

Invocations from the Tops of Minarets: A Popular Uprising and Its Aftermath in Ottoman Cairo, November 1724

HASEBE Fumihiko

I. Introduction

Some minarets appear to be enough to characterize visually an urban or rural landscape as “Islamic”. In the pre-modern period, at least, these towers had been multifunctional structures where calls to prayer were uttered loudly, and thus the control of social time was made in the Islamic way, and the death news of an influential figure was announced. Moreover, they often became symbols that demonstrated their builders’ political powers or social benefactions.¹⁾ This paper will focus on another manner of using this vertical, tall, and narrow space: utilization of the minaret as a stage for various protest actions by those urban inhabitants who did not belong to the ruling group of the city. The first part of this paper scrutinizes a dramatic occurrence in Ottoman Cairo in November 1724, and the second part compares this event with similar cases found in pre-modern great Arab cities like Damascus, Aleppo, and Cairo. The purpose is to clarify the socio-political character and cultural meanings. The main sources here are Arabic chronicles written by post-Ibn Iyās and ante-Jabartī historians living in Ottoman Cairo and other cities. With regards to this theme, the most helpful among them is an informative chronicle, *Awḍaḥ al-ishārāt fī man tawallā Miṣr al-Qāhira min al-wuzarā’ wa’l-bāshāt* (*The Clearest Signs in the Ministers and Pashas Who Ruled Cairo*), written by Aḥmad Shalabī, a Hanafi scholar who studied at al-Azhar mosque. This chronicle gives readers the minutest details of the events of 1724 in Cairo, whose urban society, economy, and politics no doubt became more mature in the Ottoman period than in the “Islamic Middle period”.²⁾

II. The Political and Economic Situation before the Major Uprising of 1724

On 18 Ramaḍān 1133/13 July 1721, the new Ottoman governor of Egypt (*wālī Miṣr*) Muḥammad Pasha al-Nishanjī arrived at the place of his appointment, Cairo, capital of the Egyptian province. His predecessor, Rajab Pasha, was dismissed primarily because of his severe conflict with powerful beys of the Qāsimiyya faction and his losing the support of Cairene subjects.³⁾ The Egyptian political movement that resulted in the displacement of Rajab Pasha can be summarized as follows: On 18 Jumādā I /17 March of this year, the *jam'iyya*, the unofficial meeting of beys and influential scholars held by Ismā'īl Bey ibn Īwāz, the most powerful leader in Ottoman Egypt at that time, had resolved to demand the dismissal of Rajab from the post of governor and then marched to al-Rumayla, the central square under the Citadel, the seat of provincial government, and demanded that the governor come down. When he refused, these beys shelled the Citadel from both the Juyūshī mosque on the side of Muqattam hill and the Qarā Maydān, for the purpose of threatening him. As a result, Rajab Pasha descended unwillingly to al-Rumayla. Surrounded by the discontented people, he was barely sheltered by one of the powerful beys. On 1 Jumādā II 1133/30 March 1721, beys and scholars sent a petition (*'ard*) that asked Sultan Ahmed III to displace Rajab Pasha.⁴⁾

During the governorship of Rajab Pasha prices had been low. For example, the price of wheat (*qamḥ*) was 27 *niṣf fidḍa* per *irdabb*. After his dismissal, however, prices started to rise.⁵⁾ In addition, even after the governorship of Muḥammad Pasha al-Nishanjī began, the political situation of Egypt remained fluid, as the conflict got furious between two powerful sub-groups of the Qāsimiyya faction, “the house (*bayt*)” of the above-mentioned Ismā'īl Bey and that of the late Ibrāhīm Bey Abū Shanab.⁶⁾ Moreover, in this connection, Shaykh Sālim ibn Ḥabīb, the sheikh of Ḥabāyiba, rebelled against the government in the Delta.⁷⁾

Then, starting in the summer of the next year, there occurred one after another the protest movements of Cairene people discontented with the current economic situation.⁸⁾ First, on 8 Dhu al-Qa'da 1134/20 August 1722, putting the monetary condition in question, the people (*ra'iyya*) made a protest in Cairo. So the governor had to issue a proclamation on the abolition of the scraped and lightened *niṣf fidḍa* silver coin, which was called *maqāṣīṣ*.⁹⁾ This disquiet atmosphere continued as

the Nile's rise stopped for five days just at the crucial moment for the flood of the river. The price of wheat (*hintā*) rose from 40 *nisf fidda* per 1 *irdabb* to 85, and then to 4 *qirsh* (132 *nisf fidda*) due to the abnormal condition of the Nile.

When the price climbed to an extraordinary level, 6 *qirsh* (198 *nisf fidda*), a serious popular uprising occurred in the city. The people (*ra'iyya*) attacked some beys who were going to the Citadel, then aimed stones at Ismā'īl Bey, the most powerful figure in the Egyptian province at that time. As he fled into the Bāb al-'Azab of the Citadel, the powerful 'Azab corps, one of the seven corps of Ottoman Egypt, guarded him with its guns. The people therefore went to the governor, Muḥammad Pasha al-Nishanjī, and complained. Then, as a respondent measure, at the Būlāq port in which lay the city's major grain market, the chief of the Janissary corps (*āghā al-Mustaḥfiẓān*), who had been playing a major role in controlling the metropolitan market, decreed a fixed price.¹⁰⁾

But the actions of discontented Cairene people did not cease. The supply of grain to the city stopped, partly because they robbed main grain markets (*ruqa'*). According to Aḥmad Shalabī, at that moment, hungry people cried out, "The price is the price of God (*Al-si'r si'r Allāh!*)". This popular statement can be interpreted that they aspired the fair price in the hand of Allah. We can find some cases of such discourse in the Arabic chronicles and inscriptions of the Mamluk period, but they are without exception official statements made by Mamluk sultans. So this seems to be a unique case in which the populace, instead of the government, adopted this very interesting and important discourse to express its grievance against the current market situation.¹¹⁾

In Jumādā I 1135/February 1723, much wheat brought by Mediterranean ships was sold in the port of Damietta. As the high price lasted in Egypt, this news was the sole topic of conversation throughout the country.¹²⁾ In the summer of this year, all the prices were still high, and the first announcement of the Nile level was made eleven days later than in a normal year.¹³⁾ Then, in July, although a plan for reforming the silver coin system was proposed in the ordinary meeting (*dīwān*) in the Citadel, beys and high officers of the Ottoman corps (*ikhtiyāriyyat al-ūjāqāt*) declared against the proposal on the basis of their anxiety that it would draw "the popular uprising (*qiyām al-ra'iyya*)" forth.¹⁴⁾ They had another unofficial meeting (*jam'iyya*) at the residence of the chief of the Tufengçi corps (*āghā al-Tufakjiyya*) in the downtown, inviting not only leading Egyptian scholars but also Sufi leaders like Shaykh al-Bakrī and Shaykh

al-Sādāt. After agreeing on the objection to the reform plan, these influential military and religious leaders submitted their report to the governor, Muḥammad Pasha. Adopting this suggestion, the chief of the Janissary corps (*āghāt al-Inkishāriyya*), acting for the governor, proclaimed that the current monetary system would not be changed.¹⁵⁾ It can be said that these details indicate that popular movements, or to put it more precisely, the ruling group's anticipation of popular political actions, affected the economic policy of the provincial government.

III. *Du'ā'* of Cairenes from the Tops of Minarets

In the summer of 1724, the Nile continued to rise rapidly even after reaching the full level. Corresponding to this rise, prices skyrocketed, and finally the wheat price climbed to an abnormal level, 8 *qirsh* (264*nişf*) per *irdabb*. Aḥmad Shalabī relates, "The poor people faced serious hardship (*shidda kabīra*)."¹⁶⁾ On 14 Şafar 1137/2 November 1724, a messenger (*āghā*) from Istanbul who brought the Imperial decree ordering three days' decorations (*tazyīn*) of the urban space for celebration of the Ottoman victory over the Safavids, whose fate was now like a candle before the wind. The above-mentioned *wālī* of Egypt, Muḥammad Pasha, could not, however, coerce the Cairene subjects into such decorating and therefore, having taken the current skyrocketing prices into consideration, only fired a gun salute in the Citadel.¹⁷⁾ After about two weeks, a furious popular revolt flared up in the center of this provincial capital.¹⁸⁾ According to Aḥmad Shalabī, the people (*ra'iyya*) rose in revolt on 3 Rabī' I 1137/2 November 1724. The chronicler's description is, "They shut their shops (*ḥawānīt-hā*) and looted the markets of al-Qāhira district (*aswāq al-Qāhira*)."¹⁹⁾ This sentence seems to mean that the rebels were at least mostly Cairene inhabitants living in the exterior of al-Qāhira district and not *sūqa* (suq merchants) of this economically most thriving district in Greater Cairo. But we can't be sure that all of them belonged to the economically lower stratum of the urban society, since some of them had been managing their own shops.²⁰⁾

The next stage of the rare event was al-Jāmi' al-Azhar, the most pre-eminent religious institution in Ottoman Egypt. Rebels descended on the scholars (*'ulamā'*) lecturing and studying in this old and distinguished mosque. Facing sudden attacks, the scholars sought refuge hastily in their home. Then attackers shot guns (*bunduq*) at Maghribians (*Maghāriba*) and sojourners (*mujāwirīn*), most of them probably students or Sufis living in

the precincts of al-Azhar, and beat them with clubs (*nabābit*). Thus a Maghribian man and one of the people died in the clash.²¹⁾

This phase appears to be extraordinary, but we can find another example of gunfire and violent fighting within the precincts of the mosque in 1709, when the election of the new rector of the mosque (*Shaykh al-Azhar*) was a point at issue.²²⁾ Then, as for the case of 1724, what kind of indignation caused the rising people to attack the estimable Azhari scholars and even fire on the students (or sojourners) of this sacred area of Cairo? Contemporary sources don't give us the clear answer, but we can note that al-Azhar mosque in those days had played an indispensable role in the provincial politics of eighteenth-century Egypt and was getting to be a focal point charged with mounting tension in the arena of cultural-political hegemony. Intellectual leaders of this unrivaled institution often took a social part in transmitting both the economic dissatisfactions and the political demands of ordinary people to the Ottoman provincial governor.²³⁾ For example, in Šafar 1114/February 1703, suq merchants (*ahl al-sūq*) went to the mosque, explained their complaint about the current monetary crisis to the Azhari scholars, and asked them to negotiate with the governor. So Muḥammad al-Nashartī, Shaykh al-Azhar at that time, and scholars went up to the Citadel with the merchants and spoke for them to the Ottoman governor Qarah Muḥammad Pasha. As fruit of the social movement, the regular council (*dīwān*) of the provincial government consulted seriously on this issue, and before long the decree concerning the monetary reform of silver coin was proclaimed in the provincial capital.²⁴⁾ Also, in the popular disturbance of May 1733 that had its origin in the decline of the silver coin, Cairene inhabitants (*ahl al-balad*) complained to the scholars of al-Azhar. The central parts were taken by *ḥarīriyyin* (merchants and producers of silk textile) and *'aqqādīn* (merchants and producers of braiding). They prepared a petition (*'ard*) and sent it to the governor with Ibrāhīm al-Basyūnī, an eminent Azhari scholar. Al-Basyūnī wisely did not go straight to the governor but let the petitioners drop in on Muḥammad Bey Qatāmish, who was then the supervisor of al-Azhar (*nāzir al-jāmi'*). After Muḥammad Bey had read the petition, Shaykh al-Basyūnī and the petitioners were escorted to the governor by the stewards (*kaykhīyya*) of Muḥammad Bey. On the next day, the metropolis was thrown into an uproar and al-Azhar mosque was filled with discontented people (*ra'īyya*). Seeing such development of popular movements, the provincial government had no choice but to decree the new policy that would stabilize the currency, including the disuse of

maqāṣīṣ coins. By this decree, as Aḥmad Shalabī states, “the people went back to their residential quarters (*maḥallāt*).”²⁵⁾

The above cases show us the pivotal but subtle position of al-Azhar mosque and its leading scholars in the arena of political negotiations between the government and people. Considering such a socio-political role for al-Azhar in those days, we can't say with confidence but can speculate about the reason for the serious attack on this religious institution in the case of 1724, as follows: in the eyes of these rebels, Azhari scholars would have appeared not as spokespersons of their own economic discontents or mediators between the provincial government and subjects, but rather as mere collaborators of the Ottoman military regime. The main participants of the 1724 uprising might not be the bazaar merchants and artisans of the central commercial area of al-Qāhira, as in 1703 and 1733, but instead people living in more marginal districts of this metropolis, who did not bind strong daily ties with the leading scholars of al-Azhar. This supposition seems to be supported by its conformity to the fact that the markets of al-Qāhira district were looted in the first phase of this event.

The next phase of the 1724 revolt is the people's movement to the Rumayla Square and reckless challenge to Muḥammad Bey Jarkas al-Kabīr (Çerkes Mehmed Bey), the most powerful military figure in Egypt at that time. At first, the rebels moved to the Rumayla.²⁶⁾ This main square under the Citadel was where the wholesale markets and warehouses of grain converged, and it had often been the focal point of popular protest movements in Ottoman Cairo. In the disturbances of 1677 and 1695, looting and arson occurred there.²⁷⁾ Although in this square the rebel people were obliged to come to a confrontation with the powerful 'Azab corps stationed at this side of Citadel, it was likely that their object was not a fight with this Ottoman regular army but instead either the acquisition of grain or a mere passage to a showdown with Muḥammad Bey Jarkas. Fired by the 'Azab corps, they moved to the residence of Jarkas but were fired at again there by his private troops.²⁸⁾

Muḥammad Bey Jarkas, the noteworthy Circassian bey, belonged to the al-Qāsimiyya faction.²⁹⁾ After the assassination of Ismā'īl Bey, who was a *shaykh al-Qāhira* in November 1723, the “house (*bayt*)” of Abū Shanab, whose core person was Jarkas, became a predominant military group in Egyptian politics. Then in December of the year, by the decree from Istanbul, Jarkas was appointed to the dominant post of *shaykh al-Qāhira*, which is a synonym for *shaykh al-balad*.³⁰⁾ According to Aḥmad

Shalabī, after the death of Ismā‘īl Bey, *al-ḥall wa’l-rabṭ* (the power to appoint and dismiss) fell into the hands of Jarkas. Under his leadership, cases of murder and pillage occurred frequently and the price rose as a result of stoppage of the Cairo supply.³¹⁾ Al-Jabartī writes in his famous chronicle,

This Jarkas was the most tyrannical creation of the God (*aẓlam khalq Allāh*) and his subordinates (*aṭbā’*), especially his saddler (*sarrāj*) called al-Sayfī and his group were similar to him. The age of Jarkas was the worst days.³²⁾

Like such views of intellectual writers, the following experience of Aḥmad Shalabī gives us a glimpse of popular sentiment toward this oppressive bey. In February 1726, after the downfall of Jarkas, Aḥmad Shalabī deliberately went to see his residence, which was being destroyed by some three hundred workers who carried out the order of the chief officer of the Janissary corps. The workers were laughing and joking, and one of them talked to the residence in fun, “We built you with no fee, but, praise be to the God (*al-ḥamdu li-llāh*)! We can now destroy you with a fee.”³³⁾

According to Aḥmad Shalabī, Jarkas was at least partly responsible for the rise in price in the summer of this year. He demanded that Awlād Humām, the core family of al-Hawwāra, the most powerful and dominant clan in Upper Egypt, not supply their grain to the market of Cairo until all the grain that Jarkas himself preserved was sold. To understand the meaning of high prices in those times, we have to pay attention to this collaborative relationship between the most powerful bey of Cairo and the predominant Bedouin ruling group centering in Sohag.³⁴⁾ But it can’t be confirmed that Cairene ordinary people knew this fact.

Caught in a pincer attack, the rebels on the run headed for the spatially marginal but religiously vital district in Cairo, the Qarāfa cemetery. Some of them took sanctuary in the mausoleum (*qubba*) of Imām al-Shāfi‘ī, some in that of Imām al-Laytha ibn Sa’d, others in “al-Juyūshī”. In these places, all of them prayed the God for pardon (*yad’ūna Allāh bi’l-‘afw*) and invoked the God against Jarkas and his group (*yad’ū ‘alā Jarkas wa-tāyifat-hu*) all through the night.³⁵⁾ “Al-Juyūshī” can be interpreted either as Mashhad al-Juyūshī, an important shrine on Mt. Muqattam from the later part of the Islamic middle period, or holy Mt. Muqattam (also known as Jabal al-Juyūshī) as a whole.³⁶⁾ Defeated rebels made good use of these sanctuaries both as their safe shelters from military powers and as stages of “the second struggle” against them that was now tried in the

spiritual domain. In respect of another case of people's invocatory action in 1705, Yūsuf al-Mallawānī called such sanctuaries located in the southern outskirts of Cairo "the places well-known as the God's response to invocation (*amākin ma'rūf bi-ijābat al-du'a*)".³⁷⁾

Another noteworthy fact in the last phase of this event is that many townspeople who made their livings in the metropolis of the Nile and did not take part in the revolt expressed their sense of solidarity by a similar behavior. They ascended minarets (*manārāt*) in Cairo, except "the minaret standing close to the residence of Jarkas," and made two types of invocation: longing for forgiving sins of the rebels and calling down divine vengeance upon Jarkas. Muḥammad Bey Jarkas, who faced such citywide extension of popular invocation, did not move to chase his enemies in the sanctuaries too far by himself, but took two emergency measures to deal with the extraordinary situation. First, he wrote to the *qāḍī* (probably the chief judge of Egypt) and asked him to ban invocations from the minarets. The judge assented to it and sent letters of order to mosques (*masājid*). Second, Jarkas called a meeting (*jam'iyya*), explained about the popular actions in it, and sent "edicts (*farmānāt*)" urging chief officers of five Ottoman regular corps, that is, the Janissaries, 'Azab, Jamaliyya, Tufakjiyya, and Jarākisa, to mobilize their forces. But high Janissary officers (*ikhtiyāriyyat Bāb al-Mustahfizān*) soon objected to this measure, insisting that it was not a custom (*āda*) to mobilize non-Janissary corps in such a case. Moreover, the Ottoman governor of Egypt, Muḥammad Pasha, ordered officially that of the four corps only the Janissaries should go into action. Seeing such obsessions, Jarkas invited the chief officers of the seven Ottoman corps to his residence and consulted again on the matter. It was decided at last that even the Janissaries would not be sent out, and therefore "the restoration of order" in Cairo by mobilizing Ottoman regular corps just as Jarkas planned was never realized.³⁸⁾ We cannot find in contemporary chronicles any sentences indicating that either the rebels or the Cairenes who supported them on their own initiative were arrested or punished by the authority.

IV. Other Cases of Protest at the Minaret in Pre-modern Arab Cities

In the above-mentioned scene of social crisis, many ordinary people living in Cairo utilized their neighboring minarets as stages for protesting. We can find several examples of such Muslim behavior in pre-modern Arab cities. In Rabī' II 849/July 1445, discontented with the manage-

ment of *waqf* by Amīr Shāhīn nā'ib al-*qal'a*, people of Aleppo (*ahl Ḥalab*) stoned and hurled abuse at him. A group of people ascended a minaret in this Northern Syrian city that had a strategic importance for the Mamluk state. Then the protesters declared the amir's unbelief (*kufr*) there.³⁹⁾ In Dhu al-Hijja 911/May 1506, early in the morning of the day of 'Arafa, groups of Damascenes who gathered from al-Qubaybāt and other districts paraded to the Umayyad Mosque, putting up their flags and reciting the name of God repeatedly. Arriving at the historic holy mosque, they went up to the top of the minaret (*ma'dhana*) and cried en masse "Allāh Akbar!" (*kabbarū*) in favor of the official messenger (*mutasallim*) sent to the city prior to the coming of a new governor. People had been indignant at the former governor, Arkmās min Tarabāy, who promoted levying a penalty on each quarter (*ḥāra*) of Damascus as collectively responsible for any murders that occurred in the quarter, though he took little interest in the arrest of criminals. In this case, the people's action centering on the minaret in such an invocatory way of expression means their welcome to both the appointment of a new Mamluk governor and the declaration made by the official messenger in respect of realizing security (*amān*) and prohibiting urban ruffians (*zu'r*) from carrying weapons. So in this case, the feeling of indignation at the penal administration of the city and the expectation of its improvement motivated the popular movement at the minaret of the city's principal mosque.⁴⁰⁾

According to Aḥmad Shalabī, in Muḥarram 979/June 1571, the poor (*fuqarā'*), or Sufis, petitioned for their pensions (*arzāq*), properties (*amwāl*), and offices (*wazā'if*). Nonetheless, the injustice (*zulm*) and tyranny (*jawr*) of the governor, Iskandar Pasha, increased. After finding out about Iskandar's rule in Egypt, the Ottoman sultan dismissed him. Then the above-mentioned Sufis went up on the minarets (*ma'ādhin*) of the Azhar mosque and called down divine vengeance upon Iskandar.⁴¹⁾ Yūsuf al-Mallawānī, another chronicler, writes that the subject of this invocation on the minarets was *fuqahā'*, jurists, not *fuqarā'*. Moreover, in another significant point, his account differs from that of Aḥmad Shalabī. Al-Mallawānī states that the dismissal was the reply of God to the invocation. That is, the invocation was not made after the discharge of Iskandar Pasha but preceded and caused it.⁴²⁾ Although we cannot give a decision in favor of either of these later chroniclers at the moment because of the lack of an actual contemporary account, doubtless in this case the actors at the minaret were not urban common people but religious scholars or mystics, and the origins of their discontent lay in the governor's injustice

and probably his infringements on their vested rights.

We can find other instances of such protest movements after 1724 in the eighteenth century. Al-Ghazzī writes in his *Nahr al-dhahab* that in 1164 A.H., after a jump in prices in Ottoman Aleppo, people (*nās*) rose in revolt (*thāra*). Thus in the state of emergency like the stoppage of collective prayer and call to prayer, “women (*niswa*) went up the minaret”.⁴³⁾ It is al-Budayrī, a noteworthy Damascene barber, who can state in his contemporary popular chronicle the circumstances of the confusion in Aleppo. According to his account, Sa‘d al-Dīn Pasha, a member of the powerful ‘Azm family who was then the provincial governor of Aleppo, tyrannized over Aleppines (*ahl Ḥalab*) and then prices rose in the city. Although he forced them to pay the huge amount of two hundred *kīs ghurūsh* on purpose to use it for the funds of *jerde* (*sirdāriyyat jirdat al-ḥajj*), the official role of escorting the ḥajj caravans on their way back from Mecca, they bravely turned him down. It is recorded that then “a great dispute (*jidāl ‘azīm*)” occurred, collective prayers were stopped, and a group of inhabitants were killed. On the day following this event, in a situation of more rising of prices, the Aleppine notables (*a’yān Ḥalab*) moved to present a petition to the Sublime Porte.⁴⁴⁾

The source that shows us vividly the details of popular actions at that time is the report of Thomas, French consul of this important commercial city. According to him, it was on Friday 28 May 1751 that the disturbance (*émeute populaire*) occurred in Aleppo, and its cause was a rise in prices and the poor-quality of bread. The shops in the city were closed on that day. At about six o’clock in the morning approximately twenty to thirty women went up to the top of the minaret of the Grand Mosque at the center of the walled city. They continuously shouted insulting words toward Sa‘d al-Dīn Pasha until they were dragged down at about one o’clock in the afternoon. On the next day, Sa‘d al-Dīn put three of them to death by hanging and had other women hit with sticks.⁴⁵⁾ This hard-hearted response of the governor to these women’s movement for the improvement of living conditions must have had a considerable part in motivating the urban notables to send a written petition to Istanbul as mentioned above. In short, this event is important because the minaret of the central mosque in Aleppo was selected as the stage for the women’s valiant demonstration. Moreover, it appears to be clear evidence of pre-modern Muslim women’s active participation in urban politics in the broader sense.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, minarets attached to al-

Azhar mosque were frequently used for various protesting activities. In Jumādā I 1191/June 1777, a dispute arose between a group of Maghribi *mujāwirūn* (sojourners or students) in al-Azhar and a man whose patron was Amīr Yūsuf Bey, on the issue of the managing right of an endowment. When Yūsuf Bey tried to seize the new leader of the Maghribi sojourners that had won the case in the Islamic court, they had the courage to repel the subordinates dispatched by Yūsuf and then report the state of things to one of the most famous Maliki scholars of al-Azhar at that time, Shaykh Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-ʿAdawī al-Khalwatī al-Dardīr (1715–86). Sent a reprimanding letter by this aggressive religious authority, Yūsuf Bey angrily captured the scholar who brought the letter to him. Hearing about this act, al-Dardīr and other scholars of al-Azhar gathered and collectively stopped their lessons and calls to prayer as a protest. Al-Jabartī writes that the sheikhs staged a sit-in at “the old *qibla*” in the mosque, and the younger member (*ṣiḡḥār*) went up minarets (*manārāt*) and heartily called down divine vengeance upon the amīrs there. Seeing such protesting demonstrations made by leading scholars and students of the highest seat of learning in Cairo, neighboring suq merchants (*ahl al-sūq*) closed their shops as an expression of solidarity.⁴⁶⁾

On 20 Ṣafar 1200/24 December 1785, after the Friday collective prayer, *mujāwirs* closed the gates of al-Azhar mosque in pursuit of improvement of their stipend. As Salīm Āghā, the chief of Janissaries, hurried to the mosque and on the next day assented to their demand, the blockade was lifted. But on the following day, seeing that the promise made by him had not been realized, students blocked up again and cried on the tops of minarets (*manārāt*) in the mosque. We have no information now about details of this conflict; it appears to have been caused by the discontent of student recipients of *waqf* endowment belonged to this great mosque.⁴⁷⁾

On 3 Jumādā I 1200/4 March 1786, inhabitants of al-Ḥusayniyya quarter on the northern outskirts of al-Qāhira revolted against Ḥusayn Bey, a subordinate of powerful Murād Bey. Ḥusayn Bey had looted the house of Aḥmad Sālim, who was a butcher of the quarter and was also the *mutawallī riyāsat darwīsh al-Shaykh al-Bayyūmī*, that is, the leader of the Bayyūmiyya Sufi order. Rebels went into al-Azhar mosque with backing by the lower stratum of people (*awbāsh al-ʿamma*) and ruffians (*juʿaydiyya*) who armed themselves with clubs and whips. The above-mentioned Shaykh al-Dardīr welcomed and encouraged them. A group among them rose to the tops of minarets (*manārāt*) and beat drums with crying, which

made the shops around the mosque close.⁴⁸⁾ Here we have to take notice of the people's behavior of beating drums on the tops of minarets. This special action, probably related to the folk Sufi rituals of the al-Bayyūmiyya order, a branch of the al-Aḥmadiyya order, appears to have been made mainly for the purpose of calling the neighbors' attention to their political action.⁴⁹⁾

People of al-Ḥusayniyya raised another objection in al-Azhar on 22 Muḥarram 1205/1 October 1790. This event also occurred on Friday. The reason for this protest was the injustice done by Aḥmad Āghā, governor of Cairo (*wālī al-Qāhira*). He had repeatedly trespassed the rights of inhabitants living in the district, and on the day had dispatched his subordinates to arrest the above-mentioned Aḥmad Sālim the butcher. Aḥmad is mentioned by al-Jabartī "the Sheikh of al-Bayyūmiyya order (*shaykh ṭā'ifat al-Bayyūmiyya*)" at this moment. Supported by the neighborhood (*ahl tilka al-nawāḥī*), groups (*ṭawā'if*) of Sheikh Aḥmad's subordinates resisted against this action. Having suqs and shops closed, the protesting people of al-Ḥusayniyya moved to al-Azhar with their drums, closed the gates of the mosque, went up its minarets, crying and beating drums as in 1786. At this moment, their main aim was to hinder the lectures in this place of higher education. This noisy way of peripheral Cairenes resulted successfully in pressing Shaykh al-'Arūsī, great shaykh al-Azhar to demand on their behalf that military leaders remove the above-mentioned oppressive Aḥmad Āghā from the office of *wālī al-Qāhira*.⁵⁰⁾ Besides, as for these two cases of the popular movements broken out from al-Ḥusayniyya quarter, mention of the people's invocatory behavior at the top of the minaret is not found in Jabartī's accounts.

V. Concluding Remarks from the Comparative Perspective

Although we have to find more such cases of protest on the top of minaret to make a comprehensive study, for the present several points are indicated by the above-mentioned cases, including that of 1724. First, the protesting subjects on the minaret were not necessarily limited to the urban ordinary people as in 1724. In 1777 and 1785 in Cairo, the actors were sojourners or students of al-Azhar that had been taking on a holy character at least in the pre-modern era. As for 1571, they were scholars or Sufis, while Aleppine women spearheaded the popular economic protest movement centering on the Grand mosque in 1751. Second, as for the social relationship that sustained the protest, the communal one

of an urban residential quarter is found significantly in the cases of 1506 in Damascus and 1786 and 1790 in Cairo, in addition to the cases in which a wide range of people sharing interests gathered together, like the case of 1724. Third, although the origins of discontents and points of issue were various, such as oppression, heavy taxation, plundering, high prices, or poor payment, the objects of protest were without exception rulers or high administrators in all the cases.

Forth, with 1724 the only exception, the minarets that were used by people for their protest attached to the most important central mosque of each city. In view of the visual and socio-political effects of demonstration, selecting minarets of these large-scale and pivotal religious buildings is easily understandable. Civil collective actions in the principal mosques of such great cities that had been functioning as “political theatres” had potential for injuring the prestige of the governors. In addition, we have to take notice of the sacred character of these mosques. Such a holy mosque with its inviolable character was perceived by people voicing an objection against authority as a safer place that could rarely be the object of military suppression. In this respect, the case of 1751 is noteworthy. Does the fact that women complaining their difficult situation were pulled down from the minaret and some of them were even executed indicate the exceptional tyranny of al-‘Az̄m ruler who was like a visitor for the urban society of Aleppo? Did the governor feel their long-sustained insults too deeply? It is unlikely that this case illustrates the weakness of the sacred character of this central mosque in Ottoman Aleppo. Meanwhile, as for 1724, it seems to be unique in respect that various urban people who got to share a common political sentiment on a popular revolt moved into action in a common way at spatially dispersed minarets within the city. We can suppose that one of the reasons of this phenomenon lay in the fact that, in this case, al-Azhar mosque itself was the object of attacks by rebels for whom after their rout numbers of other Cairenes expressed their feelings of sympathy. And fifth, the social movements on the minaret often occurred on Islamic holidays like Friday (cases of 1751, 1785, 1786, 1790) or the Feast of Immolation (1506). As Friday is the day when large numbers of Muslims assemble naturally for attending the collective prayer at noon, it was a wise policy for the Mamluk and Ottoman authority to redouble precautions against popular movement. The political protest on Friday at the top of a minaret attached to the mosque within which an important Friday sermon was made confirming the regional ruler no doubt had a significant impact for

both the ruling group and subjects.

Finally, as to the behavior pattern at the top of minaret, we can find invocatory forms such as *du‘ā’* or *takbīr* in 1506 (Damascus), and 1571 and 1777 (Cairo), similar to the revolt of 1724. Considering that such devotional behaviors’ mental and physical directionality was undoubtedly upward to Allah, it is not inconceivable that the stage of the top of minaret was felt by actors as better than the ground surface, due to their feeling of its “nearer” position toward the God. Moreover, the political power intended to place itself in the higher site within the capital space, just like citadels of Cairo and Aleppo, and often tried to set up taller minarets for visualizing its great power. From the viewpoint of cultural politics over the urban space, we can say that the *du‘ā’* from the top of minaret was an deliberate civil action that had an implication of harming or reconstructing the political power’s unilateral design when it impressed its seal on and monopolized higher places in the metropolis.

Notes

- 1) Hillenbrand, R., J. Burton-Page, and G. S. P. Freeman-Grenville, “Manāra, Manār,” *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed.; Behrens-Abouseif, D., *The Minarets of Cairo*, Cairo, 1985, 10–13.
- 2) Aḥmad Shalabī, *Awḍaḥ al-ishārāt fi man tawallā Miṣr al-Qāhira min al-wuzarā’ wa’l-bāshāt*, edited by ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ‘Abd al-Raḥīm, Cairo, 1978. On Arabic chronicles written in Ottoman Egypt and Syria, see especially Holt, P. M., “Ottoman Egypt (1517–1798): An Account of Arabic Historical Sources,” in *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt*, edited by P. M. Holt, London, 1968, 3–12; Laylā ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Aḥmad, *Dirāsāt fi ta’rikkh wa mu’arrikhī Miṣr wa’l-Shām ibbāna al-‘aṣr al-‘Uthmānī*, Cairo, 1980; Crecelius, D. (ed.), *Eighteenth Century Egypt: The Arabic Manuscripts Sources*, Claremont, 1990. On Aḥmad al-Shalabī and his chronicle, see ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, “Yūsuf al-Mallawānī’s *Tuḥfat al-Aḥbāb* and Aḥmad Shalabī ibn ‘Abd al-Ghānī’s *Awḍaḥ al-Ishārāt*,” in *Eighteenth Century Egypt*, 39–50.
- 3) *Awḍaḥ*, 321. For recent general view of the history of the eighteenth-century Egypt, see Crecelius, D., “Egypt in the Eighteenth Century,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, Vol. 2: *Modern Egypt from 1517 to the End of the Twentieth Century*, edited by M. W. Daly, Cambridge, 1998, 59–86.
- 4) *Awḍaḥ*, 312–316.
- 5) *Awḍaḥ*, 320. Murtaḍā Bey, Yūsuf al-Mallawānī’s student, recorded that just before the arrival of Muḥammad Pasha, the price of wheat per *lirdabb* was 35–36 *fiḍḍa* and that of fava beans was 38 *fiḍḍa*. See al-Mallawānī, *Tuḥfat al-aḥbāb bi-man malaka Miṣr min al-mulūk wa’l-nuwawāb*, edited by Muḥammad al-

- Shishtāwī, Cairo, 1999, 260.
- 6) On the career of Ismā'īl Bey, see al-Jabartī, *'Ajā'ib al-āthār fi'l-tarājim wa'l-akhbār*, Cairo, 1297A. H., 1:114. On Abū Shanab, see *'Ajā'ib*, 1:105-106.
 - 7) On the movement of Shaykh Sālim, see *Awḍaḥ*, 339-343, 354-356, 361-362, 365-366, 373-374, 376-377, 394-395.
 - 8) *Awḍaḥ*, 347-348.
 - 9) On the question of *maqāṣiṣ* in the period of monetary crisis from the 1670s to the 1740s, see Raymond, A., *Artisans et commerçants au Caire au XVIIIe siècle*, Damascus, 1973, 35-36, 40-46.
 - 10) *Awḍaḥ*, 348. On the important role of the *āghā* of Egyptian Janissaries in the field of the market administration in this period, see *Artisans et commerçants*, 600-606. On the Ottoman seven corps of Egypt including the Janissary and 'Azab corps, see Shaw, S.J., *The Financial and Administrative Organization and Development of Ottoman Egypt 1517-1798*, Princeton, 1962, 189-197.
 - 11) *Awḍaḥ*, 348. In Ottoman Cairo, *ruq'as* existed at Bāb al-Lūq, Bāb al-Sha'riyya, al-Ḥusayniyya, al-Jamāliyya except al-Rumayla that played a central role. See *Artisans et commerçants*, 307-311. On *si'r Allāh* in the Mamluk period, see Sabra, A., "Prices Are 'in God's Hands': The Theory and Practice of Price Control in the Medieval Islamic World," in *Poverty and Charity in Middle Eastern Contexts*, edited by M. Bonner, M. Ener, and A. Singer, 2003, 73-91; Hasebe, F., " 'Adl and 'the Price of God': The Mamluk Sultanate in the Market Economy," in *Comparative History of Asia: Possession, Contract, Market and Justice*, edited by T. Miura, M. Kishimoto, and T. Sekimoto, Tokyo, 2004, 245-263. (In Japanese)
 - 12) *Awḍaḥ*, 362-63. On the cases of importation in the times of food shortage, see *Awḍaḥ*, 112, 264, 351.
 - 13) *Awḍaḥ*, 369. It was from this year that the beginning day of official announcement of the rise of Nile became 5 Abīb of the Coptic calendar, instead of 26 Ba'ūna as in the Mamluk era.
 - 14) *Awḍaḥ*, 370. Subsequently, the Nile reached the full level (*wafā'*), but the prices rose higher from 17 Dhu al-Qa'da/19 August, when the banks collapsed in the region of al-Manzala Lake. See *Awḍaḥ*, 371.
 - 15) *Awḍaḥ*, 370.
 - 16) *Awḍaḥ*, 429.
 - 17) *Awḍaḥ*, 433.
 - 18) A. Raymond referred to this revolt in the part dealing with the economic crisis in 1721-25 in his great work. See *Artisans et commerçants*, 93-95. For the general survey on the popular movements in Ottoman Cairo, see Raymond, A., "Quartiers et mouvements populaires au Caire", in *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt*, 104-116; Baer, G., "Popular Revolt in Ottoman Cairo", *Der Islam*, 220-234. Here we try to analyze the event from the viewpoint of social history with the emphasis on the urban political culture.
 - 19) *Awḍaḥ*, 433.
 - 20) On the notable case of protest movements by the poor (*fuqarā'*) and beg-

- gars (*shahhātīn*) in 1695, see Anonymous, *Zubdat ikhtisār ta'riḥ mulūk Miṣr al-maḥrūsa*, British Library, Add. 9972, fol. 29r-v; *Tuhfa*, 162; *Awdāḥ*, 193–194, 197.
- 21) *Awdāḥ*, 433. In the Ottoman period, the *riwāq al-Maghārība*, or the facilities where Maghribian students lived and studied was found on the left hand of the inside of the Maghribian Gate. See 'Abd al-Raḥīm 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abd al-Raḥīm, *al-Maghārība fī Miṣr fī l-'aṣr al-'Uthmānī: 1517–1798*, Tunis, 1982, 99–104.
 - 22) *Tuhfa*, 179–180; *Awdāḥ*, 220–222. For another case of popular movement in 1733 that had some resemblance in respect of the political role of Azhar, see *Awdāḥ*, 584.
 - 23) On the growing authority of Shaykh al-Azhar, see Crecelius, D., “The Emergence of the Shaykh al-Azhar as the Pre-eminent Religious Leader in Egypt,” *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire*, Cairo, 1969, 109–123. On the 'ulamā' as mediators between people and military power, see El-Shayyal, G., “Some Aspects of Intellectual and Social Life in Eighteenth-century Egypt,” in *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt*, 122–123.
 - 24) *Tuhfa*, 171–172; *Awdāḥ*, 208.
 - 25) *Awdāḥ*, 584.
 - 26) *Awdāḥ*, 433.
 - 27) On the disturbance of 1677, see *Zubda*, fol. 18r; *Tuhfa*, 152; *Awdāḥ*, 176. On 1695, see *Zubda*, fol. 29r; *Tuhfa*, 162–163; *Awdāḥ*, 193–194.
 - 28) *Awdāḥ*, 433.
 - 29) For this important bey in detail, see Hathaway, J., “Çerkes Mehmed Bey: Rebel, Traitor, Hero?” *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, 22 (1998), 108–115.
 - 30) *Awdāḥ*, 399. As it is written in *Awdāḥ* that Muḥammad Bey Jarkas was appointed as a *shaykh al-Qāhira* instead of Ismā'īl Bey and in Sha'bān 1135/May 1723, Ismā'īl Bey was in the post of *shaykh al-balad*, we can consider that *shaykh al-Qāhira* was a synonym of *shaykh al-balad*. So the beginning of the politically important office of *shaykh al-balad* dates back at least the term of Ismā'īl Bey. See *Awdāḥ*, 368–369. Cf. Crecelius, D. and Abd al-Wahhab Bakr, *al-Damurdāshī's Chronicle of Egypt: 1688–1755*, Leiden, 1991, 301.
 - 31) *Awdāḥ*, 404.
 - 32) *'Ajā'ib*, 1:130.
 - 33) *Awdāḥ*, 481.
 - 34) *Awdāḥ*, 429. On the Hawwāra, see the most detailed study by Laylā 'Abd al-Laṭīf Aḥmad, *al-Ṣa'īd fī 'Ahd Shaykh al-'Arab Humām*, Cairo, 1987.
 - 35) *Awdāḥ*, 433.
 - 36) On Mashhad al-Juyūshī, see Ragib, Y., “Un oratoire fatimide au sommet du Muqattam,” *Studia Islamica*, 65 (1987), 51–67. On Qubbat Imām al-Shāfi'ī, see Ibn al-Zayyāt, *al-Kawākib al-sā'ira fī tartīb al-ziyāra fī al-Qarāfatayn al-Kubrā wa l-Ṣughrā*, Cairo, 1907, 209–214. On Qubbat Imām al-Layth, see *Kawākib*, 98–101.

- 37) *Tuhfa*, 172. Cf. *Awḍaḥ*, 210.
- 38) *Awḍaḥ*, 433-435.
- 39) Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Tibr al-masbūk li-dhayl al-sulūk*, Cairo, 1896, 118-119.
- 40) Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-khillān fi ḥawādith al-zamān*, Cairo, 1962, 1:299; Id., *I'lān al-warā bi-man wulliya nā'iban min al-Atrāk bi-Dimashq al-Shām al-Kubrā*, Cairo, 1973, 200.
- 41) *Awḍaḥ*, 117.
- 42) *Tuhfa*, 115. No mention of this protest movement is found in al-Bakrī and al-Ishāqī's contemporary chronicles. But the former points out in one of his contemporary chronicles that Iskandar Pasha squeezed from not only the weak and poor but also most of eminent scholars. See al-Bakrī, *al-Nuzha al-zahiyya fi dhikr wulāt Miṣr wa'l-Qāhira al-mu'izziya*, Cairo, 1998, 153-154.
- 43) Al-Ghazzī, *Nahr al-dhahab fi ta'rīkh Ḥalab*, Aleppo, 1923-1926, 3: 299-300. Abraham Marcus refers to this event a little in his *The Middle East on the Eve of Modernity: Aleppo in the Eighteenth Century*, New York, 1989, 100.
- 44) Al-Budayrī, *Ḥawādith Dimashq al-yawmiyya*, Cairo, 1959, 160. For the recent novel investigation into this interesting chronicle, see Sajdi, D., "A Room of His Own: The History of the Barber of Damascus (fl.1762)", *The MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3 (2003), 19-35. On Sa'd al-Dīn Pasha al-'Azam, see Rafeq, Abdul-Karim, *The Province of Damascus 1723-1783*, Beirut, 1966, 200-201. On *jerde*, see Barbir, K., *Ottoman Rule of Damascus, 1708-1758*, Princeton, 1980, 167-177.
- 45) Archives Nationales, Paris, Ministère des affaires étrangères, Correspondance consulaire, Alep, B¹ 86, fol. 72v-73r.
- 46) *'Ajā'ib*, 2:8-9. *Mujāwir* of al-Azhar has been often interpreted as a student who lived and studied in a *riwāq* but we should not forget that its original meaning was "a sojourner of holy place" just like in cases of Islamic holy cities and so al-Azhar was sacred precincts in al-Qāhira. For clear evidence of this point, although the account was made in the fifteenth century, see al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk li-ma'rifat duwal al-mulūk*, Cairo, 1956-1973, 4: 322-324. Cf. Behrenes-Abouseif, D., *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule: Institutions, Waqf, and Architecture in Cairo (Sixteenth-Seventeenth Centuries)*, Leiden, 1994, 89-90.
- 47) *'Ajā'ib*, 2:102. But we can't find the description about use of minaret with regard to the similar protest movement centering in the same mosque in July 1785, preceding this case. See *'Ajā'ib*, 2: 93.
- 48) *'Ajā'ib*, 2:103. On al-Bayyūmiyya order, see Winter, M., *Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule 1517-1798*, London and New York, 1992, 137-138. It seems indispensable to study comprehensively the legal thought, social networks, and politico-cultural role of al-Dardīr. For reconstructing his life history, see in the first place *'Ajā'ib*, 2: 147-148.
- 49) On the play of drums in al-Aḥmadiyya Sufi rituals, see the anthropological study, Reeves, E.B., *The Hidden Government: Ritual, Clientelism, Legitimation in Northern Egypt*, Salt Lake City, 1990, 113, 132-133.
- 50) *'Ajā'ib*, 2:189. On Shaykh al-'Arūsī, see *Egyptian Society under Ottoman Rule*, 121-125.