridge history of Islam*, vol. IA, 251. D. Morgan, *Medieval Persia*. London 1988, 102.

⁴ C. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*. London 1968, 316. Reading the journey of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa d. 1377, who traveled through Anatolia will help understand The turkification of the region. Tuḥfat al-Nuzzār, 1992, 299–334.

⁵ Turkmen is the Persian form for the Turkish tribes of Central Asia.

⁶ V. Minorsky, *The Turks, Iran and the Caucasus in the Middle Ages*. London 1978, 28.

⁷ al-Sakhāwī had mentioned that Mamluk sultans encouraged political marriage in the early fifteenth century with this principality which was considered a honour bestowed upon Dulkadirid rulers. *al-Tibr al-Masbuk*, Beirut 1984, 308. Morgan, *Medieval Persia*, 94.

especially with other Turkmen elements hovering over the area looking for pasture and political power. They needed the Mamluk support at a time when they were breaking from the Timurid subjugation of Anatolia during the rule of Timurlane (†1405) and his son Shāh Rukh († 1447). As for their relations with the Ottomans, the latter were expanding on the Western side most of the fourteenth century, and in the first half of the fifteenth century, thus the Ottomans did not get involved in the affairs of the Dulkadirids until the 1460s. It is difficult to catalogue the Dulkadirid appearance in the sources before their manifestation as a clear political power with a significant role in the area.

The Egyptian historian Ibn Taghri (†1471) furnishes us with details of amicable relations between the Ottomans and the Mamluks until the capture of Constantinople in 1453,⁸ reflected in their respect towards the Turkmen principalities under the Mamluks. This changed in 1465, when the Dulkadirid lord Arslān (Turkmen for "lion") 858–870/1454–1465 was assassinated in Cairo, probably upon the order of Khushqadam the Mamluk sultan († 1467), who wanted to replace him with a more capable and loyal prince. That incident led to strife within the Dulkadirid house, when some commanders refused the newly appointed Mamluk lord, Budāq (Turkmen for "mountain") and – led by Swār (Turkmen for "Knight") – were seeking Ottoman support. Sultan Muḥammad II († 1481) seized this opportunity to expand Eastward and appointed his own candidate, Swār as lord of the Dulkadirids with a sultanate diploma.⁹ Thus the Dulkadirid principality was to split into two parts: one in Marʿash governed by Dudāq, and another in Albistan governed by Swār pulling out of the Mamluk orbit. Here it seems that the rebellion of Swār was not bold enough to declare independence, but the Turkmen identity was attached to a much stronger Turkish one, after a century in Anatolia.

Not long before that the Ottoman candidate took over most of the territories of the Dulkadirids, which resulted in Budāq's flight to Cairo in 871/1466–1467. The Mamluk sultanate dispatched an army lead by Bard Bek, the vice-sultan of Syria in the same year, but it was defeated by Swār. One of the most interesting reasons for such a defeat was the defection of the vice-sultan to Swār's camp.¹⁰ Some believe that such a defection with many Turkish soldiers in the campaign was not only a result of political ambition, but also due to the similarity of the Turkish elements in the Middle East which facilitated such a move based on the common tribal behaviour of Central Asia.

Swār the Dulkadirid managed to widen his sphere of influence in 1467–1468 by attacking the Mamluk cities of Eastern Anatolia while taking advantage of the power vacuum in Egypt with three successive sultans coming to power following the death of Khushqadam in 1467.

In Rajab 872/February 1468, the new and long-reigning Burji sultan Qaitbay († 1496), commissioned a very large army, headed by atabeg Qalaqsiz (Turkmen

⁸ *Ibn Taghri Birdi, al-Nujūm al-Zāhira*. Beirut 1988, Vol. XVI, 49–50.

⁹ *al-Sakhāwī, al-Daw' Allāmi*. Beirut 1977, Vol. III, 273.

¹⁰ *al-Sakhāwī, al-Daw' Allāmi*. Beirut 1977, Vol. III, 274.

for “not distressed”), the second in command in the realm to confront the rebellious Dulkadirid Swār.¹¹ From implicit evidence in the sources other Turkmen elements can be seen in Syria and Eastern Anatolia joining the Egyptian army against Swār. Not only those, but another Turkmen principality, Banū Ramaḍān in Adana in South Taurus remained loyal to the Mamluks and helped them by attacking some territories belonging to Swār.¹² These Turkmen elements did not join the pact with Swār.

It is not the aim of this survey to provide a chronological narrative of the copious military activity recorded by contemporary chronicles. However, it can be stated that the Mamluk–Turkmen army managed to recapture ‘Ayntāb from Swār in April 1468 and deterred him from threatening Aleppo, the heart of Mamluk Northern Syria. Two months later, Swār inflicted a heavy defeat on the Mamluks, capturing their leader Qalaqsiz. Aleppo now faced a great threat.¹³ This swift change of fortune could be attributed partly to Ottoman help, but also to Swār mustering a large number of Turkmen mercenaries in eastern Anatolia, who participated in his campaign as ‘shareholder soldiers’ under his banner as the habit of the Turkmen. Carl Petry, who studied the last Mamluks extensively argues that Qalaqsiz, after being released from captivity, changed his loyalty to Swār.¹⁴ One cannot avoid the fundamental issue of identity here, with the second Turkish commander in the Mamluk sultanate cooperating with fellow Turkmen. The difference here is that Mamluk Turks were kidnapped from Central Asia and the Caucasus with no family, but were greatly influenced by the traditions of the previous dynasties (Saljuqs, Zangids, and Ayyubids) while Dulkadirids were free Turks with the institution of the family occupying a major part of their lives.

The next step in Swār’s plan was to interfere in Mamluk Syrian affairs by issuing a charter to the locals of Aleppo and Damascus in which he claimed the Sultanate for himself as an independent lord and assured them their safety.¹⁵ Swār was attempting to galvanize the Turkish elements around him in a daring attempt to create an identity outside the remote isolated region of Southern Taurus. He also was trying to make use of the large Turkmen population in and around Aleppo, an area exposed to massive Turkmen settlement starting with the Saljuqs in the eleventh century.

Sultan Qaitbay commissioned a large force lead by atabeg Uzbek (Turkmen for “brain”, also a developed form of ‘Oghuz’) from Cairo to confront Swār in Sh‘abān 873/February 1469. It is worth mentioning that in addition to the Mam-

¹¹ Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i al-Zohūr*. ed. M. Mustafa, Cairo 1963, Vol. III, 7.

¹² Ibn Iyās, *Badā’i al-Zohūr*, 37–40; I. Turkhan, *Miṣr fi‘aṣr al-Mamalik al-Jarākisa*. Cairo 1960, 125–126.

¹³ Ibn Taghri Birdi, *Hawādith al-Duhūr*. ed. B. William, California 1932, Vol. 3: 633–634. S. Harel, *The Ottoman–Mamluk War, 1485–1491*. Brill 1995, 89.

¹⁴ C. Petry, *The last Mamluk sultans and Egypt’s waning as a great power*. New York 1994, 43.

¹⁵ al-Sairafi, *Inbā’ al-Ḥaṣr*. ed. H. Habash, Cairo 1970, 29–30.

luk-Turkish regular army, many Turkmen mercenaries were in their company.¹⁶ That army managed three months later to inflict heavy defeat on Swār near Aleppo, killing a brother of his named Malbek, and capturing two others. Swār himself managed to escape by taking refuge in the Ottoman territories.¹⁷

According to Ibn Aja († 1476), weeks later, while the Mamluks were returning to Aleppo, Swār and a massive host of Turkmen managed to surprise the Mamluks and devastate them. The victory of Swār made him a legend comparable to Timurlane which was reflected in some poems of the period.¹⁸

The question which should be addressed here is how did the Dulkadirid Turkmen manage to gather such a large force and reverse their fortune? There is no clear answer in the absence of detailed information, but the saturation of the area with them made forming and breaking alliances a routine. In addition to the Ottoman assistance to minimize the Mamluk presence in Eastern Anatolia, it should be added that the image of the Mamluk sources on the Turkmen was that of robbers, ready to move at a moment's notice.

Later in the same year, Swār tried to capitalize on his victory, by negotiating with the Mamluk sultanate and trying to enter into a vassal relation with Egypt. He demanded the recognition of his authority over his capital Albistan and the other vicinities. Also he dared to request permission to deploy some Dulkadirid forces in Aleppo under the supervision of the Mamluks in return for the surrender of ʿAyntab to Cairo.

His proposals were declined, spoiling any chance of separate identity for the Dulkadirid.¹⁹ The reaction was harsh. Swār attacked the countryside of Aleppo in an economic attrition, and in addition he annexed lands from fellow Turkmen to the southwest in Adana in 875/summer 1470. That had a devastating effect in the area concerning the Mamluk territories. The locals in Sis, between Albistan and Adana, arrested the Mamluk lord of the town and contacted Swār to surrender the town to him. According to Ibn Aja, the Turkmen looting of the area was much worse than the devastation inflicted by the Timurids.²⁰ Undoubtedly, the majority of the population of Sis were Turkmen – like most of the area around Taurus – who were looking for stability in their daily lives. That could endanger the Mamluk interests in the area, and might lead to more territorial losses, especially that of Malatya, north of Albistan. It was a Mamluk city and vital commer-

¹⁶ Ibn Taghri, *Hawādith*, 700; Harel, *The Ottoman–Mamluk War*, 90. It is a strenuous task to understand the diverse mosaic of the Turkmen elements of both fronts, saturated with them and in the area in general, as sources themselves do not give much details about their clans and tribes.

¹⁷ Ibn Taghri, *Hawādith*, 709–710. al-Şairafi, *Inbāʾ al-Hasr*, 69–70. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾi al-Zohūr*, 32–33; Turkhan, *Miṣr fi aṣr al-Mamalik al-Jarakisa*, 126–127.

¹⁸ Ibn Aja, *al-ʿIrāk*, 46. The former Dulkadirid lord Budāq was in the Egyptian company in Syria and returned to Egypt with them. It is not clear if he had participated in the warfare.

¹⁹ Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾi al-Zohūr*, 44. Turkhan, *Miṣr*, 128. H. Inalcik, "The emergence of the Ottomans," in *The Cambridge history of Islam*, vol. IA, 1979, 264.

²⁰ al-Şairafi, *Inbāʾ al-Hasr*, 239. Harel, *The Ottoman–Mamluk War*, 93. Ibn Aja, *al-ʿIrāk*, 145.

cial centre linking the Caspian trade to Anatolia on the route between Syria and the Black Sea ports.

Looking panoramically, another Turkmen threat towards the Mamluks arose on behalf of the Āq Qoyūnlū lord, Uzun Ḥassan ('The Tall', † 1478), who seized the moment of Mamluk weakness in October 1470 and attacked Aleppo and other Mamluk dominions in al-Jazīra.²¹ Thus a Turkmen chain reaction was threatening the whole area. The Āq Qoyūnlū had very good relations with the Mamluks and were not hostile towards the Ottomans either until the 1460s. Due to the pressing situation, the Mamluk sultanate started immediately to organize a massive campaign to end this crisis. In addition to the appointment of the close confidant Yashbak (Turkmen for "living") as commander, Ibn Iyās had mentioned that the Mamluks were gathering the Turkmen tribes in Syria to join the Mamluk efforts.²²

Military history is not the prime concern of this paper, thus the focus is on the political outcome, leaving the details of the campaigns to the chief justice and negotiator of the Mamluk Ibn Aja.²³ In Muharram 876/June 1471, the Egyptian army managed to capture 'Ayntāb from the Turkmen after a long siege and fierce resistance by forcing Swār to flee the city.

Sources recorded that several loyal Turkmen tribes had assisted the Mamluks in their campaigns further on. In addition to the support of Banū Ramaḍān principality, as a result, the town of Tarsus and later Sis were captured.²⁴ Ibn Aja was sent by the Mamluks to negotiate with Swār upon the Dulkadirid request. Every attempt to rule semi-independently, even in remote and small towns like Sis, was turned down.

Despite skirmishes, a fragile peace was maintained for a year until Dhū al-Hijja 876/May 1472. Finally, Swār was besieged in an isolated castle with no help from the Ottomans, he surrendered himself to the Mamluk side, after being insured his safety.²⁵ The Mamluk long candidate, Budāq was reappointed as lord of the Dulkadirid principality, while Swār with two other brothers were brought to Cairo in chains and humiliated in public before being hanged at the doors of Cairo in Rabī'ī 877/October 1472. One can attribute part of the Mamluk success to the Turkmen themselves. The lavish spending of Yashbak on the Turkmen

²¹ Ibn Aja, *al-ʿIrāk*, 219. Petry, *The last Mamluk sultans*, 47. The Āq Qoyūnlū ('Turkmen for White sheep'; 780–914/1378–1508). Was a confederation of Turks, formed from the ancient Oghuz. They were vassals to the Timurids, then expanded in parts of Iraq and Persia. C. E. Bosworth. *Islamic dynasties*. Edinburgh 1980, 170–171.

²² Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i al-Zohūr*, 54–55. The sources are full of fragmented lines about diverse Turkmen elements in the Middle East, which were in general willing to fight for any power which can afford them.

²³ Ibn Aja, *al-ʿIrāk*, 87–97.

²⁴ Ibn Aja, *al-ʿIrāk*, 98–105. al-Sairafi, *Inbā' al-Ḥasr*, 331–332.

²⁵ Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i al-Zohūr*, 73–74. Ibn Aja, *al-ʿIrāk*, 147–150; Harel, *The Ottoman–Mamluk War*, 95–96. The Ottomans were engaged in fighting the Venetians at that time.

tribes, including a large number of the Dulkadirids secured their loyalty, especially the commanders.²⁶

It is astonishing that after six years of war between the Dulkadirids and the Mamluks, which drained the Egyptian economy, the Mamluk sultan reinstated a Dulkadirid as a vassal instead of appointing a commander from Cairo as the habit with the other *iqṭāʿ* in the region. That reflects the heavy presence of the Turkmen strength in the area. The Turkmen potency was reflected in the lines of the contemporary Egyptian historian, Ibn Iyās who evaluated the Turkmen challenge:

“The prestige which the sultan had enjoyed among the kings of the Orient and other realms was gravely harmed. Even the peasants across the realm dared to rebel against the authority, while fighting Swār. The Mamluks were about to lose power. Swār was nearing to capture Aleppo and the Khutba was declared for him, the currency was struck in his name in Al-bistan sphere.”²⁷

While the Dulkadirids under Budāq remained vassals of the Mamluks between 877 and 885/1472–1480, there was no sign of challenge by any elements under their suzerainty. The challenge came from a stronger Turkmen power in the Middle East. Uzun Ḥassan, lord of the Āq Qoyūnlū who established himself in Tabriz in 1472, established the capital of his realm in Azerbaijan and Northern Iraq and Western Persia.²⁸ In addition to Diyar Bakr, as mentioned above, the Āq Qoyūnlū – since their foundation in the fourteenth century – did not clash with the Mamluks and represented themselves as servants to their sultans, only in 1470 with the embarrassing victories of the Dulkadirids. When they dared to attack Aleppo in 1471, allying with Venice against both the Ottomans and the Mamluks, Uzun declared his independence, encouraged by crushing and dominating the Turkmen of Qara Qoyunlu.²⁹ Since J. Woods has studied the Āq Qoyūnlū extensively, only the idea of identity among the Turkmen must be dealt with, which is the focus of this research. Uzun in Dhū al-Hijja 877/May 1472 took the opportunity of the pilgrimage season, and sending his envoy to Mecca declaring himself as king and patron of the two holy mosques in Mecca and Medina. He also sent his own paneling (*kiswa*) for the Kaʿba in Mecca.³⁰

Here a conflicting identity can be seen. A Turkmen lord took an unprecedented step by declaring himself the patron of the two holy shrines, while the Abbasid Caliph resided in Cairo. It was a very daring attempt to seize the pres-

²⁶ Ibn Aja, *al-ʿIrāk*, 139, 158. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾi al-Zohūr*, 74–76.

²⁷ Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾi al-Zohūr*, 78–79. The khutba or Friday sermon was a mark of full independence.

²⁸ Morgan, *Medieval Persia*, 105.

²⁹ Morgan, *Medieval Persia*, 105.

³⁰ Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾi al-Zohūr*, 87–88. J. Woods, *The Aqqoyunlu. Clan, confederation, empire*. Minneapolis–Chicago 1976, 160–161. Uzun Ḥassan preceded the Turkmen Ottomans who had this title after 1517.

tige of an obscure Turkmen line. The patronage was always reserved for an Arab from the line of the prophet, or later for a powerful sultan recognized by the Caliphate. So this challenge to the Mamluk Turks was a step towards creating a new identity for the Turkmen, but it conflicted with their interests in allying with Christian Venice against fellow Muslims.

In September 1472 Uzun began depriving the Mamluks of key cities in Eastern Anatolia, such as ʿAyntāb, al-Bira, and started closing in on Aleppo. He tried to create a confederation of the Turkmen around him by contacting the lord of Dulkadir, Budāq in Albistan. He invited him to his authority, and ordering him to surrender a number of castles in the area. Also the Āq Qoyūnlū lord contacted the Mamluk deputy in Syria, trying to force him into submission.³¹

It is understandable that the deputy of Syria did forward the message to Cairo, asking for help as member of the realm. But why did Budāq, a Turkmen lord, prefer to remain a vassal of the Turkish Mamluks, and not of the Turkmen Āq Qoyūnlū? The short answer is self evident. But it can be argued that Budāq refused to submit to an equal Turkmen who claimed higher religious authority. It seems that the diverse Turkmen elements of the fifteenth century declined the habit of the steppes in joining a wider federation like the Oghuz Saljuqs in the eleventh–twelfth centuries, or the Oghuz Ottomans later on, and they shared part of their land as fiefs.

Budāq remained under the Mamluks until 886/1481, when he was overthrown by his brother ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla supported by the Ottomans. The reason for the Ottoman intervention in the Dulkadirid affairs was not to expand, but to seek revenge for the Mamluk intervention in the Ottoman feud after the death of Muhammad II in 1481, and to welcome Jem, one of the Ottoman contestants against sultan Bayazid II (†1512).³² The Mamluks had commissioned two campaigns against ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla in Rajab 888/August 1483, and in Jumada I 889/March 1484, but no decisive victory was achieved over the rebellious Dulkadirid who was strongly supported by the Ottomans. One should add that Aleppo and its vicinity was under threat from these Turkmen forces.³³ This area which represented the Thoghour (‘boundaries’) between Arabs and Byzantines in the first four centuries of Islam became a par excellence Turkmen–Turkish one.

By the end of 1485, ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla had recognized the stern will of the Mamluks to keep the Dulkadirids under their authority, which made him to initiate a negotiation with the Mamluks. Qaitbay, the Mamluk Sultan had sent an envoy to meet with him outside Aleppo where he received a royal gown from Cairo and was reinstated as lord of the Dulkadirids under the Mamluks.³⁴ Again one sees

³¹ Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾi al-Zohūr*, 81–82. Petry, *The last Mamluk sultans*, 47. It should be noted that the first Ottoman lord to be granted the title sultan was Bayezit I 1394 from the Mamluks. Bosworth, *Islamic dynasties*, 138.

³² Ibn Ṭulūn, *Mufākahat al-Khillān*. Beirut 1988, Vol. I, 47–48; M. Zeyada, “Nehayat al-Salatin al-Mamālik fi Misr,” *Egyptian Historical Journal* 4 (1951), 203–204.

³³ Ibn Ṭulūn, *Mufākahat al-Khillān*, 56–57; Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾi al-Zohūr*, 205.

³⁴ Zeyada, *Nehayat*, 221–222.

the Mamluk Turks unable to solve the Turkmen dilemma but installing a deputy from Cairo, which reflects the overwhelming presence of the Turkmen in the region. In his turn, ʿAlāʾ al-Dawla became not only a vassal, but a reporter of the hostile Ottoman activities against the Mamluks in Anatolia; e.g. in 1489 when Bayazid II was massing his forces near Kayseri, according to M. Zeyada.³⁵

The Dulkadirids, on the basis of information found in the sources, did not play a significant role further on, and remained within the Mamluk orbit until their decline in 1515 despite the severe weakness of the Mamluks with three different sultans between 1498 and 1501. The amicable relations between the two Turkish powers, the Ottomans and the Mamluks, marginalized the Dulkadirids from any important role between 1492 and 1512. ʿAlāʾ al-Dwla remained under Mamluk suzerainty until 921/1515 when Selim I the Ottoman (+1520), sacked the Dulkadirid Principality, practically ending their rule and paving the way to uproot the Mamluk Turks in the following two years.³⁶ The end of the Dulkadirids was reported in a letter from Selim I to the Mamluk Sultan al-Ghūrī (+1516) describing them as "Those apostates, damned by Almighty. We beheaded their lords while beheading other devil Turkmen."³⁷

Although C. Cahen had stated that the Turkmen elements failed to penetrate mainland Mamluk territories, and were pushed to settle in the Taurus region,³⁸ one finds fundamental changes in Mamluk Syria influenced by the Turkmen pressure in the Middle East during the fifteenth century. We find the Mamluk Sultan in RabīʿI 886/June 1481 appointing a Dulkadirid prince, ʿAbd al-Rāziq, brother of Budāq as lord of Ḥamah in central Syria. Certainly the Mamluks were in no shortage of capable deputies who were always sent from Cairo. Breaking this rule for the first time in a major city of Syria to the advantage of the Turkmen was highly significant and it reflects their deep penetration in the area.³⁹ Other cases of the same pattern cannot be ruled out completely, for the sources were overwhelmed with military details. The contemporary Syrian chronicler, Ibn Tūlūn (+1546) mentioned new development in Mamluk administration. The introduction of a new post in 907/1501 named 'Amīr al-Turkomān', prince or commander of the Turkmen, and was given first to the inspector of the Mamluk army. That post remained during al-Ghūrī's rule until 1516, and then the post was held by another prince of the Turkmen in Syria marching against Sultan al-Ghūrī against the Ottomans.⁴⁰

³⁵ Zeyada, *Nehayat*, 208.

³⁶ Zeyada, *Nehayat*, 210–212. During this friendly relation, the Mamluks had allowed the Ottomans to interfere in the affairs of their vassals, the Āq Qoyūnlū from 1492, according to Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾi al-Zohūr*, 286–288.

³⁷ A. Mutawalli, *al-Fath al-Othmani le al-Shām wa Miṣr*. Cairo 1995, 335–336.

³⁸ C. Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, 313.

³⁹ Ibn Aja, *al-ʿIrāk*, 192.

⁴⁰ Ibn Tūlūn, *Mufākahat al-Khillān*, I, 198, 327. The sources are filled with expression such as "gathering the Turkmen", and "Turkmen vanguards", especially in Northern Syria.

This reflects on the importance of the Turkmen in the area, and how they became part of the fabric of the Turkish Mamluk army. It seems that the political identity of the Turkmen developed faster than their religious identity. O. Turan and D. Morgan have both stated that all the Turkmen elements in the Middle East down to the end of the fifteenth century were half-Shamanistic followers, and Islam did not touch them yet. We find, for instance, that the Āq Qoyūnlū after 1490 still believed in Mongol Yasa and strongly opposed the implementation of the Muslim *sharia*. Although as mentioned earlier, they claimed for the protection of Mecca and Medina as true Muslims.⁴¹ It is expected that the Dulkadirids were not the exceptions.

In conclusion, one of the main failures shared by the Turkmen dynasties, including the Dulkadirids in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, was the absence of *Pacta Turkmana* like the Turkmen Saljuqs in eleventh–thirteenth centuries, or as H. Inalcik has indicated, the Ottoman Turkmen principality had united most of Anatolia during the fourteenth century under its control, developing it later into an empire.⁴² That was the exception departing from a tribal identity into a state one.

⁴¹ Morgan, *Medieval Persia*, 106. Turan, "Anatolia in the period of the Seljuks," 251.

⁴² Inalcik, "The emergence of the Ottomans," 263, 275.

THE TURKMEN IDENTITY CRISIS IN THE FIFTEENTH-CENTURY MIDDLE EAST

