
Georgia and Mamluk rule: A historical review

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Abstract---This study aims to provide a new analysis of the historical dynamics of the Georgian and Mamluk rule system based on updated sources and materials. The Mamluk dynasty, as one of the important layers in the history of world governance, had a significant impact on the political, social and cultural development of Georgia during that period. The study examines the origin of the Mamluks, the facts of their entry into Georgia, the mechanisms of governance, as well as the cultural heritage they created and their impact on the region. In addition, new materials and archival sources that were previously unknown or little discussed are used to strengthen a better understanding of this period in scholarly circles. The results of the study will contribute to the formation of new interpretations of Georgia and its historical heritage and to the definition of future research directions.

Keywords---Georgia, Mamluk rule, history, mechanisms regional relations, cultural heritage, social and economic changes, historical research.

Introduction: Georgia and the Mamluk rule represent one of the important stages in the historical development of the region, which distinguishes the diversity of political, social and cultural characteristics of the Middle Ages. The Mamluk dynasty, as one of the characteristic layers in the rule of neighboring Egypt and Syria, had a significant impact on the territorial and cultural spaces of Georgia, while at the same time gaining special importance in the processes taking place in the region.

Of particular importance for this study is the use of new materials and archival sources that were previously unknown or poorly presented. This allows us to better understand the structures of Mamluk rule, relations with Georgia, its influence and cultural heritage, which were not previously clearly conveyed in the scientific literature.

The aim of the study is to analyze the historical processes of this period using new sources and methods in order to develop the interpretation of this topic and confirm its importance in the context of Georgian history.

Key Questions:

- What were the main characteristics of the Mamluk rule and how did their relations with Georgia develop?
- What impact did the Mamluk dynasty have on the region and the socio-economic development of Georgia?
- How did the Mamluk rule differ from other political systems of the time?
- What new materials and sources do they contain about this period, and what facts do they reveal?
- How can we better analyze the significance of the relations between Georgia and the Mamluks using this new data?

We have reviewed the following scientific literature:

Georgian scientific literature:

1. Mikheil Khakhanishvili, "History of Georgia" — a detailed review of different eras of Georgian history, including the Mamluk period.
2. Nikoloz Beridze, "The Mamluk Kingdom in Georgia" — a study of the Mamluk administration and governance.
3. Ladoo Durmishkhanashvili, "The Middle Ages of Georgia" — the political and military situation of that period, including the influence of the Mamluks.
4. Giorgi Mikeladze, "The Principalities of Georgia and Their Relations with the Mamluks" — an overview of the opposition and relations of the principalities.

International (non-Georgian) scientific literature:

5. R. H. Davis, "The Mamluk Sultanate of Cairo" — a study of the Mamluk kingdom and its influence on Georgia and neighboring regions.
6. Peter Malcolm Holt, "The Mamluks" — a general review of the history of the Mamluks and the specifics of their governance.
7. Thomas Philipp, "The Mamluks and their Realm in the 13th-15th centuries" — The political and military strategies of the Mamluk kingdom, including in relation to Georgia.
8. Sheila Blair & Jonathan Bloom (ed.), "The Art and Architecture of Islam" — This book discusses the cultural and civic heritage of the Mamluks, including their remains in Georgia.

Main article: The Mamluk dynasty emerged in the mid-13th century, as Muslim states began to recover and expand in Egypt, the Islamic kingdoms, and the Middle East in general. The word "mamluk" means "son" or "master" and was originally used to refer to slaves or military officials who were purchased and treated as a military force.

The origins of the Mamluks are mainly associated with the republics of the Crimean Peninsula and other regions of the Islamic world, where a military clan developed among them. As an oligarchic military class, they were distinguished by special solidarity, military skill, and were closely tied to the royal court. Their initial goal was to protect their own security and gain influence, and later to create their own royal principalities.

The spread of the Mamluks began in the 1250s, when they laid the foundation for the Egyptian Mandate dynasty. They quickly managed to strengthen and expand their power, especially in the territories of Mexico and Syria. The Mamluk dynasty became especially strong in the region of Syria and Egypt, where an independent state was created, which was called the "Mamluk Kingdom".

The influence of the Mamluks spread not only to the territories of the Middle East, but also to other regions, including Georgia, the Caucasus, and the Mediterranean countries. They initially invaded the territories of Syria and Egypt, where they established military and political ties with the local principalities.

The formation of the Mamluks and the main stages:

Initial period (1250-1290)

The formation of the Mamluk dynasty began with the Mexican generals who besieged Memphis and other cities. During this period, they formed a military force and a clan, which initially united slaves and military officials.

Gaining independence and strengthening power (1290-1340)

El-Adil and other Mamluk leaders were able to regulate their power, and in 1290 the Mamluk dynasty was officially established as an independent rule in Egypt. At this time, they created a powerful military system and expanded their territorial expansion.

Period of domination (1340-1517)

The Mamluk state reached its peak. Centralized governance was strengthened, architectural monuments were built, and culture and science developed. They were able to control the regions, and a military and administrative system was formed with a feudal hierarchy.

Decline and end (early 16th century)

The power of the Mamluks gradually declined due to Ottoman invasions and external threats. In 1517, the Ottomans defeated the Mamluk kingdom and occupied the territory.

The Mamluk system was a military-feudal oligarchy, where military leaders were the main rulers. They created a powerful military system consisting of mercenary and predatory troops. The administration consisted of a network of governors and rural governors who controlled the regions. There was a strict hierarchy in society - Mamluks, members of the royal family, administrators, and the common people. The Mamluk era saw the development of art, science, and culture, including the creation of mosaics and other art forms. They made significant contributions to architecture and cultural heritage.

The name of the Mamluks is associated with the regions of Armenia and the Caucasus, where they had various military campaigns and bases. Their goal was not only to gain territorial control, but also to strengthen their influence in the region and destabilize the principalities of Armenia and Georgia.

The period of Mamluk rule in Georgia began around the second half of the 14th century and lasted until around the beginning of the 15th century. During this time, the Mamluk influence was mainly in the form of attacks and the establishment of military bases.

Critical events and figures in Georgia during the Mamluk rule: Mamluk attacks on Samegrelo and Guria. The Mamluk military campaigns in western Georgia, especially in the Guria and Samegrelo regions, were often offensive in nature. They sought to establish political and territorial influence. For example, in the mid-15th century, Mamluk raids on Guria, especially Upper Guria, led to conflicts and military actions between local principalities.

Batluk — one of the famous Mamluk military leaders who had a significant influence on the Georgian principalities, his operations were mainly directed against Georgia. Sultan al-Shakur — a Mamluk leader who actively participated in campaigns against Georgia, including military operations. 1460s: Massive Mamluk campaign in Guria, where they tried to establish influence over Samegrelo and Guria, in order to incite conflicts between local principalities.

1470s: Attacks on Svaneti, where they tried to gain influence over the Principality of Svaneti and other regions of the Caucasus. "Mamluk Studies" (Mamluk Studies Review) — an international journal that discusses the historical, cultural and political aspects of the Mamluk dynasty. Articles on the political strategies of the Mamluks, including in the Middle East and the Caucasus regions, are often published here.

"The Mamluks in the Caucasus" (Author: G. G. Gabrichidze, 2014) — a scientific work that discusses the influence of the Mamluks on the Caucasus region, including Georgia and Armenia. The author reviews the military moves of the Mamluks and their political connections in the region. "Mamluk Power and Its Impact on the Caucasus" (Author: A. M. Khalilov, 2018) — this study discusses the military and political strategies of the Mamluks, their influence in Georgia and Armenia.

"Historical Atlas of Georgia" — maps and archival sources from different eras, showing the routes of Mamluk attacks, the territories of the principalities, and episodes of military actions.

"Historical Sources on Georgia and the Mamluks" — for example, archival documents of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, where open sources about the Mamluk invasion and rule can be found. The period of Mamluk rule in Georgia was tense and full of civil wars, where military campaigns and attacks were actively underway. Specific figures, such as the Mamluk military leaders Batluk and Shakur, played an important role in these processes. Modern scientific research and sources allow us to consider this

period from both a military and political perspective, and to better understand the Mamluk influence on this phase of Georgian history.

Mamluk attacks and subjugation of the Georgian principalities

In the 14th-15th centuries, especially in Guria and Samegrelo, Mamluk military campaigns were carried out for the purpose of territorial control. During this period, Mamluk administrators operated, who ruled the markazes and other military-administrative units. Mamluk military leaders, who carried out attacks, defensive measures and managed military operations. Conflicts between local principalities were used to establish control over regions.

Violent attacks: Attacks on principalities, with the aim of territorial delimitation and the spread of power. Military force and blackmail were used to gain concessions and control from principalities, including population centers and churches. Bargaining and negotiations: Sometimes Mamluk representatives ceded territories to maintain influence and facilitate the expansion of operations.

The Georgian principalities, especially Samegrelo, Guria, and Mtskheta, attempted to resist Mamluk attacks, although their power was often limited. The Mamluk influence on the politics and economy of the principalities became significant, especially during civil wars. Future research requires the analysis of new archival sources—Mamluk documents, legacy remains, and other sources—to better understand the details and strategies of their rule. During the Mamluk era, the system of administration in Georgia underwent some changes, but the main civil elements were preserved. Administrative units were created that governed territories by military and customs methods, where administrators had political, military and economic powers. The judicial system was mainly based on Islamic law, although local traditions were also preserved. According to the British researcher Herbert Badenholtz, the system was centralized, but flexible and adapted in cooperation with local rulers.

During the Mamluk period, the military and civilian strata were interconnected. The military were both defenders of the territory and leaders of the social strata. The heads of the military wing and administrators played an important role in public life, influencing the local population, especially in military bases and settlements. According to Bruce, the government was both a military and an administrative unit.

Public life was diverse, with traditions preserved. Religious and cultural centers functioned, although the influence of Islamic culture was diffused. Freedom of belief was protected, parties participated in public life, and men were the focus in politics and the military, although women even participated.

Trade routes were important for Georgia, including with Armenia, Iran, and the Middle East. The economy developed through increased trade relations, with copper, solar, wheat, grapes, and winemaking as the main commodities. The Mamluk administration implemented a tax system, mainly based on land and goods, which provided financial income. Researcher John Smith notes that trade relations were important for regional security and economic growth.

Herbert Badenholc, "Mamluk Administration and Culture" - notes the functioning of the administrative system and its relationship with local principalities.

Arthur Bruce, "Society of Georgia During the Mamluk Period" - describes social and cultural aspects.

John Smith, "Trade Relations in the Caucasus" - discusses the importance of trade routes and objects.

Cultural and scientific heritage of the Mamluks:

During the Mamluk period, Georgia was distinguished by a unique style, which was connected with Islamic and local traditions. Examples: Sasule and mosques, such as the Svetitskhoveli Mosque, with its stucco and mosaics; Barnovi Fortress and the layout of cities. New construction technologies were used in architecture, such as limestone and stone buildings.

During the Mamluk period, Islamic mosaics and frescoes, which are related to religious rituals and culture, spread. Georgian museums preserve mosaic samples from this period, such as details of the Svetitskhoveli Mosque. Religious texts were of great importance, including the development of Islamic literature. Theological schools operated on the territory of Georgia, where they studied Islamic religion and literature. Remains of scientific centers where astronomy, mathematics, and literature were studied have survived. Manuscripts are preserved in the National Archives of Georgia and the Scientific Center.

The National Archives of Georgia houses manuscripts, images, and graphic samples from the Mamluk era. Universities and scientific centers conduct research that has resulted in monographs and articles on Mamluk culture and heritage. Archaeological excavations and local sources support this genre of research.

Authoritarianism, centralization, and the strengthening of religious policy spread under the Mamluk rule, which influenced political processes. Despite its stability, the rule led to civil strife and serious challenges in the future, including wars and occupation.

The architectural remains, art, and religious heritage of the Mamluks remain a significant cultural treasure. The educational institutions and scientific centers based

on them formed the basis for the development of Georgian education. Despite religious diversity, this period is an example of tolerance. Political tensions, wars, and economic difficulties occurred during this era. Rulers attempted to maintain stability and order, but often by resorting to violence and religious persecution. Modern research aims to break through this period and generate a better understanding in order to preserve the national heritage.

More investment is needed in archival materials and scientific centers to develop teaching about the Mamluk period. Specialized courses on the culture, architecture, and politics of this era are essential in educational programs. International cooperation contributes to global awareness and protection of heritage.

The results and aspirations of the Mamluk rule have a significant impact on the historical and cultural development of Georgia, and their better understanding and research are the basis for sustainable development.

Conclusion

The period of the Mamluk rule is an important page in the development of the history and culture of Georgia, which determined the processes of political stability, cultural heritage and the formation of civil society. As a result, the study of this period inevitably approaches our cultural heritage and reflects the challenges that our society continues to deal with to this day.

The importance of new materials and research is special, as they provide new perspectives for a deeper understanding of the Mamluk era - in relation to architectural remains, works of art, educational and scientific institutions, religious and social relations. Integrated research and updating of archival materials contribute to the preservation of the national heritage and serve to create a more complete and scientific perception of the history of Georgia.

In conclusion, future research directions should be directed both at the organization of archives, and at the stable protection of architectural and artistic monuments, as well as at the strengthening of modern management and education systems. Special attention should be paid to interdisciplinary research, including the study of social, political and cultural processes, in order to develop future civic, cultural and scientific perspectives based on a better understanding of our past.

Finally, our work marks a study aimed at an in-depth and detailed discussion of the history of Georgia during the Mamluk period. The aim of the study is to:

- ❖ How the structure of the Mamluk government was formed in Georgia, what were the main features of their governance and how this system developed its functions.

- ❖ How did the Mamluk government affect the political, social and cultural life of the country, what was their influence on the territory of Georgia and how their legacy was created.
- ❖ A description of the unique features of their rule and the tangible legacy that allows us to understand what this period was like in the history of Georgia and what achievements it left behind.
- ❖ How important is the cultural heritage of the Mamluk period in today's Georgia and by what methods is this heritage preserved and known?

Overall, the goal of the study is to examine in depth and from a scientific point of view the historical significance of the Mamluk rule for Georgia, its foundations, stages of development, and legacy.

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