The murder of al-Ashraf Khalīl in 693/1293 was a déjà vu for Mamluk politics, a grueling and often brutal process through which the emirs seized power for a while, only to lose it again to a stronger fellow. Many factors contributed to the turbulence of the ensuing years. The murky minutia of internal rivalries and the lack of major international events involving the Franks and Mongols made this period unappealing as a subject for the chroniclers, and more confusing for those who lived through it. When Khalīl was murdered, his brother al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was brought to the throne. The eight-year-old boy king was soon deposed by Kitbughā, a Mongol of the Ashrafi (that is, Khalīl’s) faction, who, after a short reign (1294–96), was forced out by the rival faction led by Lājīn, among others. The regicide, Lājīn, was a Mamluk of two masters named Mansūr: al-Mansūr ʿAlī b. Aybak, and al-Malik al-Mansūr Qalāwūn. Nicknamed Shuqayr, or al-Ashqar, “the Little Blonde,” perhaps an allusion to his Persian (or Greek) origin, he married one of Qalāwūn’s daughters and made a name for himself as a war hero at Acre. Like his two former lords, he, too, took the title of al-Malik al-Mansūr. He was murdered three years later, in 698/1298. The young al-Nāṣir was recalled from exile for a second run, which lasted ten years (1298–1308); but he had to flee back to Syria when a stronger emir, Baybars al-Jāshnakīr, was declared sultan, though his rule lasted only for a year or so. With the support of loyalist Mansūrī (the Qalāwūnid) emirs and Syrian tribesmen, al-Nāṣir assumed the throne for the third time, claiming the honor of the longest ruler in Mamluk dynastic history (1310–41).

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185 Irwin, Mamluk Sultanate, 85–104.
The revolving-door of changing regimes must have been a nightmare for a panegyrist. Ibn Dāniyāl’s career at the court was cut short. The fallout inevitably pushed him in other directions, personally and professionally. For the record, he did seem to continue producing panegyrics on behalf of the military and religious elite. And these poems reveal some different and intriguing traits.

First to note is the overall tone, which became increasingly angry and cynical. An example is his writing regarding a powerful veteran emir, ʿAlam al-Dīn Sanjar al-Shujāʿī, “the Brave One,” a controversial figure in historiography and a villain in folklore. A former Mamluk of Qalāwūn and then his chief of staff (shadd al-dawāwīn) and vizier, he was once appointed the viceroy of Damascus. Soon after the death of Khalīl, he was summoned back. When he returned to Cairo in the capacity of the atābek-mentor for the young al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, he managed to infuriate the locals and rival emirs by riding in an extravagant caravan worthy of a sultan.

It was over this pomp that the paths of the emir and Ibn Dāniyāl crossed. People were invited to the emir’s inauguration; in the crowd was the poet. When the ceremonial robe (khilʿa) was presented, according to Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī the historian, the appointee put it up like a turban, a symbolic sign of officially taking charge. But for some reason the emir just could not get it right. He kept adjusting the headgear with his fingers in an awkward manner. Ibn Dāniyāl wrote a poem afterwards to express his dismay.

The poet then went on, ranting about his nostalgic yearning for the joys suppressed during “the month of Fasting,” with special reference

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186 For his biography, see NZ, 8: 51–53; MŞ, 6: 80–83; BZ, 1/1: 378–85. He held various high positions under Qalāwūn, Khalīl, and al-Nāṣir, and is often portrayed as savvy and greedy.
187 MAa, 19: 385.
188 M no. 61; MM, 61a–b.