

= An @-@ Nasir Ahmad , Sultan of Egypt =

An @-@ Nasir Shihab ad @-@ Din Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Qalawun , better known as an @-@ Nasir Ahmad , (1316 ? 16 July 1344) was the Bahri Mamluk sultan of Egypt , ruling from January to June 1342 . A son of Sultan an @-@ Nasir Muhammad , he became embroiled in the volatile succession process following his father 's death in 1341 . An @-@ Nasir Ahmad lived much of his life in the desert fortress of al @-@ Karak in Transjordan and was reticent to assume the sultanate in Cairo , preferring al @-@ Karak , where he was closely allied with the inhabitants of the city and the Bedouin tribes in its vicinity . His Syrian partisans , emirs Tashtamur and Qutlubugha al @-@ Fakhri , successfully maneuvered to bring Syria under an @-@ Nasir Ahmad 's official control , while sympathetic emirs in Egypt were able to oust the Mamluk strongman Emir Qawsun and his puppet sultan , the five @-@ year @-@ old half @-@ brother of an @-@ Nasir Ahmad , al @-@ Ashraf Kujuk . An @-@ Nasir Ahmad eventually assumed the sultanate after frequently delaying his departure to Egypt .

An @-@ Nasir Ahmad was known to be a seclusive sultan , surrounding himself with his coterie of supporters from al @-@ Karak , rarely making direct contact with the Mamluk emirs of Egypt and avoiding the public view . Two months into his reign , he relocated to al @-@ Karak with substantial sums from the treasury and several horses and senior administrative officials . He ruled from the desert fortress , leaving a deputy , Emir Aqsunqur al @-@ Salari , to oversee affairs in Egypt on his behalf . His unorthodox rule , alleged frivolity , and his execution of loyal partisans , namely Tashtamur and Qutlubugha , led to an @-@ Nasir Ahmad being deposed from the sultanate by his half @-@ brother , as @-@ Salih Isma 'il . He remained in the fortress of al @-@ Karak , which the Mamluks besieged at least seven times , until being captured in July 1344 . He was killed later that month on the orders of as @-@ Salih Isma 'il .

= = Early life and career = =

Ahmad was born in 1316 or 1318 . His father was Sultan an @-@ Nasir Muhammad and his mother was Bayad , a singer and a slave girl freed by Emir Bahadur As and possibly given to an @-@ Nasir Muhammad . At the time of his birth , Ahmad was an @-@ Nasir Muhammad 's only son (three other sons had died before Ahmad was born) and the only son of an @-@ Nasir Muhammad born to Bayad . Bayad and an @-@ Nasir Muhammad later divorced and the former married Maliktamur al @-@ Sarjuwani , an emir who became Ahmad 's stepfather . As a youth , Ahmad spent frequent bouts of time in the desert fortress of al @-@ Karak under orders from his father . He was first sent there in 1324 under supervision and with a large budget to begin training in horsemanship and hunting . He was sent again in April 1326 . Since Ayyubid times , but particularly during an @-@ Nasir Muhammad 's reign , al @-@ Karak , which was isolated from the other Mamluk centers , became akin to a private academy for young Mamluk emirs where they could gain and perfect chivalric skills . Thus , Ahmad 's residency in al @-@ Karak was intended to imbue in him knightly qualities . While at al @-@ Karak , Ahmad was under the supervision of its governor , Bahadur al @-@ Badri . Nothing about Ahmad in the Mamluk @-@ era sources is known between 1326 and 1331 .

In May 1331 , Ahmad was recalled to Cairo , under the escort of Badri , where he was made an emir . His allotment of an emirate occurred on 30 September with much pomp and festivities . The following day , Ahmad left Cairo for al @-@ Karak . Sometime in 1331 , prior to Ahmad 's arrival in Cairo , Bayad died . Her widower , Maliktamur , was appointed governor of al @-@ Karak concurrent with Ahmad and Badri 's arrival in Cairo . Maliktamur was ordered to raise Ahmad and ensure his education . In 1332 , Ahmad and his brother Abu Bakr , who had also been at al @-@ Karak at the time , met an @-@ Nasir Muhammad and the latter 's favored son and Ahmad 's much younger brother , Anuk , at the Red Sea town of Aqaba , south of al @-@ Karak . From there , they were to accompany their father to Mecca for the Hajj pilgrimage , but at the last minute , an @-@ Nasir Muhammad sent Ahmad , Abu Bakr and Anuk to al @-@ Karak under Maliktamur 's care . Nothing is known about Ahmad 's life between the latter event and 1337 .

Ahmad was recalled to Cairo in 1337 by his angered father after the latter learned that Ahmad had been intimately associating with the riffraff of al @-@ Karak . Upon Ahmad 's arrival , an @-@ Nasir Muhammad saw to it that Ahmad be married to Zahirbugha Tayirbugha , a daughter of one of an @-@ Nasir Muhammad 's leading emirs . Ahmad returned to al @-@ Karak with his wife , who had been growing increasingly ill . At some point that year , Ahmad fell out with Maliktamur and requested from his father that the governorship of Mamlakat al @-@ Karak (al @-@ Karak Province) be transferred to him , a request which an @-@ Nasir Muhammad acceded to . Ahmad thus became the governor of the fortresses of al @-@ Karak and Shawbak , although an @-@ Nasir Muhammad appointed an ustadar (majordomo) , Emir Zumurrudi , to supervise him .

= = = Relationship with Shuhayb = = =

Zumurrudi reported back to an @-@ Nasir Muhammad that Ahmad was behaving poorly , dressing as a Bedouin and was spending much of his time drinking with a Bedouin boy , Shuhayb , with whom Ahmad had fallen in love with . As a consequence for his behavior , Ahmad was ordered by an @-@ Nasir Muhammad to return to Cairo with Shuhayb in March 1339 . Ahmad was received without fanfare and Shuhayb was jailed . In protest at the latter action , Ahmad forsook food and isolated himself to his quarters in the Cairo Citadel . An @-@ Nasir Muhammad sent his two most senior emirs , Bashtak and Qawsun , to persuade or threaten Ahmad to abandon his relationship with Shuhayb , but to no avail ; Ahmad told the emirs if " this young man [Shuhayb] is punished , I will kill myself ! " Ahmad also refused an offer from his father that would have transferred one hundred of an @-@ Nasir Muhammad 's mamluks to Ahmad 's service in return for Ahmad 's abandonment of Shuhayb . An @-@ Nasir Muhammad ultimately relented and abandoned hopes that Ahmad could succeed him as sultan . Instead , he released Shuhayb and made Ahmad an emir of forty mounted mamluks (the second highest Mamluk military rank) . Ahmad was also made to stay in Egypt , while Abu Bakr was sent to al @-@ Karak , likely replacing Ahmad as governor of the province .

In 1341 , Shuhayb and a eunuch entered into a dispute related to a pigeon racing competition , in which the eunuch mistreated Shuhayb . In response , Ahmad had the eunuch severely beaten , and when news of the incident reached an @-@ Nasir Muhammad , the latter attempted to force Ahmad to banish Shuhayb , again sending emirs Qawsun and Bashtak to communicate his demands to Ahmad . Ahmad refused , stating to Qawsun and Bashtak that while they each had a hundred young boys and girls , he had " contented " himself " with regard to worldly pleasures with only this boy because he has shared my exile , having left his family . How can I expel him ? If the sultan commands that I do so , then let him expel me too " . Ahmad was indeed expelled to Sarkhad , accompanied by Maliktamur . However , upon the intervention of some of an @-@ Nasir Muhammad 's emirs , wives and his harem , an @-@ Nasir Muhammad decided to have Ahmad return to Cairo while Ahmad was still on his way to Sarkhad , although he first sold all of Ahmad 's horses . An @-@ Nasir Muhammad also ultimately decided to send Ahmad back to al @-@ Karak with Maliktamur , who was also reappointed governor of Mamlakat al @-@ Karak .

= = Conflict over the sultanate = =

An @-@ Nasir Muhammad died in June 1341 . His reign was marked by a centralization of autocratic power in the Mamluk Sultanate . Shortly before his death , an @-@ Nasir Muhammad discussed his succession with his two senior emirs , Qawsun and Bashtak . The latter supported Ahmad 's nomination , but Qawsun supported Ahmad 's younger brother Abu Bakr . An @-@ Nasir Muhammad also favored Abu Bakr and believed Ahmad was unfit to rule . He rejected Bashtak 's suggestion , stating " As for Ahmad , who is in al @-@ Karak , do not let him cross [the soil of] Egypt ; do not put him in charge of anything , because he would cause the ruin of the state ! " Following an @-@ Nasir Muhammad 's death , In May or June 1341 , Abu Bakr was proclaimed sultan , but was virtually a ceremonial ruler , with Qawsun holding the reins of power as mudabbir al @-@ dawla (organizer of the state) , in effect the strongman of Egypt . He imprisoned Abu Bakr in

the Upper Egyptian city of Qus where he was executed on trumped up charges of frivolity . Qawsun thereafter arranged for an al-Nasir Muhammad 's five year old son , al-Ashraf Kujuk , to be declared sultan , further consolidating Qawsun 's power .

Ahmad was in al-Karak at the time of Abu Bakr 's execution and Qawsun called on him to report to Cairo , ostensibly to assume the sultanate . However , Ahmad viewed the invitation Cairo as a ruse by Qawsun to eliminate him . He responded in September 1341 that he would not report to Cairo unless the leading emirs of the sultanate appeared before him in al-Karak and gave him their oaths of loyalty and on the condition that his other brothers imprisoned in Qus would be relocated to al-Karak . Ahmad concurrently sent letters to the Mamluk emirs of Syria requesting their support against Qawsun , who proceeded to besiege al-Karak to coerce Ahmad to depart for Cairo . The siege was commanded by the Syrian emir , Qutlubugha al-Fakhri , while Ahmad had the support of al-Karak 's inhabitants and the Bedouin tribes of the vicinity . Twenty days into his siege , Qutlubugha defected from Qawsun , recognized Ahmad as sultan and promised the latter his unconditional support . Qutlubugha was persuaded to defect from Qawsun by the Mamluk na'ib (governor) of Aleppo , Tashtamur . The latter argued that Qutlubugha should support Ahmad out of respect for the bonds of loyalty they owed to Ahmad 's father , their master . From then on , Ahmad gained the honorific prefix of an al-Nasir , like his father .

Qutlubugha 's recognition of Ahmad as sultan was officially an act of mutiny since it was done while al-Ashraf Kujuk technically held office . It led to divisions among the Syrian Mamluk leadership , with the governors of Safad , Tripoli and Homs led by Altunbugha al-Salihi of Damascus supporting Qawsun , while Tashtamur , Qutlubugha , the governor of Gaza , the Al Fadl tribe of Palmyra , and a number of Damascene emirs supporting an al-Nasir Ahmad . As Altunbugha left Damascus to lead an expedition against Tashtamur , pursuing the latter to southeastern Anatolia , Qutlubugha moved into Damascus where he proclaimed an al-Nasir Ahmad sultan and began to reorganize the bureaucracy with the support of Damascene emirs opposed to Altunbugha . Qutlubugha prepared to strike Altunbugha , who attempted to wrest back control of Damascus , but most of his forces defected and he escaped to Cairo . Afterward , the governors of Damascus , Safad , Gaza , Hama , and Baalbek formally recognized an al-Nasir Ahmad as sultan , with apparent popular support . Nonetheless , Ahmad insisted that he remain in al-Karak instead of assuming the sultanate in Damascus unless Tashtamur , his most loyal supporter , accompanied him to Damascus from Anatolia . In the meantime , he gave Qutlubugha the authority to appoint Syrian governors as the new na'ib al-saltana (viceroy) of Syria . At one point during the political machinations in al-Karak , some of Ahmad 's mamluks killed Shuhayb , an act which emotionally traumatized Ahmad .

= = Reign = =

Qawsun 's position in Egypt was precarious and he was ultimately arrested , along with Altunbugha , in Alexandria . Afterward , a delegation of Egypt based emirs , namely Jankali ibn Baba , Baybars al-Ahmadi and Qimari Amir Shikar , arrived in al-Karak to inform an al-Nasir Ahmad of Qawsun 's ouster and to invite him to Cairo to assume the sultanate , to which an al-Nasir Ahmad refused . On 21 January 1342 , al-Ashraf Kujuk was dethroned and an al-Nasir Ahmad declared sultan despite the latter 's absence from Cairo . Qutlubugha expected an al-Nasir Ahmad to meet him in Damascus where the two men could march from there to Cairo triumphantly in royal procession , but an al-Nasir Ahmad opted for a more low key procession from Gaza , which frustrated Qutlubugha , more so when an al-Nasir Ahmad did not show up in Gaza . Instead , an al-Nasir Ahmad departed for Cairo without Qutlubugha in February , reaching Cairo in mid March . In Bedouin attire , he affirmed his title and declared " I was not yearning for royalty , and found that place [al-Karak] adequate .

In Cairo , an al-Nasir Ahmad did not partake in the usual royal feast and the public prayer during the Eid al-Fitr holiday . He surrounded himself with his coterie of supporters from al-Karak , refused to meet directly with the Mamluk emirs of Egypt , avoided the public view , and was

generally seclusive . He ordered Qawsun and Altunbugha as well as the governor of Qus who oversaw the execution of Abu Bakr to be executed . He assigned many of his unqualified supporters from al @-@ Karak to senior administrative offices , to the chagrin of the Mamluk emirs in Egypt . Tashtamur played an integral role in an @-@ Nasir Ahmad 's administration . However , Tashtamur 's arbitrary conduct in office and his selective approach to an @-@ Nasir Ahmad 's orders turned the latter against him , and with support from the leading Mamluk emirs who were also frustrated with Tashtamur , an @-@ Nasir Ahmad had Tashtamur imprisoned in May 1342 . In addition , an @-@ Nasir Ahmad ordered Qutlubugha to be confined to Damascus , while Mamluk emirs in Egypt sought to eliminate Qutlubugha . The latter was able to leave Egypt unharmed , but before reaching Beisan from Jenin , he was arrested by the governor of Safad , Baybars al @-@ Ahmadi , who extradited him to Egypt .

By the end of May , an @-@ Nasir Ahmad decided to rule the sultanate from al @-@ Karak , the only place he felt secure from Mamluk plots , real or perceived . He departed with large sums from the sultan 's treasury , huge numbers of an @-@ Nasir Muhammad 's Arabian horses and livestock , and was accompanied by the arrested emirs , Tashtamur and Qutlubugha , along with Karaki supporters , the muhtasib (chief market inspector) of Cairo and the chief scribe . He also sought to relocate Caliph al @-@ Hakim II to al @-@ Karak , and managed to install him in Gaza , ostensibly as an interim headquarters . An @-@ Nasir Ahmad reached al @-@ Karak relatively quickly (in six days) . He had left Cairo in the care of his newly @-@ appointed deputy , the governor of Gaza , Aqsunqur al @-@ Salari . From al @-@ Karak , an @-@ Nasir Ahmad issued decrees that reached Cairo through a mediator from al @-@ Karak ; an @-@ Nasir Ahmad rarely communicated directly with the Mamluks of Egypt , preferring to use mediators instead . According to al @-@ Maqrizi , Ahmad 's " most important confidant among the people of al @-@ Karak " was Baligh ibn Yusuf ibn Tayyi , the commander of Arab forces in the fortress . He was repeatedly asked to return to Cairo by the Mamluks of Egypt , but refused each time .

In al @-@ Karak , an @-@ Nasir Ahmad had Tashtamur and Qutlubugha executed for unclear reasons . The move to execute them appalled the public , with whom an @-@ Nasir Ahmad was steadily losing credibility with . The executions were seen as a testament of an @-@ Nasir Ahmad 's ingratitude to the men who had supported him and virtually installed him as sultan . Historian Joseph Drory argues that it was because Tashtamur and Qutlubugha compelled him to assume the sultanate and remove him from his self @-@ imposed isolation in al @-@ Karak that made an @-@ Nasir Ahmad resentful toward them .

= = Deposition and death = =

In Cairo , the senior Mamluk emirs resolved to depose an @-@ Nasir Ahmad and replace him with his half @-@ brother as @-@ Salih Isma 'il in June 1342 . The decision was supported by the governors of the Syrian provinces , who defected from an @-@ Nasir Ahmad after learning of the executions of Tashtamur and Qutlubugha and reports of an @-@ Nasir Ahmad 's decadent behavior in al @-@ Karak . Despite being dethroned and not having apparent ambitions outside of al @-@ Karak , an @-@ Nasir Ahmad was still viewed as a threat by the sultan ; an @-@ Nasir Muhammad had been exiled in al @-@ Karak when he marched to Cairo and seized the throne . Seven expeditions against an @-@ Nasir Ahmad were launched between his deposition and 1344 . Each siege was aborted . They often lasted for a few months , cost huge sums , and at times , ended with the dismissal of officers . The Mamluks had difficulty gaining the key support of the local Bedouin tribes , who were allies of an @-@ Nasir Ahmad .

In the summer of 1344 , Baligh , whose supporters and kinsmen served as Ahmad 's well @-@ spring of support , defected to the sultan 's army . The local defectors informed besieging Mamluks of a vulnerability in al @-@ Karak 's defenses . With this intelligence , on 4 July , the Mamluks , under the command of Emir Sanjar al @-@ Jawli , entered the fortress and captured an @-@ Nasir Ahmad , who had been wounded and was treated with respect by his captors . Still suspicious of his Egyptian captors , he refused to eat meals provided by them , only agreeing to eat food handled by his al @-@ Karak partisans . He was sent to Cairo , where as @-@ Salih Isma 'il secretly ordered to

have him decapitated by a mercenary on 16 July . An @-@ Nasir Ahmad 's head was brought to the Cairo Citadel where it was displayed . His body was buried at the foot of the fortress of al @-@ Karak .

= = Legacy = =

An @-@ Nasir Ahmad 's four @-@ month reign was judged to be a disappointment by Mamluk @-@ era historians . Ibn Iyas wrote that expectations of an @-@ Nasir Ahmad being a " victorious lion " upon his ascension to the sultanate ended with him receiving the appellation of the " crazy teacher " , while Ibn Hajar al @-@ Asqalani wrote that he was " truly a terrible administrator , a hedonist and a drunkard " . Ibn Taghribirdi asserted that an @-@ Nasir Ahmad was thoughtless , frivolous and the worst of an @-@ Nasir Muhammad 's sons . Al @-@ Maqrizi repeated the alleged warning of an @-@ Nasir Muhammad that an @-@ Nasir Ahmad should never " enter Egypt ... for he will be a ground for the ruin of the monarchy " .