

occupation. It is also significant that none of those appointed as *qāḍī al-quḍāh*, the highest legal office, had ever had an occupation belonging to the artisan group.⁶³

Moving from modest artisan professions to the circles of wealthy merchants seems to have been rare as well. Ibn Ḥajar mentions only one case where an artisan was able to build a large fortune through trade and one case where initial accumulation of wealth was combined with a judicious marriage, securing the next generation an economic head start. It may well be that a much larger number of commoners became affluent through trade, but their wealth did not reach the level of exceptional opulence that would have merited their inclusion among the dictionary entries.

Some commoners were able to attain powerful administrative positions through personal relationships with members of the Mamluk elite. The Cairene dancer is an example of a person who was able to use his status as the amir's favorite to make a career. The dancer's career was obviously a spectacular single occurrence and as such caught the attention of both chroniclers and biographers, who recorded it in their books.

It can be concluded that Ibn Ḥajar's biographical entries show a society in which lineage and networks were important ingredients of social advancement. Individual merits played an important role but did not suffice to guarantee any upward social mobility.

⁶³ Carl Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton 1981), 362–67, list of Category IV occupations in the artisan group: the numbers of artisans among *nā'ib al-qāḍīs* is 57, among *qāḍīs* 32, and among *qāḍī al-quḍāḥ* 0.