































































ic, military, and political power networks. Thus, due to the dire economic situation, the sultans employed oppressive tax policies to increase their income, while the amirs and some civilian elite members provided protection, *ḥimāyah*, to the lower military and civilian sectors against the state officials, encroaching on the sultan's authority. The *ḥalqah*'s makeup reflected the Mamluk patronage system and power structure. In the main, it was manned by strong, protected persons: mamluks from the sultan's household and the amirs' protégés. In contrast, the weak and oppressed *ḥalqah* soldiers, who constituted a small part of the *ḥalqah*, remained unprotected. They were the soldiers who were mustered before expeditions, to go into battle or to pay a part of their already low salary, and dismissals from the *ḥalqah* were from their number. They were the soldiers to whom the seemingly sorry plight of the *ḥalqah* in the fifteenth century can be attributed.