

Factors Influencing the Phenomenon of Rising Grain and Foodstuffs Prices in Egypt during the Circassian Mamluks Era (784AH / 1382AD - 923AH / 1517AD)

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Abstract

Although there are numerous studies about the Circassian Mamluk state, however there are no well rounded and integrated studies dealing with the phenomenon of the high grain and foodstuffs prices in Egypt during that era.

The study problem aims to address the factors influencing the high prices like state control over the agricultural lands and the monopoly over grains by the men in power, the power struggles, and the abundant fraud in the coins, the study methodology is based on the collection of data from historical sources contemporaneous of the Mamluk state, and proceeding with the analysis of those sources followed by a critique and discussion, then framing an outcome within a comprehensive and well integrated paper, and we conclude from the study that the immediate cause of corruption during the Mamluk state was the practice of selling the public office positions, where jobs were given to the ones who pay more regardless of skills and qualifications, which led to jobs being occupied by inefficient and unqualified individuals, who have no interest but to collect money unjustly which was reflected in a very negative manner on the whole of the administrative, social and economic conditions of the state, and the high prices phenomenon had grave and harsh effects on the Egyptian society, where two million individuals died, the policy of repressions and authoritarianism practiced by the state had great influence on limiting the demonstrations of the public against the high prices, the benefit of this study is that it shows how the corruption of the state administration leads to negative and grave effects on the conditions of the society, so ultimately states should be aware of that and must seek to apply justice and fairness in dealing with the citizens.

Keywords: Mamluk, Circassian, grains, high prices, Egypt, food, corruption, state

1. Introduction

The Mamluk era is characterized by strong loyalty to the tribe or the group, and in their era the loyalty to the tribes or groups was evident, so every sultan or emir had his own loyal group of individuals who were very loyal to him so that those Sultans were able to withstand conspiracies that the Mamluk emirs face, and based on that, the sultans bought young Mamluks and raised them so as to become their backbone in the future, and their hope to remain and continue as sultans. the sultan Mansour Qalawoon (678 AH / 1279) -689 AH /1290 AD) was one of the Sultans who appreciated this phenomenon, so he formed a special group of Mamluks, that is different from other Mamluk groups, so he formed a group of individuals who hail from the Caucasus region, and gave the groups the names which became recurring in Islamic sources as the (Circassian), but the most common name was the Circassian Mamluks, and they hailed from the mountainous region of the Caucasus region, and they inhabited areas north of the Caspian sea, and the sultan Qalawoon started to buy the Circassian Mamluks in the year 681 AH / 1282 AD, so he bought a great number of them, and the number reached three thousand seven hundred Mamluks, and he housed them in the Fort towers in Cairo or the in the residence of the sultan, and thus they were called in some historical sources as the tower Mamluks (Burji Mamluks) , and they joined the state service, and where one of their senior emirs named Barqouq became sultan (784 AH / 1382- 795 AH /1392 AD), and they controlled the reins of power in the state, and the Circassian Mamluk state was characterized by the fact that all sultans were of Circassian origins except two sultans of Greek origins namely Khashqodom and Tamrigha, so the sultan of this state adopted the loyalty to the tribe or the group as a weapon to bring down the

Naval Turkish Mamluk state, and this tendency continued as a general framework for the Circassian sultans internal policy (Al-Maqrizi, 1998, Vol. 2, pp. 420-426).

This study aims to acquire the knowledge about the factors influencing the price instability of grains and foodstuffs, and this study is based on main sources especially the historical source and that is the book of Al-Suluk Li Ma'arafet Duwal Al-Muluk by Al-Maqrizi, Nuzhat Al-Nufus Wal Al-Abdan by Al-Sairafi, and Aqed Al-Jaman by Badr Al-Deen Al-Aini, and Bada'e Al-Al-Zuhur Fi Waqa'e Al-Duhur by Ibn Iyas .

2. Factors Influencing the Phenomenon of High Prices

The prices of grains and foodstuffs at the beginning of the Circassian Mamluk state were reasonable so one Irdeb (Note 1) of wheat was sold between eight dirhams (Ibn Hajar, 1986, Vol. 2, pp. 290-291), and thirty dirhams (Al-Sairafi, 1973, Vol. 1, p. 124), and an Irdeb of beans was sold for a price than ranged between eight dirhams (Ibn Hajar, 1986, Vol. 2, p. 291), and eighteen dirhams, and an Irdeb of barley between six and twenty dirhams (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, volume 3, section 2, p. 538), and the prices of meat were very cheap, and as an example peeled off lamp meat prices was eight dirhams per Ten Ratl (Note 2), and the mutton meat was sold for one dirham per two Ratl (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 3, p. 509; Al-Sairafi, 1973, Vol. 1, pp. 88, 130), and beef was sold for one dirham per two Ratls, and sometimes every two Ratl and a half for one dirham (Al-Sairafi, 1973, Vol. 1, pp. 87-88; Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 3, p. 543).

But prices began to fluctuate sharply since the beginning of the ninth century after hegira /fifteenth century AD, so in the year 807 AH /1404 AD, the high prices became prevalent in the Egyptian districts, so the Irdeb of wheat reached around four hundred fifty dirhams, and an Irdeb of beans or barely reached three hundred twenty dirhams, one Irdeb of chickpeas was sold for five hundred dirhams, and one Ratl of mutton meat was sold for twelve dirhams, and one Ratl of beef was sold for four dirhams and a quarter, and one Ratl of Honey was sold for ten dirhams, and one Ratl of cheese was sold for seven dirhams. while one Qadah of boiled chickpeas was sold for three dirhams, and one Qadah of boiled beans was sold for two and a half dirhams, and high prices prevailed over most goods (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 3, pp. 1130-1134; Ibn Iyas, 1984, Vol. 1, p. 969), and that had a grave effects over Egypt where it lost two thirds of its population, and hundreds of villages were destroyed due to the lack of the Nile flood, and the corruption of the state administration, and the high costs of leasing agricultural lands.

In the years between 816 AH / 1413 AD - 820 AH /1417 AD high prices prevailed in Egypt, and one Irdeb of wheat reached the high prices eight hundred and then one thousand dirhams, and one batat of flour was sold for one hundred dirhams, and one Qadah of rice was sold for thirteen dirham, while one Irdeb of barley was sold for two hundred fifty dirhams, and one Irdeb of beans was sold for three hundred dirhams, and bread became scarce in the markets, and people raced to buy bread from the bakeries, and the people exhibited disorder and noise for missing the bread in the markets (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, pp. 331-335), and generally speaking high prices prevailed in most of the years of the two centuries, the tenth century after hegira / the fifteenth century AD, and the beginning of the tenth century after hegira / the sixteenth century AD where the prices of one Irdeb of wheat ranged between two hundred and one thousand dirhams .

The position of the state in relation to the phenomenon of high and exorbitant prices was pale and bewildered and was not consistent with its size or seriousness, So the state rarely resorted to fixing the prices of grains and foodstuffs, and did not have an effective role to prevent monopoly in the markets ,and rarely opened its own stores of grains and offer market prices that are commensurate with the situation of the public as was the case in Egypt over the Islamic history, and that was due to the fact that most of public officials were traders and exorbitant prices benefited them, so again they were traders and monopoly is the general and prevalent feature of them. The factors affecting the phenomenon of high prices can be summarized as follows:

2.1 State Control over Agricultural Lands and the Abundance of Taxes

The lands of Egypt during the Circassian Mamluk state was under the Iqta, system which is the delegation of the fiscal rights of the state over lands remaining juristically in the hands of their former owner and this Iqta, during the Mamluk era was awarded to the sultan, his emirs, and military commanders (Ibn Iyas, 1995, p. 135), and the Mamluk sultans exaggerated in increasing the land lease on farmers, where the lease amount of one Faddan (Note 3), became ten times more than had been imposed during the early emergence of the Mamluk state, and the costs of plowing, seeds, and harvest became higher, while the vexation of the governors and officials became greater and greater, with heavy hand on the farmers, and the malicious and harmful payment son farmers to erect bridges increased, while the land lease increased consequently, and along with that the costs of plowing, sowing, and harvest and erecting bridges also increased, which led to the higher costs of production, and this explains the

high costs during the period of the study, "and the prices remained high with no hope of any decrease" (Al-Maqrizi & Ighathat Al-Ummah, pp. 82-83).

Not only the state increased the land lease, but exaggerated in imposing harmful and malicious amounts of taxes and forfeitures on the public especially the farmers and the professionals due to its high expenditures, and in that Al-Maqrizi accounts that the Mamluk Sultanate expenditures reached one million two hundred thousand dirhams, and also food for their horses and clothing (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 28), and in addition to that state expenditures during the days of strife and war, or the expenditures of opulence by the state officials, so we cite an example here in the year 791 AH / 1388 AD, the sultan Al-Malek AL -Dhafer Barqouq awarded senior emirs upon the strife that hit Egypt ten thousand dinars (Note 4), and every one of the Al-Tabalkhanah (Note 5), five thousand dinars, and every of the Asharat emirs (Note 6), one thousand dinars, and he awarded the atabek of soldiers (the army chief) in one single night thirty thousand dinars (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 3, p. 614).

And in the year 813 AH / 1410 AH the sultan Farah Bin Barqouq exaggerated in imposing vexing and harmful amounts of money on farmers and when they failed to pay they fled their villages, so cities and village were consequently devastated, and the lands were left without farming which led to exorbitantly high prices, and Al-Maqrizi describes the outcome of affairs in Egypt during his era by saying "the country is destroyed, and the money is extracted and the villages are destroyed. So, Alexandria was devastated, Al-Buhaira, most of Al-Sharqiyah, and most of Al-Gharbiyah and Al-Jiziyah, and Al-Fayoum was devastated, and the than lands of upper Egypt witnessed devastation too to the point that more forty villages and cities of upper Egypt disappeared, and in the case of Cairo and its environs more than half of its property was devastated, and two thirds of the population of Egypt perished due to hunger and plague" (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, pp. 226-227) and the abundant unjust and harmful payments imposed by the sultan on the farmers to cover his exorbitant expenditures, for in this year he spent large amounts on his Mamluk soldiers, so he gave to the commanders of the soldiers three thousand dinars, and for the Uluf emirs two thousand dinars for every one of them, and for the Al-Tabalkhanah emirs five hundred dinars for every emir ,and for the lesser in the hierarchy two hundred dinars (Al-Sairafi, 1973 , Vol. 2, p. 264), and in the following year he spent on Mamluks the expenditures of travel of Bilad Al-Sham (Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine) where every Mamluk received seventy dinars, and for the commanders of the soldiers the atabek three thousand dinars, and for the Uluf emirs two thousand dinars, and for the Al-Tabalkhanah emirs the amount that ranged between five hundred and seven hundred dinars according to their ranks (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 196).

Also the sultan Abu Al-Naser Skaykh Al-Mahmoudi exaggerated in imposing a lot of unjust and harmful amounts of money on farmers and the public due to his high expenditures ,so he imposed gold amount of money at the beginning of the year 820 AH /1417 AD on all villages in lower Egypt, and did not grant any waiver for anybody, and looted a large number of buffalos, then he sold those buffalos at high prices, so the buffalo was sold for twelve thousand dirhams, knowing that the price of the buffalo did not exceed two thousand dirhams before, then he proceeded to upper Egypt and looted lots of sheep, cows, camels and horses, and sold them to people in lower at the highest of prices, so subsequently Egypt lost its balance very gravely. and in Rabii, Al-Akher of the year 820 AH / 1417 AD he imposed unjust and harmful amount of money in people in both lower and upper Egypt, and eight thousand sheep were collected, one thousand camels, and two thousand Qintars of cash, and a large number of female slaves, to be sold later at the highest of prices, and the people subsequently suffered immensely, and the malice hit most of the people of Egypt, and high prices became prevalent due to the harsh position of the state officials and their cronies in imposing unjust and harmful amounts of money (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, pp. 392-396), and in the year 826 AH/ 1422 AD the state officials collected huge amount of money from upper Egypt in addition to sheep, cows ,horses to be sold later at the highest of prices (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 626), and that led to the devastation of many villages and abandoning the lands without farming due to the fleeing population from the lands (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 672).

And in the year 835 AH / 1431 AD Al- Astadar travelled to upper Egypt and "carried out forfeitures and spread malice and wreaked havoc exactly as the wolf with the sheep" (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, pp. 668-669), and in the following year he collected a huge and unjust amount of money and property like horses, sheep and camels from the area of lower Egypt (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol.4, pp. 888-889), "and so he collected from each village five thousand dirhams as tax per horse, and from other areas ten thousand dirhams for two horses" (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, pp. 912-913; Al-Sairafi, 1973, pp. 283-284).

The injustice imposed on the farmers reached its apex at the beginning of the tenth century AH / sixteenth century AD. the state officials arrived in different area and extracted protections before the rainfall and the flood of the Nile, "so great hardships fell on the farmers, and the Kashafs who were state officials inspected the area and farmers and extracted money from them by beatings, while arresting the women and children of those who

manage to flee, and subsequently the devastation of most areas became prevalent and the farmers left those areas" (Ibn Iyas, 1984, Vol. 4, pp. 262-263), the state resorted to imposing unjust amounts of money to cover its massive expenditures and that due to its weak resources and its decline, and in that regard Al-Maqrizi says: "and the state has no income whether in -kind funds or harvests, and the emirs leased the areas with small amounts" (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 3, p. 569).

No doubt the abundant of unjust levies ,forfeitures and neglect of bridges led to the devastation of a great number of villages estimated by Al-Maqrizi by the number of seven thousand eight hundred and thirty villages (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 3, pp. 912-913; Al-Sairafi, 1973, pp. 283-284), and most of the lands were not used in farming, "so the harvests became so poor due to death and the fact that they fled their areas due to the harsh years and the death of the beasts of burden, and the inability of the land owners to farm the lands due to the high prices of seeds and the lack of farmers ,and the region due to all of what was mentioned ,and the region as a result of that ... reached ruin and destruction" (Al-Maqrizi & Al-Ummah , pp. 83-84).

2.2 The Policy of Grain Monopoly Exercised by the State Officials (the Governors)

The sultan and the senior state officials were at the forefront of the monopoly to achieve immense profits at the expense of Egyptians, and Al-Maqrizi affirms that most of the yields of the land of Egypt was for the sultan and the emirs (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 345), and they prevented people from getting those yields unless they obtain their favorite price (Al-Maqrizi & Al-Ummah, p. 79), and the Sultan was on top of those monopolists. For he used to store the yields in the sultanate store to be available during harsh times and at the price that he fixes, so in the year 832 AH / 1428 AD, the yields were made available from the sultanate store ,and the price of the Irdeb was fixed at three hundred dirhams while its prices was two hundred dirhams, and that led to an increase in the prices (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 801), and in the year 835 AH/ 1431 AD, a decree was issued to buy all the yields from all areas of Egypt for the sultan due to its cheap prices, and that for the purpose of storing those yields until the prices go up so that they can be traded, and he committed brokers not to sell to anybody any of the yields until the sultan is sufficient (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 894), so when the prices started to rise in the following year the sultan reaped abundant profits (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 872; Al-Sairafi, 1973, p. 239), and very frequently the sultans had a monopoly over the right to buy and sell the yields (AL-Sairafi, 1973, Vol. 3, p. 155).

And trading in some goods was within the monopoly of the sultan, so in the year 827 AH/ 1421 AD the right to buy sugar from farmers was limited to the Sultan (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 728). In the year 831 AH / 1427 AD , the sultan issued a decree prohibiting the farming of sugar cane by the subjects, where the farming of the sugar cane was only limited to the Sultan who controlled sugar cane farming, to be squeezed and sold later without anyone sharing with the sultan that trade. this decree was later invalidated (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 766), then the state issued a decree to gain monopoly over the pepper and the oriental goods for the benefit and interest of the Sultan (Al-Sairafi, 1973, Vol. 3, p. 185), the emirs of the state and its notables were one of the main reasons of the phenomenon of high prices, and in this regard Al-Maqrizi says "that the emirs and the notables were greedy in securing the benefits, and shared with ordinary people in storing the yields and other goods hoping to secure the benefits, so the yields were scarcely available, and the prices increased subsequently, and the bread was lacking in the markets, and the public officials and leaders were very distant from the good of the people, for their utmost aim was to secure money in any way or manner possible, and the conditions were disrupted, and the interests lost, and the yields became scarce to find though very abundant in the stores, and the owners held those yields hoping to secure profits" (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 830), and the state officials exaggerated in storing the yields and making those yields available during harsh times to secure immense profits during the era of the Circassian Mamluks, so as an example and as Al-Maqrizi says that the direct reason of high prices during the reign of the Sultan Abu Al-Naser Skaykh Al-Mahmoudi was the policy of monopoly exercised by his emirs, " so the emirs of his state and the officials made every effort to raise the prices, by storing the yields and selling them at the highest of prices and his ministers made the goods available to traders and buyers at the highest of prices, and forced them to bear the high prices ...so we are not surprised that Egypt saw misery and devastation ,and the money of the people decrease along with the blessings, and exorbitant prices became the norm with no hope of an end" (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, pp. 225-226), and in the year 822 AH / 1419 AD the yields became scarce in the markets due to the storage of the yields by the state officials "and the greed of the state public officials and their cronies, and their storage of the yields seeking the increase in the prices" (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 1, p. 503). The State officials used to collect sugar, honey, and the yields unjustly from the public and selling those items later to the buyers at the highest prices (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 393).

2.3 *The Disruption of the Flood Tide of the Nile River*

The disruption of the water level of the Nile river, by stoppage during its high or descending swiftly without irrigating most of the land, led to making people worried and nervous, and fearing the unknown future, so they resorted to storing yields for the purpose of securing them for themselves and their families or for the purpose of securing profits, so the supply of yields gets weaker in the markets, and thus high prices come as a result of that, and usually high prices hit Cairo first then spread to other areas of Egypt, and in this regard Ibn Iyas Says "that people when the Nile stops during the days of its increase they start to worry where they think that the regular cycle of the Nile will be disrupted, so they hold to the Yields and refrain from selling those yields, and everyone works hard to store the yields either to secure profits or secure the food for his family, and thus high prices prevail" (Ibn Iyas, 1995, p. 90), and Al-Maqrizi affirms that that a group of people used to spread rumor that the Nile will not flood aiming to spread fear and apprehension in the markets , so people raced to buy and store the yields to secure profits leading to high prices (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 894).

And Ibn Iyas Affirms that the Nile law which means the customary levels of the Nile flood has changed during the era of the Circassian Mamluks state due to the neglect of bridges, canals, bays, and channels(Ibn Iyas, 1995, p 85), and the minimum required for farming is that the measure (Note 7), of the Nile reaches eighteen thiraa, and to irrigate all agricultural lands, the measure should range between eighteen and twenty thiraa, and the sixteen thiraa, and the seventeen thiraa was not sufficient to irrigate all lands, and also the eighteen and twenty thiraa were not causing damage on the crops as was the case in previous eras (Ibn Iyas, 1995, pp. 86-89; Al-Qalqashandi, 1987, Vol. 3, p. 516), due to the damage of the bridges.

The bridges of the Nile were divided into two kinds: the Sultanate bridges erected by the state benefiting the public, and the duty of maintenance of those bridges was the responsibility of the state, but during the era of the Circassian Mamluk state, a great amount of money was collected for this purpose by the state, but in reality none of that amount was spent on bridges (Al-Maqrizi, 1998, Vol. 1, p. 26), and the second type of the bridges was the municipal type that benefit one area in exclusion of other areas, and are erected by money collected from farmers from the money of the area (Al-Maqrizi, 1998, Vol. 1, pp. 291-292), and historical sources contemporaneous of that era almost unanimously are in agreement that the Circassian Mamluk state, neglected the care of bridges, which led to abandoning large tracts of arable lands without water (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 678, Al-Sairafi, 1973, p. 166; Al-Qalqashandi , 1987, Vol. 3, p. 516).

And during the period of this study, the Nile flooded normally during most of the years, and its measure ranged between eighteen and twenty thiraa, which is the needed length measure to irrigate the lands, but its disruption during its increase, or descending rapidly, and the damage of bridges, led to leaving most lands not irrigated, so in the year (796 AH / 1393 AD), the Nile increase reached eighteen thiraa and eleven Osba (Note 7), then descended rapidly without irrigating most of the lands which led to high prices (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 3, p. 819), and in the year (806 AH / 1403 AD) The Nile reached only sixteen thiraa, and three Osba, so upper Egypt was not farmed at all, and in the following year and although the Nile flooded as normal by reaching nineteen Thiraa, and three Osba however the neglect of bridges led to the devastation of many villages, and the inability of the farmers to sow the land (Al-Maqrizi , 1971, Vol. 3, pp. 1116-1135).

The measure of the Nile in the year 8 22 AH/ 1419 AD reached eighteen thiraa and fourteen Osba but descended rapidly without irrigating most of the agricultural lands (Ibn Iyas, 1995, Vol. 2, p. 453), and in the year 825 AH / 1421 AD the measure of the Nile reached nineteen Thiraa and Six Osba, and benefit fell on most of the lands, but the damage of the bridges left lands without farming especially the types that are farmed in the summer season (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 646), and in the year 827 AH / 1423 AD the Nile descended rapidly without irrigating most of the upper and lower Egypt, and in the following year most of the lands were not farmed due to the deficient Nile flood within the normal time, and the lack care of bridges. and although the Nile flooded normally in the years 830 AH / 1426 AD, and 832 AH / 1428 AD, and 835 AH / 1431 AD, and 837 AH / 1433 AD, and 873 AH / 1468 AD, and 899 AH / 1484 AD, and 899 AH / 1493, and 902 AH / 1496 AD, and 917 AH / 1511, and 919 AH / 1513, but its rapid fall, and the corruption of the bridges led to leaving most lands without irrigation, and the historical sources refer to that using the term " farmless" (Note 8).

2.4 *Bribery*

Bribery prevailed during the period of this study where buying public office jobs became the general characteristic of the Circassian Mamluk era. where almost no one secures a job without paying money (Ibn TaghriBardi, 1992, Vol. 11, p. 239), so most public office job went to those who could pay more regardless or merit and eligibility, making most of the job in the hands of people with no competence, being only interested in collecting money, so taxes increased along with forfeitures and corruption prevailed.

So the Sultan Al-Malek Al-Dhaher Barqouq barely gave a job to any person except when the money is paid to him, and he was fond of money collection, "and in his days people talked openly about bribery, so rarely any one can get a job or work except in condition that money is paid, so low level individuals rise while having grand works and the higher jobs and in addition to that he was fond of raising low level individuals" (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 618).

Also his son the Sultan Al-Malek Al-Naser Faraj followed the same footsteps (801 AH / 1398 AD -815 AH/ 1412 AD) whom Al-Maqrizi "describes as one of the worst Muslim kings ,and who damaged by his mismanagement all the land of Egypt and Bilad Al-Sham...and was and blood thirsty ...and around him there as group of emirs and Mamluks very close to him teaching him all kinds of immorality, and debauchery, and make things look normal and legal in regard to taking and seizing the money of the Muslims ... and he did not leave any area of injustice and immortality untouched, and he collected a lot of money and gold ,gems and precious stones that his father did not collect before" (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 225; AL-Sairafi, 1973, Vol. 2, p. 322). And during the reign of Sultan Al-Malek Abu Al-Nasser Shaykh Al-Mahmoudi (815 AH /1412 AD-824 AH/ 1421 AD), the corruption of the affairs of the state reached new heights. Taking bribes and hush money prevailed for all public state jobs including religious jobs, and the state exaggerated in imposing unjust and harmful payments to be paid by the farmers and that addition to the exaggeration in regard to forfeitures and the rights were lost, along with the lack of law and order, and the country was hit with the most extreme cases of fraud in transactions along with exorbitant prices (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, pp. 388-394).

No doubt that securing job through bribery led to the corruption of the affairs of the state, and prevalence of injustice, and the loss of rights, and the abundance of harmful and unjust payments and taxes on farmers, and that reflected negatively on the totality of the economic affairs of the state, and Al-Maqrizi described the conditions of Egypt through the events of the year 429 AH /1425 by Saying: "and the markets of Cairo, Misr Al-Fustat, and Damascus are in recession ,and the injustice of public servants is prevalent, and the justice officials led a very corrupt paths and most of the lands of Egypt without farming, due to the deficiency in the Nile flooding, and the lack of care of the bridges and the roads in Egypt and Bilad AL-Sham are filled with fear due to the mess created by the Bedouins ,and most people of different strata are poor, and stinginess and greed were the characteristics of the people, so you hardly find anyone not complaining about the life, and religion became alien with no supporter" (Al-Maqrizi , 1971, Vol. 4, p. 678).

And one of the jobs that was hit with corruption is the job of Al-Muhtaseb who was the official overseeing all what s related to markets and trade in the Islamic city, so this job did not continue to be one of the high caliber job, but became a job like any post in the public sphere where the one securing the job is the one who pays the higher amount of money so it was bought with money (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 3, p. 872), so in the year 793 AH/ 1390 AD, the Muhtaseb Job of Cairo went to Bahaa, Eddin Mohammed Al-Burji with money paid to the Astadar - the chief of royal servants- and in the year 798 AH/1395 AD the Muhtaseb of Cairo was removed due to his inability to meet his commitment in regard money (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 852), and was replaced by Bahaa, Eddin Al-Burji because he paid higher amount of money, so people were pessimistic during his term due to the acute exorbitant prices that hit the country (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 872), and in the year 806 AH / 1403 AD, the Muhtaseb of Cairo was changed many times, because the job went to the person who pays the highest amount of money (Al-Sairafi, 1973, Vol. 2, p. 473), and the tradition of Al-Muhtaseb job continued until the end of the Mamluk era where it was held by incompetent and were not Islamic clerics, so that reflected negatively on the condition of markets in the state, so chaos and high prices prevailed, and that in addition to fraud, monopoly, deceit, dishonesty and manipulation of weights and measures, so the people suffered immensely from the corruption of this job ,where even the fraud in goods became legitimate ,and Al-Muhtaseb collects taxes (AL-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, pp. 388-389), also the industry collapsed in Egypt due to the injustice of the governors and leaders, and Al-Maqrizi says within the events of 837 AAH /1433 AD, that in Alexandria he counted weavers, so there was eight hundred looms, while the number in the year seven hundred ninety was fourteen thousand, where those people doing this work were dispersed and displaced by the injustice visited upon them by the governors and their ill-behavior (Al-Maqrizi , 1971, Vol. 4, p. 909).

2.5 Fraud in Coins

The currency in Egypt during the period of this study was gold dinars and silver dirhams, and copper Fulus, and the dinars were divided into three types: Al-Harjah Dinar, and this is the Islamic gold free from fraud, and became scarce with the people, and the Frankish Dinar that was brought from the Frankish countries, and dealing in that dinar began in the year 790 Ah/ 1388 AD, and was abundant until it became the prevailing cash, but people diminished its weight until it became lighter, and was coined by many people with resemblance in shape, and people tolerated that until it became prevalent, but with great difference in regard to lesser weight caliber,

and with each defect of this cash a portion of money that make its exchange less, and the third type of dinar is the Nasserite Dinar that was coined by Al-Malek Al-Nasser Faraj Bin Barqouq, but the gold caliber of this dinar was less than original limit.

In regard to Fulus where it was usually exchanged in cash, where each dirham was equal to twenty four Fils ,and the weight of each Fils is Mithkal (Note 9), then its weight decreased and was coined with abundance, and dealing in it became by weight stating in the year 807 AH/ 1404 AD, and each Ratl of it was equal to six dirhams, and each dirham equals to twenty four fils, and the price of gold increased due to the abundance of Fulus, and the ugliness of carrying it during travel, and the lack of dirhams in the markets, and Fulus was the means of payment for all sales and all works were evaluated based on Fulus, and gold and silver is given in exchange of Fulus (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, pp. 305-307), But Fulus became more and more corrupt during the Mamluk era , and the corrupt people in power corrupted the Fulus by deceasing its weight, and coined many of this currency which was similar but only in looks and contained copper with little amount of silver, then iron nails were mixed with Fulus, and the iron metal used for horse foot and materials like pieces of copper and chunks of lead, to the point that in a single Qintar of Fulus there was only one fourth of the Fulus and the rest was iron and copper and lead (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 549), so for the reason that dealing in Fulus should be by weight and not by counting numbers, the Sultan Abu Al-Naser Shaykh Al-Mahmoudi ordered in the year 824 AH/ 1421 AD that price of one Ratl of Fulus free from iron, lead and copper shall be equal to seven dirhams per Ratl, and the corrupt Fulus shall be equal to five dirhams per Ratl (Al-Aini, 1992, p. 252), and although that was the case, but Fulus was the cash in circulation, and all works and sales are valued using them (Iyas, 1984, Vol. 1, p. 695).

We note that during the era of the Circassian Mamluk state, the price of Mithkal of gold fluctuated from year to year, and its value fluctuated between twenty nine and two hundred dirhams (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 346), and the direct reason for the fluctuation of gold was the corruption of Fulus (Ibn Iyas , 1984, Vol. 1, p. 695), which prompted people to abandon it, and the demand on gold became very high, so they exchanged a lot of the Fulus in their possession for gold which led to an increase in its price, and due to the fluctuation and the high prices of gold, thus everything was sold many times of its prices (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 29), and Al-Maqrizi affirms that the source of calamity and sky rocketing prices was the prices of gold during the period of this study (Al-Maqrizi & Al-Ummah , p. 112).

And due to the fluctuation in the price of Mithkal of gold, the dinars witnessed high fluctuations in its value, so the Frankish dinar ranged in value between thirty four and two hundred dirhams (Al-Sairafi, 1973, Vol. 2, p. 400), and as for the Nasserite Dinar its value ranged between thirty six and two hundred seventy dirhams, while the value of Al-Harjah dinar ranged between sixty five dirhams and two hundred eighty dirhams (AL-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, pp. 1076-1177), and the disruption of the value of gold dinars was one the main causes of exorbitant prices, that led to the misery of people due to the low value of cash in Egypt while the prices of sales and the wages of employees remained stable (AL-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 364), and people suffered huge losses, and their situation was marred with stagnation due to their unwillingness to exhibit gold and Fulus in the markets, so the prices of sales rose sharply accordingly .

The state policy towards the currency and the price of gold was characterized by disarray so the state fixed the prices of Mithkal of gold, and the value of dinars annually without a serious study, which subsequently let in a continuous manner to volatility of prices especially the prices of grains and foodstuffs ,and sometimes some resolutions were passed in regard to gold or Fulus which led to negative effect on market conditions , so the year 811 AH/ 1408 AD, the state issued a resolution prohibiting dealing in gold, so people suffered immensely due to the fact that the prevailing cash or currency was the gold, so people refrained from bringing out the gold which ultimately led to the increase in the prices of sales (AL-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, pp. 82-85), and in Shawwal of the year 813 AH/ 1410 AD the state prohibited people to travel with some gold , so matters became harsh on people (Al-Sairafi, 1973, Vol. 2, pp. 264-289), and in the same year the state issued a decree to sell a Ratl of Fulus for twelve dirhams instead of six dirhams, and activity of people ceased subsequently, and they closed their shops, which prompted the state to rescind the decree, and in the year 819 AH/ 1416 AD the state prohibited dealing in the Nasserite Dinar, and ordered its demise and using the Egyptian gold Harjah instead, and that action caused hardship for p[people, and a lot of their money damaged, and in the year 828 AH / 1424 AD , the state fixed each Ratl of Fulus to be equal to nine dirhams (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 356), and in the year 879 AH / 1474 AD, the state coined new Fulus and fixed the prices of one Ratl for thirty six dirhams, and the old Fulus was exchanged for twenty four dirhams per Ratl, which led to grave losses to the people as people lost one third of their money (Ibn Iyas, 1984, Vol. 3, pp. 105-106).

It is worth noting that the value of Ratl of Fulus in the first Mamluk era did not exceed two dirhams (Al-Maqrizi & Al-Ummah, p. 74), while during the study period its value ranged between six dirhams and twenty dirhams,

and sometimes for thirty six dirhams which subsequently led to grave consequences on the totality of the state conditions.

2.6 The Struggle for Power

This era was characterized by the high frequency of removing the sultans, so the end of many of the sultans came at the hands of the senior emirs, and some sultans remained in power only for a short period not exceeding three months or four months or a month and a half to one hundred days or six months, and the process of removing the sultans was accompanied by unrest and power struggle between the senior emirs, and in addition to that the short period of their reign reflected negatively on the totality of the state conditions (Al-Maqrizi, 1998, Vol. 2, pp. 241-242; Ibn Duqmaq, 1985, Vol. 2, pp. 260-296) the state was ravaged by the high incidence of unrest due to the power struggle between the senior Mamluk emirs, so the end of most sultans came as removal from power after bitter struggles, and that in addition to the high incidence of encroachment of Bedouins and the soldier on the public, while the bandits appeared in great numbers during turmoil.

The unrest started during the reign of the Al-Malek Al-Dhaher Barqouq, where its reign was characterized by strife, and the days of Al-Nasser witnessed a lot of strife, unrest, evil, exorbitant prices and epidemic (Al-Maqrizi, 1998, Vol. 2, pp. 241-242), so in the year 719 AH/1388 a bitter power struggle ensued between the sultan and the emirs Yalbagha Al-Nasser and Mintash that ended in suppressing them, and this struggle had grave consequences on the population of Cairo, where people raced to buy bread and markets were closed, and fear looting intensified, and panic and corrupt people spread in the city, and spread evil deeds, and matters became so bad that fear hit almost everyone, the fear for themselves, property and family, and the governor of Cairo ordered the traders to move their goods from shops fearing looting (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 3, pp. 601-628).

Egypt was hit by exorbitant prices, epidemic and sedition in the years (806 AH/ 1403 AD -807 AH / 1406 AD) where two thirds of the population of Egypt perished, and most villages destroyed, and during this period a bitter struggle ensued between Al-Malek Al-Nasser Faraj Bin Barqouq and emir Yashbek who was one senior emir of his state and who tried to defeat the sultan, so he controlled the reins of power of the state, and subsequently came into direct confrontation with the sultan, and a bitter and violent fighting ensued that led to the departure of the emir Yashbek to Bilad Al-Sham (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 3, pp. 1135-1162).

The mess created by the bandits, Bedouins and soldiers became very frequent, so in the year 824 AH / 1421 AD, the bandits spread in upper Egypt, did a lot of killing and looting, which led to the stoppage of trade and depressed markets, and matters became worse by the injustice of governors and leaders and their cronies (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 3, p. 549).

And Al-Maqrizi described roads in Egypt and Bilad Al-Sham during the year 828 AH/ 1424 AD by saying: "and the roads in Egypt and Bilad Al-Sham is filled with fear due to the mess created by the Bedouins" (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 3, p. 678), and Ibn Iyas mentions during the events of the year 892 AH/1486 AD "and the total malice and damage increased and the Bedouins and their evil deeds increased in the country" (Ibn Iyas, 1984, Vol. 3, p. 237), soldiers also messed a lot in the districts, and looted a lot of cloth and goods in the markets, and they and became contemptuous of the sultan and the emirs: "and the Mamluks are unjust and harming people" (Ibn Iyas, 1984, p. 338).

2.7 Attacks by Mice, Locusts, Worms of Agricultural Yields and Crops

The yields and crops were frequently attacked by worms, mice and locusts, so in the year 816 AH/1413 AD, the mice damaged a large area of agricultural crops (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, pp. 764-766), and in the year 821 AH/1418 AD, the worms damaged most of the agricultural crops particularly alfalfa and beans (Ibn Hajer, 1986, Vol. 7, pp. 323-324), and in the year 830 AH/1426 AD the worms damaged green alfalfa, beans, wheat and the like (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, pp. 764-766), and in the year 834 AH/1430 AD the yields and melon and watermelon farms were attacked by mice in Al-Gharbiyah districts and ate and damaged the crops while still budding and even the seeds, and in one single location one can find more than three hundred mice (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 589), and in the year 841 AH / 1437 AD the locust appeared in massive numbers in the Cairo environs and damaged farms and crops (Al-Sairafi, 1973, Vol. 3, p. 417), and in the years 842/ 1438 AD , 843 AH /1439 AD), the mice damaged large areas of agricultural lands especially in the upper Egypt area (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 1140), and that in addition to the worms which ate the crops, then the lands was sowed again with seeds for a second and third time but the worms ate what was sowed in the land again (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 1176), and in the year 917 AH/1511 AD the mice again attacked the wheat while barely in the budding stage (Ibn Iyas, 1984, Vol. 4, p. 217), and many times the crops were damaged by frost and heat as it happened in the years 827 AH/1423 AD (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 656), and 830 AH/1426 AD (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 764), and 844 AH/1441 AD (Al-Maqrizi & Al-Suluk, Vol. 4, p. 1220).

historical sources to talk with elaboration about the effects of price rises on Egyptian society, so Al-Maqrizi mentions during the events of the year 831 AH / 1427 AD "poverty and destitution has prevailed over people in Egypt, and indifference in regard to the matters related to religion, and people were just being occupied with seeking to secure a living due to the lack of gain (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 764), and he mentioned within the events of the year 844 AH /1440 AD: "and in this time people quarreled a lot ,and encroached on each other, and malice occurred frequently amongst them, and their efforts took a negative and ugly form, and their contacts were marred with sin and aggression" (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 1227). while Ibn Iyas had described the conditions of the people in Egypt in the year 874 AH / 1469 AD by saying: "and this year was very bad and odd for the people, and they suffered a lot of high prices, damage, plague and sedition ...and a lot of forfeitures occurred because of military expeditions, and the salaries of employees were not paid, and people lost sons and family and people saw nothing good" (Iyas, 1984, Vol. 3, p. 37), while he described the conditions in the year 893 AD/ 1487 AD by saying: " and this year saw no good things for the people and they are in grave situation, and the prices were high for all goods, and the conditions and affairs are stagnant, and the Sultan is unjust and seizing people's money unjustly (Ibn Iyas, 1984, Vol. 3, p. 246), and he described the conditions in the year 903 AH / 1497 AD by saying: the people are in terrible and grave situation and experienced and witnessed exorbitant prices, damage, forfeitures and the injustice of the Sultan and the harm caused by the Mamluks to the people, and people reached a high level of messy conditions and disruption"(Iyas, 1984, Vol. 3, p. 395).

The large numbers of villages were destroyed, so Al-Maqrizi mentions that the villages of Egypt during the Fatimid era was ten thousand villages, while during the Circassian Mamluk state only two thousand and seventy villages survived while the rest was destroyed (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, pp. 912-913; Al-Sairafi, 1973, Vol. 3, pp. 283-284), so Alexandria, Al-Jizah, Al-Fayoum were damaged and destroyed while upper Egypt saw the same fate, and Aswan port was damaged, and most of Al-Sharqiyah district, and most of Al-Gharbiyah district, and the more than half of Cairo and environs were damaged (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, pp. 225-227), and two thirds of the people of Egypt perished, and people were forced to sell their children at the cheapest of prices due to exorbitant prices and hunger, so large numbers in Cairo were enslaved, and large number people were moved outside the country, and they were sold in countries of the world exactly like captives (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 3, p. 1135).

The Al-Maqrizi affirms that all of the public officials were losers because of the low value of currency, and due to the fact that the purchasing power of the currency had collapsed, so as an example the person with a salary of one hundred dirhams, where before the troubles was equal of five Mithkal of gold, but now the one hundred dirhams, seventeen Ratl and two thirds Ratl of Fulus, and is worth one dinar, so what he buys with the one hundred is the same of what he used to buy with much less than twenty dirhams (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 28), and consequently the prices of grain and foodstuffs increased tenfold as compared with the beginning of the first Mamluk era. Al-Maqrizi summarizes effects of exorbitant prices on all strata of the Egyptian society in his books (Ighathat AL-Ummah Bi Kashf Al-Ghimah (Al-Maqrizi & Ighathat, pp. 11-114), and he divided them into seven types according to the following:

- the state officials: they had a lot of money obtained by tax on land, so the tax imposed before those events which was twenty thousand dirhams became one hundred thousand dirhams, but Al-Maqrizi confirms that the purchasing value of the currency decreased during the period of this study, and subsequently the purchasing power of the twenty thousand dirhams in the first Mamluk era exceeds the purchasing of the one hundred thousand dirhams.
- successful traders and people of opulence : their conditions were not affected during this era due to the vast money amounts that they gained due to exorbitant prices.
- people of wealth: those who live in those hard times live by what they secure from profits ,and usually are not content unless the secured a lot of benefit.
- people of farming and plowing: and most of them perished due to exorbitant prices, epidemic and sedition, and some of them became rich when their lands were had enough water during drought, so they reaped huge profits from farming their lands and their wealth rose sharply.
- scholars and people of wage earners: and their conditions was worsened due the exorbitant prices until it reached many times its original value, while their wages and sultanate salaries did not increase, and there was no balance between wages and prices, so the dirham became of no value.
- craftsmen, employees, servants, porters and weavers and those wages increased a lot, but few remained alive due to epidemic and sedition, and they became scarce to find.
- destitute and wretched people: and most of those people perished by hunger and cold, and a small number of them remained alive.

The policy of repression and authoritarianism on the subjects by the Sultanate of Mamluks prevented the popular protests against exorbitant prices, so historical sources rarely mention the public protesting against the prevailing conditions, and even if they protested, then those protests were met by suppression, so in the year 797 AH /1394 AD the people protested to the Sultan about the exorbitant prices and they sought help and aid (Al-Sairafi , 1973, Vol. 1, p. 430), but the Sultan took no notice of that, and in the year 828 AH/ 1424 AD and because of the lack of bread in the markets, the people protested against the Muhtaseb of Cairo and his ill-behavior, but the sultan suppressed the protest movement, and many were arrested, jailed and beaten, and their fingers and ears chopped (Al-Maqrizi, 1971, Vol. 4, p. 698), and thus the state suppressed the protest movement in a harsh manner. and in the year 839 AH /1435 AD and while the Sultan Barsbay Al-Ashraf was out to practice archery as was his habit, the common people stood around him and complained about the lack of bread in the stores of bakeries while the wheat is available in abundance, so he ignored them completely (Al-Sairafi, 1973, Vol. 3, p. 341), and this is the definitive proof of neglecting the interests and affairs of the subjects and not only but also conspiring with the state officials to control the markets to reap abundant profits, and in the year 885 AD/ 1480 AH the people protested the high cost of living to the Al-Malek Al-Ashraf Qaytbay, and they complained that the officials Al-Hisbah were corrupt , and in the afternoon there was no bread in the shops, and when the protest movement exacerbated, then Sultan responded and removed the Muhtaseb (Ibn Iyas, 1984, Vol. 3, p. 165).

3. Conclusion

The conclusion from this study that the direct cause of corruption during the Circassian Mamluk era is the prevalence of the sale of jobs, and most of the state jobs were sold to the person paying the highest amount of money and disregarding competence to fill those jobs, so the jobs were occupied with individuals who has no concern but to collect money, and that reflected negatively on the totality of the state conditions i.e. the administrative, the social and the economic, and the State sultans are those ones who ravaged the Egyptian society by their economic policies. The study has the benefit of showing that the corruption of the state administration, mismanagement is reflected negatively on the conditions of the society. Countries must ensure that applying justice is the correct way in regard to dealing with the interests of the people, and that corruption leads to the damage and decay of the society.

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Notes

Note 1. Irdeb: an Egyptian measure of wheat that consists of (6) webah, and each webah (8 large Qadah or (16), small Qadah, and the Irdeb is equal to (69.6 kg). Hinz, Walther, Measures and weights in the Islamic world ,Amman, publications of the University of Jordan, Amman, 1970, pp. 94-95 .

Note 2. Ratl: Also pronounced Ratel, and the Egyptian Ratl weighs (144) dirham and equals 457.5 gm, see. Hinz, Measures, pp. 30-31.

Note 3. Faddan: An Egyptian measure of area, and equals (6368 Sq. meters) Hinz, Measures, pp. 97-98.

Note 4. About the sedition between the Sultan and the emirs Yaligha Al-Nasser and Mintash see Al-Maqrizi, Al-Suluk, volume 3, section 2, p. 616 and thereafter.

Note 5. Emir of Tabakhanah: They are the leaders of swordsmen, usually they have seventy or eighty horsemen or around this number, see. Ibn Fadl Allah Al-Mari, the definition of the term, pp. 103 -104.

Note 6. Emirs of Asharat: They are leader of swordsmen with a number of horsemen, see. Ibn Fadl Al-Omari, the definition of the term, pp. 105- 106, Al-Qalqashandi, Soboh Al-A,sha volume 4, p. 15.

Note 7. Miqyas: a marble octagonal white marble column, where the water is flows into it, and this column composed of twenty two Thiraa, each Thiraa, has twenty four Osba. Ibn Iyas, Nuzhat Al-Umam, p. 86.

Note 8. For further information about the flood of the Nile during this period see: Al-Maqrizi, 1971, volume 4, section 2, pp. 903, 902, 874, 809, and Ibn Iyas, 1984, volume 3, pp. 304, 329, 370, 304, 253, 209, 21.

Note 9. Mithqal: The Egyptian Mithqal weight was (24) Qirat, each Qirat (0.195) = 4.68. see Hinz, Measures, p. 12.

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