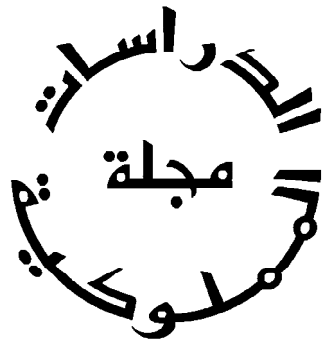


MAMLŪK STUDIES REVIEW

V



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MAMLŪK STUDIES REVIEW

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Mamlūk Studies Review is an annual, Open Access, refereed journal devoted to the study of the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt and Syria (648–922/1250–1517). The goals of *Mamlūk Studies Review* are to take stock of scholarship devoted to the Mamluk era, nurture communication within the field, and promote further research by encouraging the critical discussion of all aspects of this important medieval Islamic polity. The journal includes both articles and reviews of recent books.

Submissions of original work on any aspect of the field are welcome, although the editorial board will periodically issue volumes devoted to specific topics and themes. *Mamlūk Studies Review* also solicits edited texts and translations of shorter Arabic source materials (*waqf* deeds, letters, *fatawa* and the like), and encourages discussions of Mamluk era artifacts (pottery, coins, etc.) that place these resources in wider contexts. An article or book review in *Mamlūk Studies Review* makes its author a contributor to the scholarly literature and should add to a constructive dialogue.

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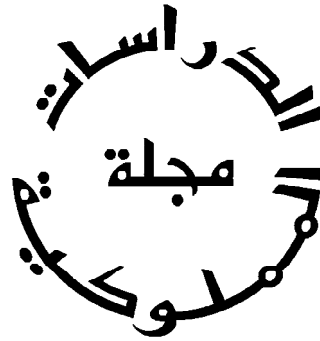
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ULRICH HAARMANN
1942-1999

The Mamluk System of Rule in the Eyes of Western Travelers*

THE LENS OF OCCIDENTAL TRAVEL REPORTS

The reports of late medieval European travelers to Egypt and Palestine have been discovered recently by experts in the history of mentalities as a first-rate source for the reconstruction of contemporary European modes of thought, perception, and experience during the critical transition from the medieval to the modern. Among this body of works, pilgrims' reports have been especially fruitful, and in particular, those sections dealing with Egypt. Despite the significance that this land had in the Old and New Testaments, in Egypt—unlike the Holy Land—it was not yet the case that every stone and every ford was imbued with sacral historical significance. Vast horizons were open to the imagination and curiosity of the traveler in Egypt, horizons which had long since been blocked in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, or Nazareth. The holy sites of Palestine so preoccupied the attention of authors and readers that they paid very little attention to the landscape and everyday life around them.¹

Reports on Egypt are not so unidimensional; they show a thematic multiplicity. The wonders of nature, that is the exotic animal and plant world of the Nile oasis, as well as the disconcerting customs and habits of the natives,² are placed on an equal footing with the locales and monuments associated with Biblical reminiscences. Among the more prominent such sites are the fruitful land of

*Delivered as the Fifth Annual *Mamlūk Studies Review* Lecture at The University of Chicago, February 25, 2000. The lecture was read by John E. Woods. Kenneth J. Garden and Stefan H. Winter translated it from German. Aram Shahin tracked down a number of missing or incomplete footnote citations.

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¹See Hannes Kästner, "Nilfahrt mit Pyramidenblick: Altvertraute Wunder und fremde Lebenswelt in abendländischen Reiseberichten an der Wende der Neuzeit," in Eijiro Iwasaki, ed., *Begegnung mit dem 'Fremden': Grenzen-Traditionen-Vergleiche*. Akten des VIII. Internationalen Germanistenkongresses Tokyo 1990, vol. VII, (Tokyo 1991), 307-16; here 308 n. 3 with further references.

²Pero Tafur, *Pero Tafur: Travels and Adventures 1435-1439*, ed. and trans. Malcolm Letts, The Broadway Travellers (New York, 1926), 71 on jesters.



Goshen,³ the pyramids as the granary of Joseph,⁴ and the fig tree in the grove of Maṭariyah⁵ under which the holy family found shelter during their flight from the henchmen of Herod.

The perspectives of western travelers to the Orient were naturally subject to European schemes of interpretation, which they had to justify neither to themselves nor to their audience. Not only the educational horizon and religious engagement, but also the cultural and geographic background of the individual author were limited by the traditional and conventional statements and assessments of the Holy Scripture. In those days there was no space for personal experience outside of this frame of reference.

Despite this, we witness a long-term and highly significant transformation, at least in the case of the later travelers at the end of the fifteenth century and beginning of the sixteenth. Recently rediscovered classical texts, namely those of Herodotus, Pliny, and Strabo, emerged as sources of incontestable reliability on the country, edifices, and history of Egypt, rivalling the authoritative tradition of the Holy Scriptures. The contradictions between the Bible and the historians and geographers of antiquity strengthened the inclination to rely on one's own observation, that is, living, empirical examination. Hannes Kästner has made this clear with the example of the reporting on the pyramids and the crocodile.⁶ We find that Arnold von Harff, for example, a knight from the lower Rhine who traveled throughout Egypt from 1496-98, relies entirely on Holy Scripture in his traveler's report. On the other hand, the humanistically educated Dominican monk Felix Fabri (d. 1502), who left by far the most informative and also most literarily distinguished pilgrim's report, struggles to reconcile knowledge newly won from the works of the classical authors with the apodictic statements of the Bible. He must frequently resign himself to apposing contradictory interpretations of the things that he encounters in the Sinai or in Egypt about which the Scripture and the old masters give differing accounts.⁷

Travelers to Egypt were spared the necessity of this balancing act when they encountered not the "familiar strangers" (the pyramids or the Nile, for example) of

³Ludolf von Sachsen, *Ludolph von Suchem's Description of the Holy Land, and of the Way Thither, Written in the Year A.D. 1350*, trans. Aubrey Stewart, Library of the Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society, vol. 12 no. 3 (London, 1895; repr. New York, 1971), 67.

⁴Tafur, *Travels*, 78.

⁵Ibid., 77; Felix Fabri, *Voyage en Égypte de Félix Fabri 1483*, trans. Jacques Masson, Collection des voyageurs occidentaux en Égypte 14 (Cairo, 1975), 897; Emmanuel Piloti, *L'Égypte au commencement du quinzième siècle d'après le traité d'Emmanuel Piloti de Crète (incipit 1420)*, ed. P.-H. Dopp (Cairo, 1950), 28-31.

⁶Kästner, "Nilfahrt," 312.

⁷See his reports on the pyramids, Fabri, *Voyage*, 448 ff.



the authoritative texts, to use Kästner's phrase, but rather "true strangers." These include the banana plant,⁸ rivers upon one of whose banks poisonous snakes thrive while on the other bank they expire,⁹ incubators for chicks,¹⁰ giraffes, the Nilometer,¹¹ the carrier pigeon post,¹² or even a ruling elite that recruited itself in the slave market. This had to be conveyed to the European reader in all of its immediate wonder and strangeness. This subjective striving for realism may not always have been successful. Naive observations were often tied again to general statements from the Bible or classical authors, which led inevitably to the "harmony of deceptions" described by Ludwig Fleck.¹³ Thus in Pero we read of mules, heavily laden with grain, crossing tirelessly over visible ramps and entering into the pyramids, that is, into Joseph's granary.¹⁴ The classical, Christian, and even Muslim wonders of the land are depicted together by Fabri, himself inspired by a visit to the pyramids,¹⁵ but are blended, according to the level of knowledge the author brings to each, into a kaleidoscope of commentary, theological report, and direct description.¹⁶

Also subject to the rules of the time were the illustrations, through which *mirabilia* unknown in Europe were to be brought nearer, quickly reaching the reader thanks to printing. The prelate of Mainz, Bernhard von Breydenbach, who visited Egypt in 1483 at the same time as Fabri, had his artistically-talented Dutch traveling companion depict the then-unknown giraffe, the crocodile (frequently described by classical authors), and the mythical unicorn,¹⁷ all peacefully occupying a single woodcut. Arnold von Harff, on the other hand, showed himself to be more sober. He contented himself with the giraffe and the crocodile, which he incidentally drew separately. In the encounter with the unknown and unbelievable, there was plenty of room for both its fantastic and its relatively objective representation.

⁸Cf. Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 24.

⁹See Ludolf, *Description*, 63.

¹⁰Again Ludolf, *ibid.*, 67; Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 38-40.

¹¹Ludolf, *Description*, 78; Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 20.

¹²Ludolf, *Description*, 80; Tafur, *Travels*, 68 f.

¹³See reference in Kästner, "Nilfahrt," 309 n. 6 and 313 n. 16.

¹⁴Tafur, *Travels*, 78.

¹⁵Fabri, *Voyage*, 448 ff.

¹⁶See esp. *ibid.*, 475 ff.

¹⁷Bernhard von Breydenbach, *Die Reise ins Heilige Land: Ein Reisebericht aus dem Jahre 1483 mit 15 Holzschnitten, 2 Faltkarten und 6 Textseiten in Faksimile*, ed. Elisabeth Geck (Wiesbaden, 1961), 35.



This forms the basis of the particular value of travelers' reports for the Islamic historian. The geographic and cultural distance from which the western visitors to the Nile, the Sinai, or to Palestine came again and again permitted a conscious awareness of, and reflection on, structural differences in the everyday world that they found there. The inhabitants of this world, on the other hand, were not capable of this, at least not without conscious effort. For the Egyptians themselves, the milieu in which, and according to whose rules, they lived was close, intimate, and taken for granted. The self-evident does not require examination, which is valid here as well. It cannot be approached from outside, for the inner distance necessary for objective analysis is lacking. The European visitors were able to grasp the differences and otherness of the Near Eastern world more clearly than were its own natives.

In this way, insights into the social structure and ruling system were also achieved, insights for which we search in vain in the Arabic sources, including political and administrative tracts. The occidental pilgrims deal extensively not only with the Mamluk system of ruling and recruiting¹⁸ but also with the relationship between Mamluks and their sons, the focus of this paper, and sometimes even their relations with the native Egyptian (and Syrian) population. They also speculate about the reasons for this peculiar regime. Whenever possible, a link is of course also sought between observations and commentary on the Mamluk ruling system and Biblical or Biblical-classical traditions whose truth is unquestioned.

THE SLAVE STATUS OF THE MAMLUKS

The primary reaction of the contemporary western commentary on Mamluk rule was astonishment over the fact that slaves could become rulers of the land. The Castillian Pero Tafur, who visited Egypt in the time of Sultan Barsbāy (1422-38), relates how the Mamluks were sold for cash in the Black Sea region by Christian merchants, brought to Egypt, Islamized there ("made into Moors"), and instructed in Islamic law and the arts of mounted warfare. At this point they were equipped and received a salary. Only from their ranks could one become sultan or admiral. Only one of their number could occupy the offices of the empire.¹⁹ Emmanuel "Mannoli"²⁰ Piloti (b. 1371), an enterprising Venetian of Cretan origin²¹ and many-year resident of Egypt in the early fifteenth century, emphasizes this absurdity when he says that the Mamluks, bought as slaves, pretend that God had invested

¹⁸Tafur, *Travels*.

¹⁹Ibid., 74.

²⁰Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 99.

²¹Ibid., 102.



them with the sword and the power to rule and govern this land.²² According to the Bedouin with whom Piloti had contact,²³ it was preposterous that the Mamluks, the "nation vitupé reuse" who had been bought with the money of the Egyptian peasants, should be the rulers of the land and not the Bedouin. It was these who had been called to this position since time immemorial and from whose numbers, after all, the Prophet Muḥammad came.²⁴ In another passage, however, Piloti adds his voice to the chorus of those who say that, without these purchased slaves, Cairo would be in a hopeless situation.

Hans Schiltberger also comments on this unusual phenomenon. A native of Munich, Schiltberger visited Egypt and several other regions of the Islamic Near East at the same time as Piloti, that is, during the reign of Sultan Faraj (1405-12) and his successors in the first third of the fifteenth century. He closes his chaotically structured chapter 38, entitled "The Neighboring Lands of the Great Tartardom, a Description of Cairo,"²⁵ with the strikingly nuanced observation "that hardly anyone becomes the Egyptian sultan who has not come out of the Mamluk bodyguard, of which many had been sold there as slaves." His formulation is doubly qualified: there would certainly also be sultans who are not themselves Mamluks; and not every Mamluk enters this elite as a purchased slave. There is no talk here of exclusivity.

The absurdity of slave rule was easily harmonized by our European travelers with the image associated with Egypt since Herodotus²⁶ that everything on the Nile stands on its head. In his fictional dialogue with a nun, the Franciscan abbot Francesco Suriano, zealous for learning, lists all of the ways in which Egypt is the opposite of the Western, read natural, order. He counts thirty-six contrasts. Among them are some objective and accurate observations. These include, for example, the fact that in Egypt, one writes from right to left,²⁷ and begins a letter with the address whereas "we" close with it. Other observations are of interest concerning legal praxis. For example, "we" repudiate women, but there it is the women who repudiate the men (!)²⁸ and there, poultry is sold by size and fruit and vegetables

²²Ibid., 11; see also 14.

²³Ibid., 19.

²⁴Ibid., 11 and 19.

²⁵Johannes Schiltberger, *Hans Schiltbergers Reise in die Heidenchaft: Was ein bayerliches Edelmann von 1394 bis 1427 als Gefangener der Türken und Mongolen in Kleinasien, Ägypten, Turkestan, der Krim und dem Kaukasus erlebte*, adapted by Rose Grässel (Hamburg, 1947), 87.

²⁶Herodotus, *Histories*, second book, chapter 35.

²⁷Francesco Suriano, *Treatise on the Holy Land*, trans. Theophilus Bellorini and Eugene Hoade (Jerusalem, 1949), 204.

²⁸Ibid.



by weight whereas in Europe it is the opposite.²⁹ The pair of opposites that concerns us here is number 27 regarding Mamluk rule: for us, slaves are servants, but there they are lords.³⁰

"ALL MAMLUKS ARE CHRISTIAN APOSTATES"

It is not easy to clarify the claim made by most of the European travelers that the Mamluks are *all* Christian renegades. It is known from the Arabic sources that the majority of the Mamluks were *awlād al-kafarah*, "sons of true unbelievers."³¹ This was indeed held against them at the court of the Ottoman sultan Bayezid. Initially they were predominantly Kipchak Turks. From the end of the fourteenth century they were of Circassian-Abkhazian origin. Certainly there were some Christians who became Mamluks, as per the prevailing misconception, after being captured (no doubt willingly, on occasion) or through the slave market. After the Ottomans defeated the western alliance led by Emperor Sigismund at Nicopolis in 1396, two hundred Christian prisoners of war, French and Italian, were sold en masse as Mamluks to the Cairene sultan by the victorious Turks, and "All were made to be pagans,"³² that is, they had to accept Islam. This is reported by Piloti, the Cretan merchant and Venetian subject,³³ who spoke with them in Cairo. As prominent as this Mamluk contingent may have remained in the consciousness of West Europeans, converted Christians were in fact still only a comparatively small minority.

In 1498, Arnold von Harff mentions as the regions of origin Slavonia, Greece, Albania, Circassia, Hungary, Italy, and, in rare cases, also Germany,³⁴ in short, the Caucasus and the Balkans with its adjoining regions. A few years earlier, in 1483, Bernhard von Breydenbach lists "Slavonia, Albania, Hungary, and the Romance countries."³⁵ Greeks and Christian Caucasians, especially Georgians, would have represented the largest "Christian" contingent of the Mamluks. After all, historians of the fifteenth century provide lists not only of the Circassians, but also of the Greeks (*arwām*) who attained the sultan's throne. In comparison with the Mamluks

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī, *Kitāb Nafā'is Majālis al-Sulṭānīyah fī Ḥaqā'iq Asrār al-Qur'ānīyah*, in *Majālis al-Sulṭān al-Ghawrī, Ṣafahāt min Tārīkh Miṣr fī al-Qarn al-'Ashir al-Hijrī*, ed. 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām (Cairo, 1360/1941), 133.

³²"Tous furent fais tornez estre poyens."

³³Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 104, 110.

³⁴Arnold von Harff, *The Pilgrimage of Arnold von Harff, Knight, from Cologne through Italy, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, Ethiopia, Nubia, Palestine, Turkey, France, and Spain, Which he Accomplished in the Years 1496 to 1499*, trans. Malcolm Letts, Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society, 2nd. ser. no. 94 (London, 1946), 120.

³⁵Breydenbach, *Reise*, 37.



of pagan-shamanistic origin who came to Islam without a detour through Christianity (and in some cases, those already born as Muslims),³⁶ converted Christians, and in particular the central and southern European "Foreign Legion" among them, did not constitute an important presence on the Nile.

But for our pilgrims from the West, it was precisely these few Mamluks from the Christian realms who were important. Moreover, the catastrophe of Nicopolis was everywhere present: imperceptibly, the few became many, a noteworthy and typical but proportionally insignificant, marginal group became the whole. And one carried this exaggerated claim to the next without anyone seeing the necessity of determining its accuracy while in the region. For by having supposedly all quit the path of salvation, the Mamluks became more enigmatic and interesting to the audience of these travel reports back home. Piloti speaks with admiration of the fact that the Mamluks who were captured at Nicopolis were "young, handsome, and stood at the beginning of illustrious careers."³⁷ The decision of these Europeans to reject Christianity demonstrated in fascinating and menacing ways the attraction of Islam and also of the Mamluk institution in which a slave, bought like a cow or a horse,³⁸ could rise to become the ruler of a powerful kingdom. In Burgundy in the fifteenth century, the term *mammelu*, "Mamluk," became a regular synonym for "apostate."³⁹

A few of the European renegades are actually quite well known to us from the western travelers' reports. Piloti's encounter with "two hundred" Latins who had become Mamluks has already been mentioned. Konrad the Mamluk from Basel was met by Arnold von Harff, a knight from Cologne, in 1496, and also by Felix Fabri of Ulm⁴⁰ thirteen years before that in Cairo, the Rome of the pagans.⁴¹ Fabri takes him to be "at that time, the only German at the court of the sultan."⁴² In another passage, he speaks at length of some Catalan and Sicilian Mamluks, "that is, Christian renegades," whom he encountered in Gaza directly before the exciting and arduous trip across the Sinai. Thenaud mentions a Mamluk from Languedoc.⁴³ Arnold von Harff sat together over forbidden wine not only with Konrad, but also

³⁶Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 15, 64.

³⁷Ibid., 110: "tous estoient josnes, beaux et tous eslus."

³⁸Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 120.

³⁹See Johan Huizinga, *Im Bann der Geschichte: Betrachtungen und Gestaltungen*, trans. Werner Kaegi (Basel, 1943), 245.

⁴⁰Fabri, *Voyage*, 913-14.

⁴¹"Rome des payens," Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 11.

⁴²Fabri, *Voyage*, 913-14.

⁴³Jean Thenaud, *Le voyage d'Outremer (Égypte, Mont Sinay, Palestine)*, ed. Charles Schefer, Recueil de voyages et de documents pour servir à l'histoire de la géographie 5 (Paris, 1884; repr. Geneva, 1971), 64.



with a German subject of the Danish king. His countrymen clearly enjoyed the exchange and the opportunity to speak German again. They showed him the city, even arranged a visit to the Citadel and, above all, instructed him in the strange Mamluk universe. They had attached themselves to this universe of their own free will but remained conscious of its peculiarities, all the more so in the company of an interlocutor from the world of their own past. If Felix Fabri is to be believed (though in fact, in this case it may well have been a matter of wishful thinking), the Islam of these opportunistic converts, as he portrays them, was not especially firm. For one thing, they give themselves to forbidden pleasures such as wine drinking. Already in the middle of the fourteenth century, this passion is reported by Ludolf von Sachsen, who spent the years 1336-41, the last years of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn's sultanate, in Egypt and Palestine. He writes, "these mercenaries (i.e., Mamluks) have an especial delight in Germans whom they straightaway recognize by their appearance and walk, and drink wine deeply with them, albeit it is forbidden by their law."⁴⁴ Beyond this, "all Mamluks are bad pagans [i.e., Muslims] and all have the intention to return to Christianity. The Mamluk from Basel also promised us that he wanted to return, and the dragoman Tamgwardin often tells us that he does not want to stay long."⁴⁵

European converts to Islam played a key role as courtiers and officials in exactly that sphere in which western visitors encountered the indigenous people. Pero Tafur, Piloti,⁴⁶ Felix Fabri, and Thenaud, thirty years later, all report southern European dragomen who smoothed the way for European visitors and who, though not without sentimental memories of their own Christian youth, had no desire to turn their backs on Islam. One of them, the Spanish born Taghrībirdī, was sent by Sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī as an ambassador to Venice at the rank of *amīr tablkhānah*.⁴⁷ In these reports, the spontaneous familiarity with these intermediaries is counterbalanced by the total incomprehension of how easily these countrymen had become accustomed to the mores and vices of the Islamic milieu. The claim, coming from Christian mouths, that they were all waiting for an opportunity to return to the Christian fold can be rejected as an exaggeration and a case of wishful thinking, even if there were occasionally such confessions made by disillusioned, aging Mamluks to their countrymen. Ludolf von Sachsen tells of three impoverished "renegades" from the diocese of Minden, whom he met in

⁴⁴See Ludolf, *Description*, 61.

⁴⁵Felix Fabri, *Die Pilgerfahrt des Bruders Felix Faber ins Heilige Land Anno 1483* (Berlin, n.d.), 122; idem, *Voyage*, 915.

⁴⁶Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 87.

⁴⁷Schefer, Introduction to Thenaud, *Voyage*, xlv, li-lii.



Hebron, longing to return home.⁴⁸ They had hoped for fame and fortune, surely in the service of an amir, through their Mamlukdom and conversion to Islam, but now toiled, despite their status as Mamluks, as a water carrier, a manual laborer, and a porter.⁴⁹ Ludolf also speaks of a German Mamluk who had guarded the balsam garden of the sultan before the gates of Cairo, prominently mentioned by nearly every European traveler to Egypt, who did in fact return to Christianity. Piloti personally obtained the release, in 1402 from Sultan Faraj ibn Barqūq, of Christians (Mamluks?) who were forced against their will to convert to Islam.⁵⁰ This came after his diplomatic success in purchasing the freedom of 150 Saracen captives from the grasp of the Duke of Naxos.⁵¹

The testimonies of the exclusively Christian origin of the Mamluks by travelers to Egypt of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries vary according to the emphasis given to this theme. They also vary, in cases in which the text is longer and allows for such conclusions, according to the socially and regionally determined perspective of the reporter as well as his level of education. One finds both brief qualifications attached to the term "Mamluk" as well as lengthy interpretations that reach into other areas.

In the fourteenth century, Niccolò da Poggibonsi summarily mentions the "number of Christian renegades," that is, of Mamluks, in the heading of chapter 176 of his pilgrim's report.⁵² His contemporary, Ludolf von Sachsen, even holds all Turks, "the most zealous Saracens [i.e., Muslims], but not of the Saracen race [i.e., Arabs]," (!) to be apostates from Christianity.⁵³ A few generations later, we have the report of Bertrando de Mignanelli, the intimate observer of the rise, fall, and rise of Sultan Barqūq, in his *Ascensus Barcoch*. He tells us that Nu'ayr, the Bedouin ally of Mintāsh and adversary of Barqūq, held it against Barqūq that he had been a Christian and was then sold into slavery.⁵⁴

⁴⁸Ludolf, *Description*, 70.

⁴⁹See also Michael Hamilton Burgoyne and D. S. Richards, *Mamluk Jerusalem: An Architectural Study* (Jerusalem, 1987), 55.

⁵⁰Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 103.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 95-103.

⁵²Niccolò da Poggibonsi, *A Voyage beyond the Seas (1346-50)*, Publications of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum 2 pt. 2, trans. Theophilus Bendoricich and Eugene Hoade (Jerusalem, 1945), 89.

⁵³Ludolf, *Description*, 30.

⁵⁴Bertrando de Mignanelli, trans. Walter J. Fischel in "Ascensus Barcoch: a Latin Biography of the Mamlūk Sultan Barqūq of Egypt (d. 1399) Written by B. de Mignanelli," *Arabica* 6 (1959): 153.



Both of the Florentine travelers Leonardo di Frescobaldi⁵⁵ and Simone Sigoli⁵⁶ directly address the Christian origin of Sultan Barqūq, who ruled Egypt during their stay. On the other hand, Bertrandon de la Brocquière, who visited the Near East in 1432-33, is not entirely certain about the Christian past of this "ancestor" of the Circassian sultans ruling during the fifteenth century.⁵⁷ With regard to Barqūq, Frescobaldi adheres to an entirely personalized treatment of his subject.⁵⁸ He reports that Barqūq had his father brought to Egypt from the pagan Circassian lands, then forced him to renounce Christianity and be circumcised. This operation led to the death of the old man in a short time. This depiction is known to be accurate and greatly preoccupied the Arab historians.⁵⁹

The travel report of the Castilian globetrotter Pero Tafur stems from the first half of the fifteenth century. He speaks of the Mamluks as "apostate barbarians."⁶⁰ "No one other than these renegades can become sultan or admiral, nor hold office or prebend. Neither can any Moor [i.e., native Muslim Egyptian] under pain of death ride a horse. These Mamluks possess all the knightly privileges."⁶¹ Tafur, and this I mention only in passing, exaggerates when he claims that every non-Mamluk who mounts a horse is immediately killed. However, we do learn from numerous oriental sources that horses were fundamentally reserved for the Mamluks, who were addicted to *furūsīyah*.

Perhaps the most important witness is again Piloti, who spent many years in Egypt during the final phase of Sultan Barqūq's reign, under Faraj, and then again under Barsbāy.⁶² He emphasizes not only the Mamluks' monopoly of power, as does Tafur, but also their Christian origin. In his schema of the three "pagan" (i.e.,

⁵⁵Leonardo di Frescobaldi, "Pilgrimage of Lionardo di Niccolò Frescobaldi to the Holy Land" in Theophilus Bellorini, Eugene Hoade, and Bellarmino Bagatti, trans., *Visit to the Holy Places of Egypt, Sinai, Palestine and Syria in 1384*, Publications of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum 6 (Jerusalem, 1948), 45 ff..

⁵⁶Simone Sigoli, "Pilgrimage of Simone Sigoli to the Holy Land" in Theophilus Bellorini, Eugene Hoade, and Bellarmino Bagatti, trans., *Visit to the Holy Places of Egypt, Sinai, Palestine and Syria in 1384*, Publications of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum 6 (Jerusalem, 1948), 171.

⁵⁷Bertrandon de la Brocquière, *The Voyage d'Outremer by Bertrandon de la Brocquière: Translated, Edited, and Annotated with an Introduction and Maps*, trans. Galen R. Kline, American University Studies, Series II: Romance Languages and Literature, vol. 83. (New York, Bern, Paris, Frankfurt am Main, 1988), 22.

⁵⁸Frescobaldi, *Pilgrimage*, 46.

⁵⁹This report is to be found not only in al-Maqrīzī but also in the short chronicles such as Abū Ḥāmid's *Duwal al-Islām*.

⁶⁰Tafur, *Travels*, 74.

⁶¹See also Burgoyne and Richards, *Mamluk Jerusalem*, 55.

⁶²Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 11.



Muslim) Egyptian nations or "generations" (Egyptians; Arabs [i.e., Bedouins]; Mamluks), he equates Mamluks with purchased slaves of *Christian* origin:

The third nation, they are bought slaves, from all Christian nations, of whom are made Mamluks and admirals, and from these the sultan is made. And in this nation they made themselves lords and governors and they command the state and the lordship over the people of the country and over the generation of the Arabs and over the inhabitants of the country. . . .⁶³

Piloti had great difficulty in reconciling the cliché that all Mamluks were of Christian origin with the much more complex evidence that was available to him. As an expert in long-distance trade, he was better informed than any of the other European reporters of the late middle ages. He provides a more realistic picture in his chapter on the procurement of Mamluks⁶⁴ and the Genoese entrepôt of Caffa in the Crimea.⁶⁵ He writes that the Tatar (and other) slaves purchased by the sultan's "facteurs et serviteurs" in the "pagan" (*payen/poyen*) (i.e., truly pagan or Muslim, certainly not Christian) lands of the Tartars, Circassians, Russians (!), etc., passed through Caffa.⁶⁶ There, they are said to have been asked by the Genoese authorities (whom the author, as a Venetian, deeply mistrusts) whether they would rather be Christians or pagans (in this case, Muslims).⁶⁷ If they choose to be Christians, the Genoese keep them. Only if they choose to be Muslims do they travel with the Muslim slave traders in Muslim⁶⁸ or disreputable Christian ships⁶⁹ through Gallipoli⁷⁰ to Alexandria, Damascus, and Cairo (if they are not first seized by Christian corsairs).⁷¹ There, they are delivered in triumph to Islam.⁷² Whenever the slave traders have again brought a couple of hundred future Mamluks of the sultan to

⁶³Ibid., 14.

⁶⁴Ibid., 15f.

⁶⁵Ibid., 64.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid., 16, 64: "se il/ils vuellent estre crestiens ou payens/poyens"; note that he writes "*estre*," "be" and not "become" or "remain."

⁶⁸Ibid., 15.

⁶⁹Ibid., "sur nés de malvis crestiens et mal disposés"; 64, "sur naves de très faulx et très mauvais crestiens."

⁷⁰Ibid., 15, 62.

⁷¹As depicted by Piloti, *ibid.*, 60.

⁷²Ibid., 16.



Cairo, and have been led to the Citadel with highest honor and the blare of trumpets, the heralds of the sultan, of the "chief de la foy payene,"⁷³ loudly cry:

These honorable traders have brought and rendered three hundred or more, whatever the number may have been, souls of the Christian nation and Christian faith to the sultan. These will now live and die in the faith of Muḥammad so that the faith of Muḥammad may multiply and grow and that of the Christians may dwindle.⁷⁴

Also, the fact that Piloti takes pains to present two of the Mamluk conspirators against Sultan Faraj as Christian renegades⁷⁵ (one came from Salonica, the other from the southern Slavic lands) implies that there must also have been Mamluks who did *not* arrive in the country as Christians. Piloti's own evidence cannot, therefore, easily be harmonized with his claim that all Mamluks had fallen away from Christianity.

The travel reports from the last quarter of the fifteenth century are numerous and often closely interwoven.⁷⁶ Travelers such as Tucher, among others, will not be considered here. One of the most original authors in this respect is again Francesco Suriano, abbot of the Franciscan monastery on Mount Zion in Jerusalem and favorite of Sultan Qāyṭbāy and the famous/infamous chief *dawādār* Yashbak al-Zāhirī. He had spoiled both of them during their exile in Jerusalem with monasterial hospitality and, above all, fine cuisine. In one passage, Suriano qualifies the term "Mamluk" as "that is, Christian renegade soldiers."⁷⁷ In another passage, he formulates the rule equally concisely: "all of these soldiers must be Christian renegades." But he goes another step and substantiates this rule in a "historical" way:⁷⁸

Their first sultan was bought and sold five times and for this reason, to the present day, only he who has been bought and sold five times can ascend to this position. And if one of them does not meet this prerequisite and nonetheless wishes to ascend to this position,

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴See *ibid.*, 15.

⁷⁵Ibid., 12.

⁷⁶Arnold Esch, "Gemeinsames Erlebnis - individueller Bericht: Vier Parallelberichte aus einer Reisegruppe von Jerusalempilgern 1480," *Zeitschrift für historische Forschung* 11 (1986): 385-416.

⁷⁷Suriano, *Treatise*, 4, 191.

⁷⁸Ibid., 207.



then he is bought and sold as many times as is necessary. Only a Christian renegade can rule this land.⁷⁹

In 1496-98, in his etiology of the unique foundational law of the Mamluk system, Arnold von Harff goes back, impeded neither by humanistic knowledge nor doubt, to the Old Testament. For him, it was Joseph who set the precedent to which contemporary Egyptians still conformed:⁸⁰

For it was never questioned since the time of Joseph, who was sold by his brothers into Egypt, that a Sultan should be a heathen born, and always an elected renegade Christian . . .⁸¹

Later he carries this idea further:

. . . as Joseph was sold by his brothers and came to Egypt to Cairo to King Pharaoh (as the Bible tells us plainly in the thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis), and this Joseph was such a wise man that after Pharaoh's death he was chosen King or Sultan and ruled the land with great wisdom and in peace, so they keep him in everlasting remembrance. They will have no Sultan who has not first been sold, and they observe this until today, choosing Sultans from the bartered Christians known as Mamelukes. . . .⁸²

When Harff and his two German companions encounter over one thousand young, dark-skinned Mamluks after his visit to the Citadel, and he asks his two friends and drinking-partners about these people, he discovers that the sultan presently

⁷⁹Quoted in Pietro Casola, *Canon Pietro Casola's Pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the Year 1494*, trans. M(ary) Margaret Newett, Publications of the University of Manchester 26 (Manchester, 1907), 392 n. 88.

⁸⁰Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 103; *ibid.*, trans. Paul Bleser, "Le pelerinage du chevalier Arnold von Harff," in *Zum Bild Ägyptens im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance/Comment se représente-t-on l'Égypte au moyen âge et à la renaissance?*, ed. Erik Hornung, *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 95 (Göttingen, 1990), 81.

⁸¹Note that pagan here means Muslim. Pagan can therefore also metonymically mean "Arabic," the language of the pagans. See Jan Hasištejnský z Lobkovic (1450-1517) in his pilgrim's report *Putování k Svatému Hrobu*, quoted by Svatopluk Souček, "A Czech Nobleman's Pilgrimage to the Holy Land: 1493," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 8 (1984) (special issue entitled *Turks, Hungarians and Kipchaks: A Festschrift in Honor of Tibor Halasi-kun*), 233-40; here, 235, "pohansky."

⁸²Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 120; *idem*, *Pelerinage*, 98.



possessed 15,000 Mamluks "who are renegade Christians,"⁸³ from which that year alone one thousand had been killed. There is no talk of Joseph in this passage, nor is there any in Harff's vivid report of how these Christian warriors become Muslim Mamluks:

When these Mamelukes are first captured in Christian lands they are sold to the heathen. They are then forced to say: "Holla, hylla lalla Mahemmet reschur holla:" that is in German: "God is God and shall be so forever, Mahomet is the true prophet sent from God." Then they circumcise him and give him a heathen [Muslim] name.⁸⁴

The learned Felix Fabri, who had stayed in Cairo in 1480 and 1483, reports in a manner that is similarly colorful and direct. He discriminatingly registers and comments on what occurs around him in a different way. He speaks of the renegade status of the Mamluks in several passages both in the long and in the short version of his *Evagatorium*, for example, on the occasion of the visit of some Mamluks to the house of the Christian pilgrims in Cairo on October 11, 1483,⁸⁵ or in a report about the three "mighty ones" of the empire:⁸⁶ "Cathube [Qāyṭbāy], a Catalan renegade, the father of the sultan and governor of all the kingdom, and the admiral, head of the armies. These three men do everything. . . ." This quote corresponds in the German summary to the following striking text: "And all three are Mamluks, apostate Christians, and all office holders in all the lands of the king sultan are Mamluks and greatly oppress the Saracens and allow them no power, nor do they let them become rich."⁸⁷

Fabri sees the causes for these unusual political conditions in demography and in the social structure. He explains them in a manner that approximates the conclusions of modern research: by utilizing an inexhaustible reservoir of soldiers from the outside (Christians, Fabri believes), one is no longer dependent on native Muslims. Rather, these are discriminated against in favor of the Mamluks:

All Mamluks are Christian renegades. . . . They neither let the Saracens serve as soldiers nor permit them to bear weapons. Things have gone so far that, thanks to the growth of the band of Christian renegades and apostates, only such are considered as sultan or king

⁸³Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 108; idem, *Pelerinage*, 86.

⁸⁴Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 122; idem, *Pelerinage*, 101.

⁸⁵Fabri, *Pilgerfahrt*, 121; idem, *Voyage*, 913.

⁸⁶Fabri, *Voyage*, 576f.

⁸⁷Fabri, *Pilgerfahrt*, 128-29; idem, *Voyage*, 928.



of Egypt. This custom is not very old and does not have the force of law among them. But the immense flood of renegades has brought about this situation, which is the greatest of all humiliations for the Saracens and for the Christians a powerful and repulsive scandal and simultaneously the ruin of our faith. They have decreed that no one can become sultan who has not before been a Christian and who has not been sold twice since his fall from faith [Suriano spoke of five times].⁸⁸

A reference to Joseph and Genesis 37 and 39 follows. Then Fabri repeats the last point once again: "They thus say that no one may be sultan who has not renounced his Christian brothers and been sold twice."⁸⁹ This is surely a reflection of the fact that Mamluks, especially in the later period, might have a number of masters (sing. *ustādh*) in short succession:

Furthermore, these apostates have decreed that all important offices in the kingdom can only be entrusted to Mamluks. The governors, legal officials (!), princes, army commanders, and emissaries within the realm of the sultan are all Mamluks. The [prospect of] emancipation and freedom and these hopes of attaining the highest offices attract numerous Christians. There are also the payments and daily stipends, the security, but also the weakness of the flesh and the prospect of possessing several women. All of this leads a great number of them to abandon their [Christian] faith. As soon as one has disowned his faith, he immediately receives an office, a salary, and is placed above others.

From the perspective of contemporary research, what is interesting in this quote is Fabri's view that the imported military slaves' monopoly of power is not a *law*, but rather a custom resulting from the *embarras des richesses* of Mamluk importers, which does not stem from a previous age. This impressively commensurate analysis admittedly does not prevent our Dominican, in his search for biblical *loci probantes*, from also calling upon the biblical Joseph as the godfather of this unusual custom. Harff, who traveled thirteen years later, could have been inspired by Fabri's Joseph argument in his own portrayal.

⁸⁸Fabri, *Voyage*, 551-53. See also Jean Claude Garcin, "Aux sources d'une idéologie: la force empruntée de l'Islam (trafic d'hommes et mentalités en Méditerranée)" in *Le mirior égyptien: Rencontres méditerranéennes*, ed. Robert Ilbert and Philippe Joutard (Marseilles, 1984), 167, reprinted in Garcin, *Espaces, pouvoirs et idéologies de l'Égypte médiévale* (London, 1987).

⁸⁹Fabri, *Voyage*, 552-53.



In another passage in Fabri's travel report, we encounter the tensions between the Mamluk elite and the native Egyptians,⁹⁰ which culminated in the ban on weapons for the latter, linked with the supposed exclusively Christian past of the Mamluks. In the passage depicting the pilgrims' stay in Gaza, two Saracen (that is, native Arab-Muslim) guides of a Christian pilgrim caravan with the names Sabat(h?)ihanco and Elphahallo accuse the Europeans entrusted to their care of cultivating displeasingly friendly relations with Mamluks. And this despite the fact that the Mamluks (whose offensive hubris vis-a-vis the Muslims of the land has already been mentioned) should be especially repugnant to Christians.⁹¹ Sabat(h?)ihanco says, "You are true Christians! How can you dare to eat and drink with these people who have sworn off the faith of the Christians with abominable oaths?" His companion Elphahallo raises the pressure for self-justification for the pilgrims still more: "You are among those Christians who will doubtless be saved through their faith. It is just as certain that these Mamluks will be damned for having rejected your faith. How can there be relations between you?" The pilgrims responded, according to Fabri "as best they could,"⁹² astounded at the belief that one could achieve salvation only in the faith in which he was born and in no other.⁹³

SULTANS AND POPES: THE DESCENDENTS OF THE MAMLUKS

If it is indeed the case that the Mamluk ruling elite replenishes itself entirely from the outside (for demographic or whatever other reasons), irrespective of whether they are Christians or pagans, then all natives must be *ipso facto* barred from participation in these highest privileges, no matter how much this runs contrary to human psychology, which yearns to pass riches and instruments of power on to its own progeny in as undiminished a form as possible.

The extent to which the limitation of membership in the elite to first-generation Mamluks can be demonstrated to be a historical reality over the course of decades is a major concern of this study. What do the European travel reports have to say on this matter? As we have said, Schiltberger speaks, as far as the circumstances that he experienced in the early fifteenth century are concerned, very reservedly of the fact that there is hardly a sultan who is not a Mamluk.⁹⁴ This commentary implies that there are exceptions to be expected. After all, the time which he

⁹⁰Found in this quote as well as in Pero Tafur; see above.

⁹¹Fabri, *Voyage*, 32.

⁹²Ibid., 33.

⁹³See also the brief reprimand in *ibid.*, 798: "We saw many Mamluks there, powerful and magnificent, all of them Christian renegades."

⁹⁴Schiltberger, *Reise*, 87.



describes and partially experienced first hand saw the enthronements of several sons of sultans (Faraj ibn Barqūq; but also the sons of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh and Ṭaṭar).

Pero Tafur, who also visited Egypt at this time, namely during the sultanate of al-Ashraf Barsbāy, speaks not about the princes specifically but rather about the sons of the Mamluks generally, which makes this testimony especially valuable. He has the impression that the Mamluk privileges diminish continually from the first to the second and third generation: "Their [i.e., the Mamluks'] sons have a somewhat reduced status [from that of the father] and the grandchildren less still. After this, they are considered as native born Moors."⁹⁵ Piloti's commentary, stemming from the same period, is much less precise. In his chapter on the training of the Mamluks in the barracks under the supervision of the *ṭawāshīyah*, indispensable as a supplement to Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ* and Abū Ḥāmid al-Maqdisī's *Duwal al-Islām*,⁹⁶ he adds, following the description of the emancipation ceremony of the Mamluks before the sultan and the transfer of the corresponding privileges, that this favor is to continue to be held after the death of the beneficiary by his children or other relatives.⁹⁷ He may have been thinking here of payments to survivors (*rizqah mabrūrah*) or perhaps only of non-material support for the relatives of the deceased Mamluks. We cannot infer anything more precise from this succinct quote.⁹⁸

The next voices are half a century younger. At this point, the chances of the descendents of Mamluks having a share in the power and wealth of the state are judged much more cautiously.

Let us begin with a fifth "renegade" quote from Arnold von Harff, which has heretofore escaped consideration. It concerns the constitutional consequences of the decree that the ruler must come from outside, and thus by implication also the lot of the sons of Mamluks born in the land: "no heathen [Muslim] born in the Sultan's country can be a ruler; only the captured renegade Christians, there called Mamluks, rule the Sultan's country."⁹⁹

Harff was present in Egypt at just the right time to watch how effective this rule he posited actually was, or at least to see how power politics were carried out with reference to it. Qāyṭbāy, close to death, had abdicated in favor of his fourteen-

⁹⁵Tafur, *Travels*, 74.

⁹⁶"... and there, there are the great masters, who are tavassi, which is to say castrated, who are the leaders and governors of this band of slaves. . . .Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 16.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸See also Burgoyne and Richards, *Mamluk Jerusalem*, 55a/b.

⁹⁹Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 121; idem, *Pelerinage*, 99. The French translation is incorrect in exactly this spot. Instead of "Dans le pays du Soultan aucun païen de naissance n'a le droit de régner" it should read "aucun païen qi est né dans le pays du Sultan, n'a le droit de régner."



year-old son al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. In my opinion, this bold youth has been badly handled in the historiography to date. Not only did he show farsightedness as an energetic proponent of the increased outfitting of the army with firearms, he also learned to write Turkish and Arabic poetry in the cultivated ambiance that his father had created in the Citadel. It is true that Sultan Jaqmaq had already done this before him, in January 1453.¹⁰⁰ However, for contemporaries, this abdication and transfer of rule to a son born in the country (one, furthermore, with an Arabic surname) was a provocation and transgression of valid law. With this argument, that the sultan had acted illegally, the powerful General Qānṣūh Khamṣmi'ah promptly claimed the sultanate for himself, "since he was of the opinion that no one heathen born [i.e., Muslim] should be Sultan."¹⁰¹ Power befitted only "genuine" Mamluks.

We can also infer from western sources, if only indirectly, how widespread was the conviction that Qāyṭbāy's abdication in favor of his son was in fact a coup d'état. Under the date May 26, 1496, shortly before Qāyṭbāy's death and Muḥammad's succession, otherwise unknown Alexandrian sources informed the Venetian diplomat Sanuto that the generals and the Mamluks opposed the appointment of Qāyṭbāy's son as the new sultan because the youth was a "son of the people."¹⁰² Their laws, on the contrary, stipulated that power could be conferred only to a purchased slave. A good eight weeks later, on the 22nd of July of that year, Sanuto's diary states that the son had in fact been made sultan, but that his reign would not last long because he was a "son of the people."¹⁰³ "Son of the People," *fiol di la zent*, is naturally nothing other than the Italian translation for the well-known *ibn al-nās* (pl. *awlād al-nās*). This term, used only sparingly in the Arabic sources as a categorical label, was therefore clearly in circulation, otherwise it would not, as in this case, have been taken up by foreigners.¹⁰⁴

It can be inferred from a further observation of Arnold von Harff that the purely Mamluk, that is, oligarchic, election principle had prevailed, even after two hundred years, over the competing dynastic principle in this final phase of the Mamluk sultanate, not only at the pinnacle of the state but also in all of the

¹⁰⁰See Abū al-Maḥāsin Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah*, vol. 15, ed. Ibrāhīm 'Alī Tarkhān and Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyādah (Cairo, 1972), 452-53, and Abū Ḥāmid al-Maḥḍisī, *Kitāb Duwal al-Islām al-Sharīfah al-Bahīyah wa-Dhīkr mā Zahar lī min Ḥikam Allāh al-Khafīyah fī Jalb Ṭā' ifat al-Atrāk ilā al-Diyār al-Miṣrīyah*, ed. Ṣubḥī Labīb and Ulrich Haarmann, *Bibliotheca Islamica* 57 (Beirut, 1997), 95.

¹⁰¹Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 104; idem, *Pelérinage*, 82.

¹⁰²"*Fiol di la zente*," Marino Sanuto, *I diarii di Marino Sanuto*, ed. Federico Stefani (Venice: 1879-1903), 262.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴See Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 103-4 n. 4; see also Casola, *Pilgrimage*, 392 n. 88.



subordinate benefices reserved for Mamluks: "when a Mameluke dies, the Sultan takes his goods and all that he has left behind, and if he has ten children they inherit nothing, for they are heathen born [i.e., Muslims]. But, if the Sultan is pleased, out of his grace, to give them something, that they may keep."¹⁰⁵ Machiavelli's commentary in 1513 on the Mamluk system of succession is also relevant here. He compares it to the election of a pope, inasmuch as both forms of rule can be described neither as inherited nor as acquired, "for it is not the sons of the old rulers who are heirs and who remain lords. Rather, the sultan is raised to this rank by those who have the power to do so. Because this is an ancient, traditional structure, one cannot speak of an acquired position, for many of the difficulties that one has with new leadership are not present in it. Even if the ruler is new, the organization of the state is nonetheless old and arranged as if the new lord had inherited the throne."¹⁰⁶ The College of Cardinals and the council of Mamluk oligarchs are in essence equated.

A valuable confirmation that Arnold von Harff's verdict on the career opportunities of the sons of Mamluks at the end of the fifteenth century was current in European circles is given by the canon Pietro Casola, who traveled to Jerusalem two years before Harff.¹⁰⁷ His commentary in this respect is connected to his complaint about the rule of the cursed Mamluks, who had repudiated Christianity, over the Holy Land. He places the responsibility for this tragedy with the quarrelsome Christians themselves, who fragment their powers, then speaks to our theme: "Only a Christian apostate can rule over the Moors. And when one of these apostates takes a wife and has sons, these sons cannot succeed the father in his office. Such sons are called "sons of the people," although they are sons of the sultan."

The expertise of the theological scholar Felix Fabri is especially enlightening in this matter. Here again, he tries at all costs to systematize that which is incomprehensible to him, and to make it plausible to his readers at home through references to his own culture, no matter how speculative. In both versions of his travel report, the German abridgement,¹⁰⁸ and in the full Latin edition of the *Evagatorium*,¹⁰⁹ he imaginatively addresses the obvious problem of how the sons of Mamluks can share in the privileges of their fathers despite their exclusion:

¹⁰⁵Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 122; idem, *Pelerinage*, 100.

¹⁰⁶Machiavelli, *The Prince*, chapter 19.

¹⁰⁷Casola, *Pilgrimage*, 279.

¹⁰⁸Fabri, *Pilgerfahrt*, 122.

¹⁰⁹Felix Fabri, *Evagatorium in terrae sanctae, arabiae et egypti peregrinationem*, ed. Cunradus Dietericus Hassler, Bibliothek des literarischen Vereins in Stuttgart 2-4 (Stuttgart, 1843, 1849), 3:93.



It is estimated that there are more than 30,000 Mamluks in Cairo in the service of the sultan. The sultan is the heir of all of them, for it is not permissible that the son of a Mamluk inherits his father's fortune. He is not even seen as a Mamluk, because he has never been a Christian and has not fallen away [from Christianity]. Therefore, the Mamluks intentionally allow their children to be baptized as Christians. As long as they are growing up, they have them instructed in the faith of Christ. However, when they have reached the age in which they can judge for themselves, somebody leads them to renounce their faith in full public view. Now the son can follow in his father's footsteps and become a Mamluk. The young people know this and yearn for the day of their apostasy to come as soon as possible, because they may then ride a horse and carry weapons. And for this reason, the number of Mamluks grows from day to day.¹¹⁰

In the German edition of Fabri's 1483 pilgrim's report, abridged from the complete Latin version, it is stated briefly that:

The Mamluks also allow all their children and women to be baptized. But not all do so for the sake of God; rather they seek to deceive through this. At the court of the king sultan, no one can be or become powerful but Christian apostates. For no heathen [i.e., Muslim] can become a Mamluk and therefore the Mamluks have their sons baptized and instructed in the Christian faith until they reach the age, then they too apostatize, become Mamluks, and inherit their father's fortune. All this could not be had they not been Christians before. And this is a lamentably great deception in which there is no good, for in this manner the name of Christ remains among the heathens.¹¹¹

The following paragraph is incomplete in the available German abridgement of Fabri's pilgrim's report. Therefore I have inserted the missing passages (in italics) from an available French translation of the complete German text:

¹¹⁰Fabri, *Voyage*, 553.

¹¹¹Fabri, *Pilgerfahrt*, 122; idem, *Voyage*, 915.



There are innumerable many Mamluks at the court. The sultan, *the amir, and the dyodar* [i.e., *dawādār*] have nearly 30,000 Mamluks, all of whom are given a salary. *Their inheritance goes to the sultan. Their children retain only that which it pleases him to leave them.* We saw young boys as Mamluks at the court, many with costly ornament. The entire land, as far as the sultan rules, is ruled through Mamluks and the Saracens have no power there.

Fabri's peculiar idea, irreconcilable with the reality known to us, that descendants of Mamluks could, by means of a limited term conversion, attain the privileges of their fathers so to speak through the back door surely has an ideological background on the Christian side. Garcin, for example, sees this as an effort by the author to make the impressive power of the Mamluks and their many victories over the Christians bearable to himself.¹¹² By declaring them to be former or crypto-Christians, one could claim them for one's own cause, sharing in their success in a deeper sense. This must surely be the most complex but also the most unequivocal expression of the West's respect for this powerful monarchy and its rulers. The alleged eagerness of the Mamluks in general to return to Christianity, their native religion, has been discussed above. This claim too strengthened the feeling that, on the deepest level, one was dealing not with opponents but with allies. To be defeated by them was less humiliating than if one had been dealing with true foreigners. We should also not forget that the Mamluks were the masters of the holy places of Palestine, the land which the Crusades had sought in vain to win back for Christendom. Arnold von Harff has one of his German Mamluks argue simply but fully in the context of this deep-set Christian disquiet over the Mamluks' power: Jerusalem is a holy place for all three great religions, for Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Whoever rules this city must then be the most powerful king on earth.¹¹³

Ibn Zunbul, who wrote his history of the conquest of Egypt by Sultan Selim at the beginning of Ottoman rule, renders historical processes (as well as the inheritance of privileges), as he is fond of doing, in a (fictional) dialogue. In the following case he deals with the competing principles of succession. If, according to Selim, a sultan must be descended from a sultan,¹¹⁴ something that disqualified a Mamluk from becoming ruler, these were quick to reply: "Who was Abraham's or

¹¹²Garcin, "Aux sources d'une idéologie," 168.

¹¹³Harff, *Pilgrimage*, 128-29.

¹¹⁴Aḥmad ibn 'Alī Ibn Zunbul, *Wāqī'at al-Sultān al-Ghawrī ma'a Salīm al-'Uthmānī*, ed. 'Abd al-Mun'im 'Āmir (Cairo, 1962, repr. 1997), 84, 166.



Muḥammad's father?"¹¹⁵ Even in a time when the Mamluk sultanate had long since become history, this basic law of the late Mamluk period was still deeply anchored in the consciousness of the Egyptian people. The French Franciscan André Thevet visited the country in 1550 and encountered again and again sentimental memories of the courageous sultans, especially the last of them, Ṭūmān Bāy, whom the Ottoman conqueror Selim had executed in a most bestial manner. He puts it this way: "The sons of the Mamluks could not become soldiers and therefore the sultan was not able to bring about the succession of his sons."¹¹⁶

THE HISTORICAL VALUE OF THE EUROPEAN TRAVEL REPORTS

In the course of the history of the Mamluk sultanate from 1250 to 1517, the most important institutions of the empire were gradually, and sometimes also abruptly, "Mamlukized." Reverses in this process, such as the well-known intermezzo during Sultan Ḥasan's reign, were without lasting consequence. Occidental pilgrims and emissaries inform us about these social and political developments, initially sporadically and later with greater and greater frequency. Through their distance they saw, as emphasized above, the essential institutional changes at the pinnacle of the state more clearly and impartially than many of the officials of the chancery or court historians of the time.

The most important stages in this long process of the erosion of the non-Mamluk elites' power to the benefit of the sultan and the royal Mamluks who underpinned the system can be briefly summarized. Under Qalāwūn began the displacement of the "turban wearers" from offices traditionally accorded to civilians, such as the vizierate, by true Mamluks (*mukalwatūn*). The next decisive event was the reform, finally successful after many failed attempts, of the army and fiefs by al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in the year 1315. As a result of this, the rulers and sultan's Mamluks were able to secure a greater share of the rural wealth of Egypt at the expense of non-Mamluk groups (such as the *ajnād al-ḥalqah*). Nevertheless, the assumption of power by the oligarchy of generals after the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad still did not mean the end of dynastic continuity at the pinnacle of the

¹¹⁵Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule: Institutions, Waqf and Architecture in Cairo, 16th and 17th Centuries*, Islamic History and Civilization Studies and Texts 7 (Leiden, 1994), 197; al-Ḥusaynī, *Kitāb Nafā' is Majālis al-Sulṭānīyah*, 133 f. In the early fourteenth century, in the struggle between the son of the sultan, al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, and his "purely" Mamluk opponent, Baybars, the formula "*al-mulk 'aqīm*" epitomized the ideal of personal effort over inherited position.

¹¹⁶André Thevet and Jean Chesneau, *Voyages en Égypte 1549-1552*, ed. Frank Lestringant, Collection des voyageurs occidentaux en Égypte 24 (Cairo, 1984), 178: ". . . voire les enfans sortis d'un Mamelu, ne pouvoient estre honorez du tiltre d'hommes d'armes: qui estoit cause, que le Soldan ne pouvoit faire que ses enfans luy succedassent."



state itself. Sultans from the reigning house—Qalāwūn's sons and grandchildren—ruled over Egypt longer than the Ayyubids, although they were born in the land and should have been excluded from power according to stricter Mamluk rules. The longevity of his house was favored by the fact that the Egyptian-born al-Nāṣir was able, with iron self-discipline and determined politicking, to shake the stigma of non-Mamlukdom and was seen by contemporaries as a true and even exemplary Mamluk.

From the end of the fourteenth century, European travel reports are available as a source for these important events. Simone Sigoli cites the reservations, for example, of the caliph to the usurpation of the throne by Barqūq at the expense of the Qalawunids:¹¹⁷ as an illegitimate ruler, he must first buy the loyalty of the amirs.¹¹⁸ Also de Mignanelli, in his report made possible by his intimate proximity to the ruler, Barqūq, emphasizes the at that time still uncontested validity of the dynastic principle. He writes in *Ascensus Barcoch* how it was held against Barqūq that he was a slave, that is, in contrast to all of his predecessors since al-Manṣūr Lājīn, he had come to the throne as a real Mamluk. It is further noted that, in deposing his rival Barakah, he nevertheless had himself sanctioned by the Qalawunid shadow caliph as custom dictated. It required fine maneuvering, according to the author of *Ascensus Barcoch*, well versed in events at the court and in the provinces, but in the end, the rebel Barqūq was able, after two attempts, to ascend to the sultan's throne and depose the last Qalawunids, allies of his opponents.

The next break in this development, the diversion of funds originally earmarked for Barqūq's son to the *dīwān al-mufrad*, was not registered by a single western traveler. Nonetheless, we do hear from Piloti about what was perhaps the most important turning point, in terms of institutional history, in the history of the office of the sultan.¹¹⁹ I am thinking of the execution of Sultan Faraj, the son of Barqūq, in the year 1412. This was done with the blessing of the shadow Caliph al-Musta'īn,¹²⁰ at the behest of al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh, who was so conscious of his own Mamlukdom. The farce that immediately after this event the previously mentioned Abbasid shadow Caliph al-Musta'īn held the throne for a short time, only to be removed soon afterwards once the new strong man had rid himself of

¹¹⁷Sigoli, "Pilgrimage," 175.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 174.

¹¹⁹Piloti, *L'Égypte*, 12-13.

¹²⁰With appeal to supposed violations of the law: "that he has treated infinite pagans [i.e., Muslims] unjustly [*il avait fait infinis payens contre justice*] and that he has eaten pork and drunk wine on Friday . . ." Ibid., 13.



his internal opponents, also found its way into Piloti, though naturally he does not really grasp the institutional impotence of the office of the caliphate.¹²¹

At that time, in 1412, cracks began to appear in the law of the succession of father by son, which had been recognized without question as valid from within and without. This was a relic of the Seljuks and Ayyubids, as whose heirs the Mamluks saw themselves. It becomes predictable that the sons, whose succession was regularly pushed through the election councils composed of the most powerful oligarchs by their fathers before death, will only be left in office as sultan until the victor in the power struggle among full Mamluk competitors is determined. The observations of Schiltberger and Tafur (the latter comments on the career chances of Mamluk sons generally, not only of the princes, or *sīdīs*) reveal a clear hierarchy between the Mamluks of the first generation and their immediate descendents. For the Mamluk descendents of the fourth generation, according to Tafur, the blue blood of their forefathers carries no weight whatsoever.

After a further thirty years, the glut of travel reports begins and we near the end of the sultanate. At this point the hopes of the sons of Mamluks are finished, that is the hope to slip into their father's shoes despite having been born in the wrong place. All of the European reporters corroborate this, as brief, muddled, and biased as their portrayal of the fact may be. The last attempt is made by Qāyrbāy. He has his half-grown son Muḥammad appointed as sultan in his stead while he is still alive and thereby provokes the opposition of the entire Mamluk establishment. In the hundred years from Mignanelli's Barqūq biography to Arnold von Harff's colorful portrayal of the civil war between al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qāyrbāy and his "full Mamluk" challengers, the opinion of the foreigners on what is legitimate has turned 180 degrees. The son of the ruler is at this point no longer destined to succeed as on the basis of his lineage but rather, quite on the contrary, disqualified through his relationship.

¹²¹See *ibid.*, and *ff.*



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Mamluk Egyptian Copper Coinage Before 759/1357-1358: A Preliminary Inquiry

I

Paul Balog's *The Coinage of the Mamluk Sultans of Egypt and Syria* was published in 1964.¹ Contrary to a frequently-encountered belief among Mamlukists, the study of Mamluk money did not end with its appearance. While the *CMSES* (as it will henceforth be referred to) has proved a solid foundation for the subsequent study of Mamluk numismatics and monetary history, it did not solve every problem nor answer every question. There are still several outstanding gaps in our knowledge of Mamluk money. This article sketches out the parameters of one such gap: developments in the copper coinage minted in Cairo for the first century of Mamluk rule.

In the year 759/1357-58, apparently at the instigation of the Amir Sarghitmish, the Mamluk Sultan al-Nāṣir Ḥasan issued new copper coins (often referred to as *al-fulūs al-judud* in the sources) of different appearance and minted to a heavier, fixed weight—the *mithqāl* standard—than those that had circulated previously.² Coins similar to these were minted during the remaining decades of the eighth/fourteenth century, and apparently were struck in such quantities that they circulated well into the next.³ But what was going on before these developments? What is the state of our knowledge about Mamluk *fulūs* before the “new ones?” The obvious starting point in the search for answers is the *CMSES*, where we read:

The weight-unit of the copper coinage since the beginning of the Bahri rule until 759 H, during the second reign of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, was the *dirhem*. At this time the *mithqāl* was officially proclaimed as the unit of weight. Whereas before 759 H. the copper could pass

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¹New York, 1964.

²The coin type is *CMSES* type 369.

³See Warren C. Schultz, “Mahmūd ibn ‘Alī and the ‘New Fulūs’: Late Fourteenth Century Egyptian Fulūs Reconsidered,” *American Journal of Numismatics*, 2nd ser., 10 (1998): 127-48.



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by tale [i.e., by count], even though for modest transactions only, after that time it had to be weighed for any business deal.⁴

In light of the research presented below, several modifications must be made to Balog's assessment. First of all, the situation is quite different depending on whether one is discussing *fulūs* struck in Cairo or in the major Syrian mint cities of Damascus, Ḥamāh, Aleppo and Tripoli.⁵ For reasons explored in the next section, this discussion will be limited to those coins struck in Cairo. Secondly, the numismatic record for Cairene *fulūs* itself is scanty to say the least, and fraught with problems. Thirdly, the surviving literary records reveal a more complex situation for the period "since the beginning of Baḥri rule." And finally, the question why the Mamluk Sultanate would have specified a weight standard for low value copper coinage must be asked.

II

It is useful to preface this discussion with some comments about copper coinages in the medieval Islamic world. Unlike gold and silver coins of a high alloy, copper (and other base metal) coinages have a low intrinsic value, reflecting the lower worth of copper vis-à-vis the precious metals. Copper coins are thus usually described as a fiduciary money, with a higher percentage of their circulating (extrinsic) value determined by factors other than their metallic content. The only ways in which an issuing authority could maintain this higher extrinsic value would be by limiting the number of copper coins it issued and by accepting them in turn as payment for taxes and other transactions.⁶ Failure to do so could result in the coins plummeting in value to a floor provided only by the market value of the metal itself.

⁴*CMSES*, 49. Balog based his analysis here on the compilation of textual citations found in William Popper's *Egypt and Syria under the Circassian Sultans, Systematic Notes to Ibn Taghribirdī's Chronicles of Egypt*, University of California Publications in Semitic Philology, vol. 16 (Berkeley, 1957).

⁵The occasional Mamluk mints of al-Lādhiqīyah, Malatya, and al-Marqab seem to have minted only silver. Copper coins were not struck in Alexandria until 770/1368-69, and thus fall outside of the time period of this study. Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Ighāthat al-Ummah bi-Kashf al-Ghummah*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah and Jamāl al-Dīn Shayyāl (Cairo, 1940), 69.

⁶See Carlo Cipolla, "The Big Problem of the Petty Coins," in *Money, Prices, and Civilization in the Mediterranean World, Fifth to Seventeenth Centuries* (Princeton, 1956), 27-37. Cipolla discusses coins of extremely low silver content in this article, but his analysis holds true for copper-only coins as well. It is worth repeating that despite what is frequently asserted, it is highly unlikely that any pre-modern state could guarantee or enforce exchange rates after a coin entered circulation.



Copper coins are also said to have fulfilled a different role in the marketplace than their precious metal counterparts. Copper coins are often dismissed as merely local coins, good for petty purchases only, and not given the status of legal currency. The reality is more complex, both for questions of legal standing and circulation. For the former, while it is true that gold and silver coins are discussed more frequently than copper coins in the works of major Muslim jurists,⁷ by the Mamluk period it is clear that the role and status of copper coins was of concern to religious scholars.⁸ This is a topic that needs further attention.

In terms of circulation, it must be acknowledged that both textual and archeological evidence suggest that Mamluk copper coins could circulate far from the city of their origin. *Fulūs* from Cairo, for example, circulated as far afield as Jerusalem and its environs,⁹ and possibly in Quṣayr on the Red Sea as well.¹⁰ Nevertheless, it is probably safe to assume that the norm was for these coins to circulate close to their mint of origin. That said, there are immediate differences between the copper issues of Cairo and the Syrian mints for the first century of Mamluk rule. The copper issues of the Syrian mint cities (Damascus, Ḥamāh, Aleppo, Tripoli) are far better known than those from Cairo. Many more Syrian types and actual specimens are known to us, although few studies of these coins have been published.¹¹ These Syrian *fulūs* vary tremendously in their appearance,

⁷See Robert Brunschvig, "Conceptions monétaires chez les juristes musulmans (VIIIe-XIIIe siècles)," *Arabica* 14 (1967): 113-43; and A. L. Udovitch, *Partnership and Profit in Medieval Islam* (Princeton, 1970).

⁸As is well known, al-Maqrīzī's screeds against copper coinage pepper his *Ighāthah* and *Shudhūr al-Nuqūd fī Dhikr al-Nuqūd*. Al-Suyūfī also discusses copper coinage in a *fatwā*, "Qaṭ' al-Mujādalah 'inda Taghyīr al-Mu'āmalah," cited by Christopher Toll, "Minting Technique according to Arabic Literary Sources," *Oriental Suecana* 19-20 (1970-71): 125-37. An as yet unexploited resource are the Mamluk-era *fiqh* manuals. Rafaat El Nabarawy has drawn attention to one such manuscript, Ibn Hayyim's "Nuzhat al-Nufūs fī Bayān Ḥukm al-Ta'āmul bi-al-Fulūs" preserved in the Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah MS 1073 *fiqh shāfi'ī*. See his "Maskūkāt al-Mamālīk al-Jirākisah fī Miṣr," Ph.D. diss., University of Cairo, 1981, p. *yā'*.

⁹Ibn Hayyim, "Nuzhat al-Nufūs," mentioned Cairene coppers circulating in Jerusalem (cited by El Nabarawy, "Maskūkāt al-Mamālīk," p. *yā'*). This observation is also supported by many small hoards of copper coins preserved at the Israel Antiquities Authority, wherein Cairene coppers are found mixed with *fulūs* from the Syrian mints. The author gratefully acknowledges the permission of Ruth Peled and the assistance of D. T. Ariel in examining these coins. While it is true that archeological finds alone do not prove zones of circulation, in this case the correlation of both literary and archeological evidence supports the assertion that Cairene coppers did indeed circulate in Jerusalem.

¹⁰This is clear from the archeological excavations done at the site, which revealed copper coins from Cairo and other Mamluk cities. Permission to examine the coins found at Quṣayr and preserved at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago was granted by Donald Whitcomb.

¹¹The important study by Lutz Ilisch, "The emission of copper coins in 8th century H. Mamluk



and make frequent use of heraldic-type designs and decorations. The situation is made more complex by the fact that many coppers of clear Syrian provenance lack a mint name. They also exhibit extreme metrological variance from type to type and across mint. The issues of each of these Syrian mints is deserving of their own study. For these reasons, I will limit my discussion to Cairene *fulūs* only.

Finally, as was the case for gold and silver, there were no functioning mines for copper in the Mamluk domains.¹² Metal for minting *fulūs* had to come from either existing stocks of copper (in the form of older coins or in other goods such as plate, etc.) or was purchased from external sources.

III

The numismatic and the literary records are clear that the Ayyubid rulers of Egypt minted copper coins.¹³ The Mamluks thus inherited a monetary market place in which coins of gold, silver, and copper circulated. Unfortunately, while copper coins are mentioned in the sources with some frequency, actual copper coins from the first century of Mamluk rule are rather rare. There are only 16 types that have thus far been linked to Cairo by the *CMSES* and subsequent scholarship. These types, along with two other possible Cairene types, are listed in Figure 1. Obviously, there are significant gaps in this record. Coins have been definitively linked to only four sultans out of a possible 21 rulers from Shajar al-Durr to the second reign of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan.¹⁴ Clearly there is much numismatic spade work to be done. Three problems seem especially important to me as illustrative of the difficulties faced in studying the copper coinage of this period.

The first concerns the *fulūs* of al-Zāhir Baybars.¹⁵ The only mint name found on his surviving coins thus far is Damascus. Most of his copper coins are without

Syria," delivered at the Balog Memorial Symposium in 1988, is unpublished.

¹²Āfiyah, Muḥammad Sāmiḥ, *Ta'dīn fī Miṣr Qadīman wa-Ḥadīthan* (Cairo:,1985), vol. 1, *Al-Ta'dīn al-Qadīm fī Miṣr*, 215. Cf. Adel Allouche, *Mamluk Economics* (Salt Lake City, 1994), 18.

¹³After several centuries in which copper coins were apparently not minted in Egypt, the Ayyubid al-Mālik al-Kāmil (615-35/1218-38) ordered the striking of *fulūs*. For a discussion of this event, see Hassanein Rabie, *The Financial System of Egypt, AH 564-741/1169-1341* (London, 1972), 182-83; the story of the woman and the water seller is surely apocryphal. This episode is also discussed by Claude Cahen, "Monetary Circulation in Egypt at the time of the Crusades and the Reform of al-Kāmil," in *The Islamic Middle East, 700-1900*, ed. A. L. Udovitch (Princeton, 1982), 315-33.

¹⁴This ignores the Syrian-based "revolts" and claims of Sinjār and Sunqur. For the Syrian *fulūs* struck by Sunqur, see Balog, "Un fals d'al-Kāmil Shams al-Dīn Sunqur, sultan mamelouk rebelle de Damas," *Revue numismatique*, ser. 6, vol. 15 (1973): 177-79.

¹⁵See *CMSES* types 94-103.



mint name. For good reason, many of these mint-less coins have been linked to other Syrian cities, notably Ḥamāh.¹⁶ However, it is of course possible that some of the coin-types lacking a mint name were struck in Cairo. That this is so is one probable repercussion of the fact that mint-less coins of Baybars were found in the digs at Fustāṭ.¹⁷

A second problem lies in the copper coins of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.¹⁸ The entire coinage of this sultan awaits an in-depth analysis. His *fulūs*, in particular, are little understood. Many are mint-less and most types lack dates. The few that have dates are from his third reign only. More seem to be from Syria than Cairo. When faced with the difficulties of sorting and attributing this coinage, Balog placed it all in his discussion of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's third reign (709-41/1309-40) for "practical purposes."¹⁹ A perusal of this section of the *CMSES*, however, reveals that some of the copper coins attributed to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad by Balog bear only the regnal title *al-Malik al-Nāṣir* or even just *al-Nāṣir*. Note that it is possible that coins featuring only the regnal title *al-Nāṣir* and without personal name could also be al-Nāṣir Ḥasan, or for that matter any of the other Mamluk sultans who adopted this sobriquet. Balog argued against this, stating that the copper coins of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan have a "different style of design" than those of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.²⁰ He was doubtless referring to the "new *fulūs*" minted in 759 and after; these coins are clearly different from what is known to have preceded them, and are immediately recognizable. However, it must be emphasized that these "different" coins appeared only in 759, towards the end of the second of two reigns of al-Nāṣir Ḥasan (748-52/1347-51 and 755-62/1354-61). The question remains: did al-Nāṣir Ḥasan order the minting of copper coins in the years before 759? As of yet, no coins of Cairo for Ḥasan before 759 have been found, possibly because no one has been looking for them. It is possible that some of them are mixed in with the issues of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. The lucky appearance of an overstrike or odd die link would be most helpful in this matter.

Furthermore, many of these coins are thus far only known in a few specimens. I have been able to locate and study only four examples of Quṭuz's type #26, for

¹⁶Lorenz Korn, *Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum Tübingen: Ḥamāh IV c Bilād aš-Šām III* (Berlin, 1998), 26.

¹⁷I have examined six of these Fustāṭ coins of Baybars. They are preserved in the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. My thanks to Raymond Tindel for his assistance in viewing these coins.

¹⁸*CMSES* types 214-65, pp. 147-63. An initial attempt at making sense of this complex copper series is Nuha N. N. Khoury's "The Copper Coinage of al-Nasir Muhammad b. Qala'un," unpublished paper, 1986 American Numismatic Society Summer Graduate Seminar.

¹⁹*CMSES*, 125.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 163.



example, and only six of Qalāwūn's type #140. The exceptions to this issue of scarcity are the later types of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā'īl. Thanks to two hoards, both published by Balog, several hundred of these coins are known and available for study.²¹ Nevertheless, given the paucity of surviving specimens, the publication of more specimens of already known rare types would not be mere duplication but significant contributions to our knowledge, making possible more comprehensive studies of the *fulūs* of the first Mamluk century.

IV

In contrast to the scanty numismatic record, the Mamluk literary sources contain many remarks about the Cairene *fulūs* in the first decades of Mamluk rule. Copper coins are mentioned in various contexts, ranging from lists of prices to exchange rates to the description of innovations in the way in which *fulūs* were valued. The earliest mention of this last sort of comment refers to events of the year 695/1295-96, during the reign of the sultan Kitbughā.²² It is found in al-Maqrīzī's *Ighāthah*, and is worth quoting in its entirety.

When al-'Ādil Kitbughā became sultan, . . . the injustices of the vizir Fakhr al-Dīn 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Khalīlī became more frequent, and the members of the sultan's entourage and his mamluks oppressed the population. Because all were greedy in [accumulating] wealth and receiving bribes and protection money, new *fulūs* were minted. These were *so light* that people avoided them. Hence it was proclaimed in 695/1295-96 that *they would be valued by weight and that one fals would be the weight of one dirham* [of minted copper]. Then it was announced that the exchange rate of one *raṭl* of *fulūs* would be two [silver] *dirhams*. *This was*

²¹Balog, "Trésor de monnaies en cuivre Mamelouks Bahrides," *Annali d'Instituto Italiano di Numismatica* 23-24 (1976-77): 199-215; idem, "Three Hoards of Mamluk Coins," *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* 16 (1970): 173-78. The "Annali" hoard of 668 pieces is particularly important. These coins are recognizable by their "chocolate-brown" patina. The bulk of this hoard remained in Balog's personal collection. This important collection is now preserved at the Israel Museum, where I was able to weigh these coins, many of them for the first time. I would like to thank Yaakov Meshorer and Haim Gitler for their assistance in studying the Balog collection.

²²A supposed development in Mamluk *fulūs* said to have occurred in 650/1252-53 did not in fact occur. It is the result of an editing error in the text of al-Maqrīzī's *Ighāthah*, 70. The actual events described in that passage took place "after 750" and not "after 650" as the editors put it. See W. Schultz, "Mamluk Money from Baybars to Barquq," Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1995, 190-92.



*the first time in Egypt that [the value of] the fulūs was determined by weight and not by tale.*²³ (emphasis added)

Several items in this passage require further comment. There are two “firsts” mentioned in this passage, one explicitly and the other implicitly. The “explicit” first is al-Maqrīzī’s last sentence; that this event marked the first time that the value of Egyptian copper coins was determined by their weight and not count. This is problematic, in light of evidence discussed below. The “implicit” first in the passage is al-Maqrīzī’s assertion that the weight of a single copper coin was set at one *dirham*.²⁴ This is the earliest known (to us) citation that pegs Mamluk *fulūs* to a specific weight standard. If true, it places the establishment of a weight standard for the copper coins not at the beginning of the Bahri period, but more than four decades into the sultanate. More importantly, if true, it inserts a new factor in the determination of value of these coins.

Prior to this development, if the weight of earlier copper coins did not matter, then the sole determinant of value was quantity. The more coins one possessed, the more money one had in one’s possession. This is the normal situation expected when dealing with a fiduciary coinage of low intrinsic worth. Of course the value of the coins could be lowered by a number of factors, chief among them the failure of the mint to limit the numbers minted, but it would not make a difference if some coins were heavier than others.²⁵ If this were the case in Egypt prior to 695, however, why then would the people reject “lightweight” copper coins as asserted in the above passage? How could a coin be described as lightweight if no weight standard had been specified?

The answers to these questions lie in an analysis of al-Maqrīzī’s assertion that the year 695/1295-96 marked the first time the value of copper coins was determined by weight. Specifically, we must explore the math behind the exchange rates

²³Allouche, *Mamluk Economics*, 71. The original Arabic is found in the *Ighāthah*, 70, but see also 37-38. Al-Maqrīzī gave no source for his account of this event, which took place well before his birth. It is probable that the ultimate source for this account was a now-lost section of the history of al-Yūsufī. This is warranted by the observation that a similar account (lacking a few details) is also found in Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-‘Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo, 1987-91), 3:303. The dependence of both al-Maqrīzī and al-‘Aynī on al-Yūsufī has been established by Donald P. Little, “The Recovery of a Lost Source for Bāḥrī Mamlūk History: al-Yūsufī’s *Nuzhat al-Nāzir fī Šīrat al-Malik al-Nāšir*,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94 (1974): 42-54.

²⁴Note that the term “*dirham*” is both the generic name for a silver coin, a unit of account used in valuation, and a weight unit of approximately three grams. In this case it is clearly used to signify a weight unit. See George C. Miles, “Dirham,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 2:319-20.

²⁵Therefore I must disagree with Rabie, who posits the existence of “lightweight” copper coins in the early Bahri period (*Financial System*, 188).



along with a closer examination of other contemporary textual sources. Al-Maqrīzī wrote that the exchange rate of these new copper coins was set at one *raṭl* of *fulūs* equal to two silver *dirham* coins. In Egypt at that time, a *raṭl* was a unit of weight equivalent to 144 *dirham* weight units. If the exchange rate cited above is correct, the math is quite simple. With their weight fixed at one *dirham*, 144 of the new copper coins of 695 would weigh a *raṭl*, and collectively be worth two silver *dirhams*. Thus 72 of these *fulūs* would equal one silver coin.²⁶ If the new *fulūs* were prepared with care and indeed weighed a *dirham*, the holder of the coppers desiring to use them in a commercial transaction could either count out the coins or weigh them to reach the desired amount, for the resulting sums would be equivalent. Thus a customer could count out 18 *fulūs* to purchase an item priced at a quarter-*dirham*, but then for an item priced at four silver *dirhams*, he could weigh out four *raṭls* of *fulūs* rather than count out 288 separate coins. But other than the ease with which such interchangeability must have aided transactions, what else could have been behind the establishment of a weight standard for low value copper coins?

The establishment of a weight standard may also be explained as an attempt to minimize the harm that was evidently being done to those using *fulūs* by the way in which copper coins had previously been valued in the marketplace. This explanation is based on the fact that al-Maqrīzī was wrong in his assertion that 695 was the first time Mamluk copper had passed by weight (the explicit first mentioned above). Other Mamluk sources mention two instances in the two years preceding 695 where the copper:silver exchange rate specified the total weight of copper coins required to buy a silver coin but not their number. According to al-Suyūfī (like al-Maqrīzī a ninth/fifteenth century source), in 693/1293-94 it took one *ūqīyah* of copper coins to equal one-quarter of a silver *dirham*.²⁷ At twelve *ūqīyahs* to the *raṭl*, this would result in an exchange of one *raṭl* of copper coins worth three silver *dirhams*. Al-Suyūfī then mentioned that the rate subsequently fell to one *raṭl* of copper equal to two silver coins, a rate corroborated for 694/1294-95 by al-Maqrīzī in his *Sulūk*, (and also cited as the rate reaffirmed in 695).²⁸ In

²⁶This exchange rate represents a devaluation of the copper:silver ratio found much earlier in the seventh/thirteenth century. In 622/1225 it took 48 *fulūs* to buy one good silver coin, and 16 to purchase one low silver coin. The exchange rates quoted in most discussions of al-Kāmil's reforms of that year usually fail to differentiate between the types of silver coins available in the market. See Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab* (Cairo, 1964-), 29:131, n. 2, but note that the editors mistakenly identify a *dirham wariq* as a high silver content coin.

²⁷Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī, *Husn al-Muḥādarah fī Akhbār Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Cairo, 1904), 2:177. See also Popper, *Egypt and Syria*, 67.

²⁸Al-Suyūfī, *Husn*, 2:177; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma'rifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad



neither of these years is the number of copper coins necessary to reach the required weight specified. Thus we are left to conclude that prior to 695 no weight standard had yet been fixed for the copper coins. What was important was the total weight of copper coins required to exchange for a silver *dirham*, not their number. In effect, copper coins had become little copper ingots, valued at or slightly above their copper content. In such a context, a heavier coin would be worth more than a lighter one.

The events leading up to 695 reveal a fundamental tension that apparently existed up to the last decade of the seventh/thirteenth century. This tension resulted in different rules in effect for transactions involving copper coins depending on whether the transaction was small or large. Simply stated, it meant that those who held lighter-weight coins would always face the potential of loss in value when they tried to use those *fulūs* in large scale transactions. If, for example, a baker sold loaves of bread for a single *fals* or two per loaf, it is likely that he accepted these coins by tale. Yet if he had to pay for his silver *dirhams'* worth of wheat using several *raṭls* of these same coins (as was evidently the case in 693-94), he would need more of the light-weight coins to make the desired exchange weight. It is no wonder that before 695 the Cairenes are said to have refused to use the lighter-weight coins said to have been issued by Kitbughā's minions. Since the exchange rate for larger transactions was already two *raṭls* of copper coins per silver *dirham*, it would have required more of the newer coins to reach that weight.

Once the weight of individual copper coins was standardized, however, the number of copper coins necessary to total a *raṭl* would remain relatively constant. If the individual *fals* weighed a *dirham*, then it should always take 144 of these *fulūs* to reach a *raṭl*. Of course the value of that *raṭl* of *fulūs* vis-à-vis silver *dirhams* could change in response to any number of market factors, but by minting copper coins to a specified weight standard, the nameless officials responsible were in effect attempting to guarantee the extrinsic value of coined copper. Given these circumstances, a weight standard for the *fulūs* can be seen for what it was, an attempt to ensure that the same petty coins could be used in confidence both by tale and by weight.

I have discussed this account in some detail because it sets the parameters of all subsequent *fals* crises of the remainder of the period under consideration here. In every example, the *fulūs* are said to circulate at an established rate of exchange until the presence of lighter coins (either officially minted or perhaps counterfeits) forces a drop in the copper:silver exchange rate, which in turn causes upheaval in the marketplaces of Cairo. This brings about the minting of new full-weight coins which circulate at the old exchange rate. The old *fulūs* are usually said to have decreased in value, taking many more of them to equal a silver *dirham* than



before. This basic cycle of events is mentioned at least four more times in the Mamluk sources for the period up to 759.

The first such occurs in 705/1305-6, during the second reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.²⁹ The next crisis of *fulūs* falls in the years 720-21/1320-22, during the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. This episode is noteworthy because some of the new full-weight coins issued in response to the turmoil are said to have included a "heraldic napkin" (*buqjah*) in their design as a way to differentiate them from the preceding coins.³⁰ This account is closely followed by the events of 724/1323-24.³¹ The final example occurs in 745/1344-45, during the reign of al-Šāliḥ Ismā'īl.³² While the odd detail may vary between these accounts, the basic pattern is very familiar.³³

It remains to be seen if the numismatic evidence corroborates the above analysis. Here the scantiness of this evidence proves an obstacle. There are no known Egyptian *fulūs* from the reign of Kitbughā, for example, and there are very few known from the sultans before him, so we are unable to mesh the account of 695 with precise numismatic data. Yet the surviving coins are not entirely mute concerning the possible establishment of a *dirham*-weight *fals* in or around 695. There do exist five measurable samples of coins that fall on either side of that date. These samples allow us to ascertain if a weight standard was ever established for *fulūs* during the first century of Mamluk rule.

Muṣṭafá Ziyādah and Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr (Cairo, 1934-73), 1:810.

²⁹Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:17. See also al-'Aynī, *Iqd*, 4:410, where there is no mention of the minting of new coins, and K. V. Zetterstéen, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Mamlukensultane in den Jahren 690-741 Higra, nach arabischen Handschriften* (Leiden, 1919), 132, for an even briefer account. Al-Maqrīzī's passage reads "in that year economic transactions in Cairo ceased due to the increase of the number of *fulūs* as well as [an increase] in the lightweight *fulūs*. . . . New *fulūs* were ordered struck and the lightweight *fulūs* were exchanged at the rate of two and one half [silver *dirhams*] per *raṭl*, and business resumed."

³⁰Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:205-6; cf. Rabie, *Financial System*, 195-96. J. W. Allan has argued that this rhomboid is but a frame for the words it surrounds and not necessarily a heraldic device. See his "Mamluk Sultan Heraldry and the Numismatic Evidence: A Reinterpretation," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1970): 99-112, especially 100.

³¹Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:253, idem, *Al-Mawā'iz wa-al-I'tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār* (Bulaq, 1270/1853-54), 2:148-49; Abū al-Maḥāsīn Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Cairo, 1942), 9:77; al-Suyūfī, *Ḥusn*, 2:180. There is no evidence to support the weight standard of a "dirham and one-eighth" cited by the editors of the *Sulūk*, and repeated in the text notes of the *Nujūm*.

³²Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:669.

³³All except the last are discussed in Rabie, *Financial System*, 195-97.



The sole anterior sample is that of the Ayyubid Cairene *fulūs* of al-Kāmil Muḥammad and al-Šāliḥ Ayyūb.³⁴ While they were minted several decades before Kitbughā's reign, they do provide a baseline against which the early Mamluk *fulūs* may be compared. The weights of 85 of these coins are plotted in a frequency table (Fig. 2).³⁵ The wide range of coin weights—from less than 1.40 to more than 4.90 grams—and utter lack of a pronounced peak in any weight interval are strong visual proof that these Ayyubid coppers were not struck to a weight standard. It is safe to conclude, therefore, that if a weight standard for copper coins is subsequently encountered, it is of Mamluk origin.

The remaining four coin samples date from after the reign of Kitbughā. Three are dated to the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, and the fourth to the reign of al-Šāliḥ Ismā'īl. Figure 3 tabulates the earliest sample from the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, struck during the years 710-12/1310-13. The sample consists of twelve coins dated 710, and fourteen additional coins which, while undated, can be assigned to this period on stylistic grounds.³⁶ While this period does not match up with any of the crises noted above, these coins represent the closest available chronological set of data to the events of 695, and therefore should be examined. The weights of these 26 coins are plotted on Figure 3. The sample is admittedly quite small, but the peak interval (2.80-2.89 grams) is noteworthy. It falls close to the value of approximately 3.00 grams which is the weight usually associated with the *dirham*-weight unit in the Mamluk era.³⁷ Nine of the 26 coins fall in that range. While it would be unwise to build an argument on such a tiny sample, this graph—with its pronounced peak and tight cluster of 25 of the 26 coins—suggests at the very minimum that more attention was being paid to the weight of the *fulūs*.

The next set of coins can be clearly linked to the events of 720-21 mentioned above. This is evident from the *buqjah* which is quite prominent in the coin design. A small sample of 15 of these coins is tabulated in Figure 4. The shape of the graph is similar to Figure 3, albeit shifted slightly to the left on the horizontal

³⁴While the Egyptian coppers of al-Kāmil Muḥammad are mint-less, they are attributed to Cairo by archeological evidence. See Michael Bates, "The Function of Fatimid and Ayyubid Glass Weights," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 24 (1981): 65, n. 8.

³⁵A frequency table plots the number of coins on one axis against weight units on the other axis, and is a useful tool for illustrating metrological aspects of a coinage sample. The author would like to thank the many curators and private collectors who graciously made the collections in their care available for this metrological analysis.

³⁶The coins in question are *CMSES* types 231-2. For a discussion of the style of these coins, see Khoury, "The Copper Coinage of al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qala'un," 14-15.

³⁷For the range of values for such units as the *dirham* and *mithqāl*, see my forthcoming "Mamluk Metrology and the Numismatic Evidence."



axis. The sample is too small to safely confirm or deny the existence of a weight standard, yet it does establish a base set of data to which future specimens may be added in the hope of eventually corroborating the literary accounts of this coinage. Still, if a *dirham* weight standard of approximately 3.00 grams was in place, the peak interval (2.50-2.59 grams) raises the possibility that this sample itself contains examples of the light-weight counterfeit coins mentioned by al-Maqrīzī in his accounts of the *buqjah* coinage.

The third and final batch of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's coins studied contains 299 specimens of an epigraphic design.³⁸ These coins are undated, but can be placed with confidence in the last decade of his rule. Several factors support this attribution, the most important being the extremely close resemblance of these coins to the dated issues of Damascus from 735-41/1334-40.³⁹ (This is, incidentally, one of the few instances in which there appears to have been coordination in the minting of *fulūs* between Cairo and one of the Syrian mints. The significance of this awaits further study.) While this sample of coins does not chronologically match any of the incidents mentioned above, its size makes it a valuable source of metrological information. The weights of these coins are plotted in Figure 5. This frequency table has the prototypical bell-shaped curve that is expected when charting a coinage prepared to a fixed weight standard. The coins are tightly clustered around the peak interval of 2.90-2.99 grams. The average weight of the sample is 2.98 grams. Given the *dirham*-weight unit of about 3.00 grams for the Mamluk period, this data does indeed support the conclusion that by the fourth decade of the eighth/fourteenth century, Egyptian copper coins were being struck to the *dirham*-weight standard.

This standard was evidently continued into at least the reign of al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā'īl (743-46/1342-45). A sample of 188 coins dated 745-46 and bearing the name of this sultan is plotted in Figure 6.⁴⁰ With these dates, these coins are strongly linked to the episode of *fulūs* crisis in 745 discussed by al-Maqrīzī. While the curve is not the perfect bell-shape seen in Figure 5, it is a tightly packed histogram, suggesting close attention was paid to coin weight. The most interesting feature of the table is clearly the large number of coins that fall in the intervals 3.00 to 3.09 and 3.10 to 3.19 grams. This would suggest either that the coins were struck to a

³⁸These coins are *CMSES* types 220-1. A total of 275 of these coins came from the hoard published by Balog as "Tresor de Monnais en cuivre Mamlouks Bahrides" (see note 21). Balog provided less than 20 weights in this article. Balog identified 263 coins as type 220-1. The additional 12 are the result of my attribution.

³⁹The Damascene coins are *CMSES* types 222-226. For this and other stylistic reasons, Khoury also attributes these Cairene coppers to the latter years of his reign. (Khoury, "The Copper Coinage of al-Nasir Muhammad ibn Qala'un," 17-18.

⁴⁰These coins are *CMSES* types 285-6.



standard slightly higher than the *dirham*-weight unit, or that the *dirham*-weight unit was slightly heavier than previously assumed, but final word on this should be postponed until more specimens of these types are known and weighed.

V

Lastly, in light of this discussion of the literary and numismatic evidence, what conclusions can be drawn for the first century of Mamluk Egyptian *fulūs*? First, given the uneven quality of the numismatic evidence, any conclusions must be painted in the broadest possible strokes. A corollary of this is that the literary and numismatic evidence simply do not correlate closely. Coins discussed by the chronicles in certain years are often rare or even unknown, and those coins that do survive in large numbers are often not mentioned by the surviving literary sources at all. Thankfully, the possibilities for meshing chronicle and coin improve after this first century of Mamluk rule.

Secondly, we must back away from Balog's assertion that the *dirham*-weight standard was in place for the copper coins from the beginning of the Bahri period. The first mention of such a standard does not appear until 695, and the available numismatic evidence does not begin to support such an assertion until the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. Figure 2 is proof that the Ayyubids did not utilize a standard weight *fals*. For the next eight decades we simply do not have enough coins to work with. It is only with Figure 5, plotting coins attributed to the late 730s, that we have a statistically viable sample indicating a weight standard was in use, and that that weight standard is close to the 3.00 gram range usually associated with the *dirham*-weight.

Thirdly, what was gained by the institution of a weight standard for the *fulūs*? Seen in the light of how copper coins circulated and were exchanged, the establishment of such a standard is best viewed as an attempt to insure that *fulūs* could be used for both small-scale and larger transactions; that those who took them by tale could also use them by weight. The fact that the 759 reform featuring *mithqāl*-weight coppers was maintained for more than three decades—the situation did not disintegrate until the 790s—further indicates that fixing the weights of Egyptian copper coins was an effective measure.

And finally, there is still work to be done in Mamluk numismatics and monetary history.



The following types have been identified. "Epigraphic" means that the most noteworthy feature of coins is their legend. They lack a clearly identifying symbol or design. Unless specifically mentioned otherwise, references are to Balog's *CMSES*.

| Name: | Date: | Comments: |
|----------------------------------|--------|---|
| <i>Quṭuz</i> Type #26 | 658 | epigraphic |
| <i>Qalāwūn</i> #140 | 678 | epigraphic |
| #140A | ND | epigraphic (Balog 1970) |
| #140B | ND | epigraphic (<i>Annali</i> 23) |
| <i>al-Nāṣir Muḥammad</i> #232 | 710 | each side features a central circle, in which is found "Muḥammad" on one side, and "Qalāwūn" on the other. |
| #242 | 720 | <i>buqjah</i> -type, c.f. #244, Damascus mint |
| #243 | 721 | <i>buqjah</i> -type |
| #219B | ND | epigraphic (<i>Annali</i> 23) |
| #220 | ND | epigraphic, similar legends found on #222-226, all Damascus, dated 736-41. |
| #220A | ND | epigraphic (<i>Annali</i> 23) variant of 220 |
| #220B | ND | epigraphic (<i>Annali</i> 23) variant of 220 |
| #221 | ND | epigraphic |
| #221A | (7)39 | epigraphic (<i>Annali</i> 23) |
| #231 | ND | one side features a central circle in which is found "Muḥammad." The other side is epigraphic. |
| <i>al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā'īl</i> #285 | 745 | legends enclosed in cross shaped cartouche on one side, in a linear square standing on edge, with arabesque knot in each corner, on the other |
| #286 | 746 | as above |
| #290 | DM | <i>dirham</i> -type dies? Attribution to Cairo is uncertain. |
| <i>al-Ṣāliḥ Ṣāliḥ</i> # __ | 753(?) | tentative attribution of coin in the ANS collection |

Figure 1. Mamluk Copper Coinage of Cairo, 650-759



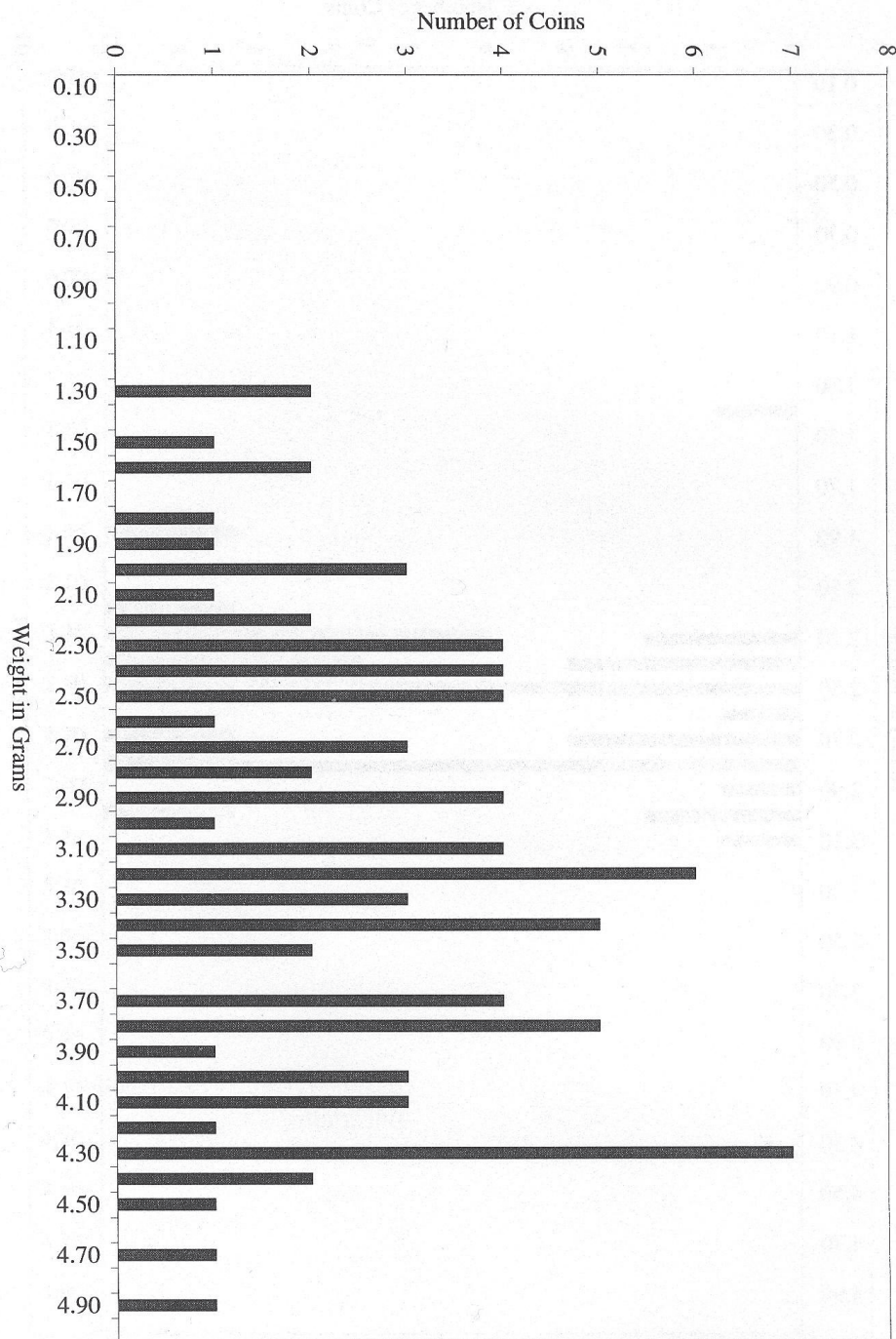


Figure 2. Avvubid *Fulūs* from Cairo (85 coins)



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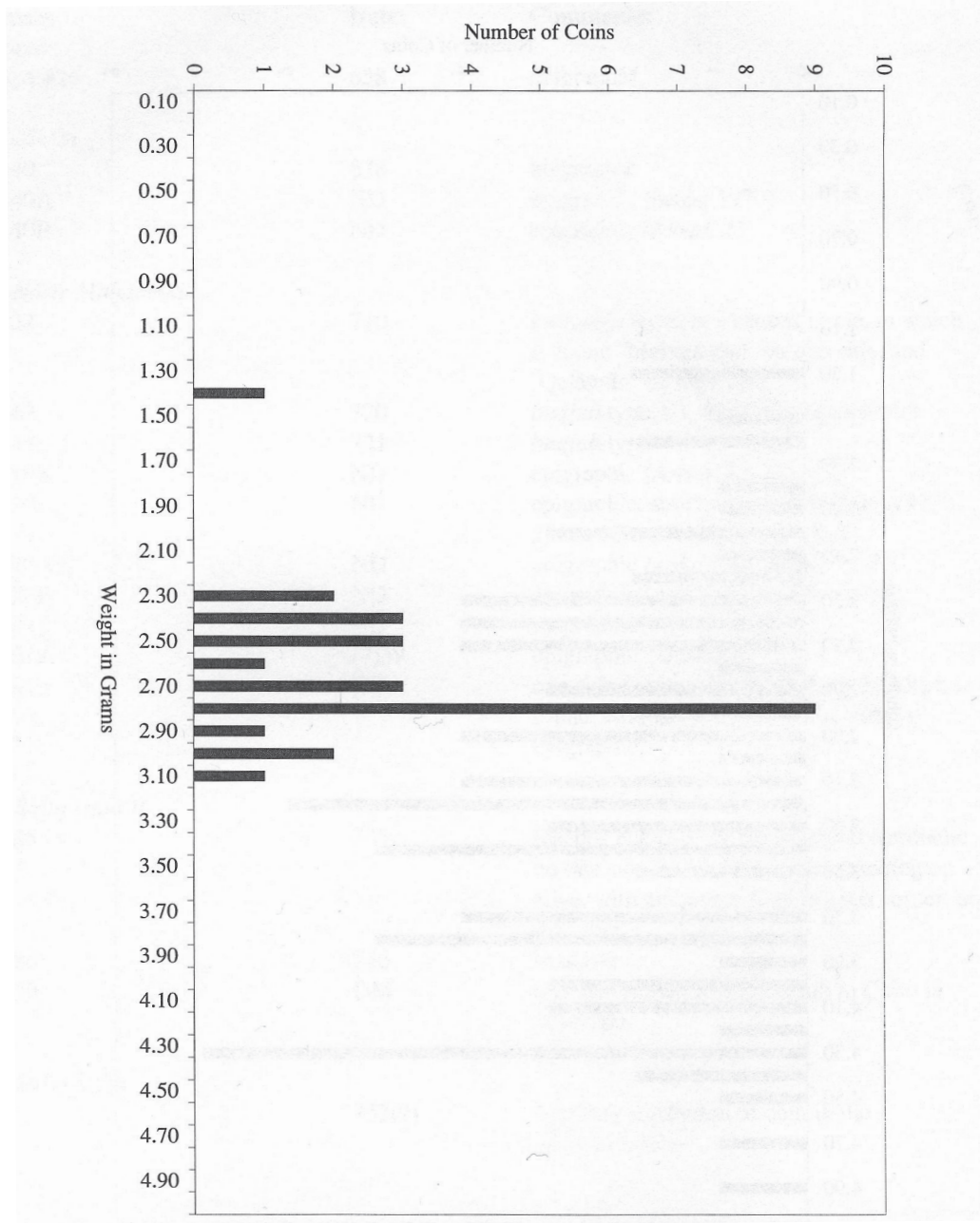


Figure 3. Cairo *Fulūs* of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, *CMSES* type 231-2 (26 coins)



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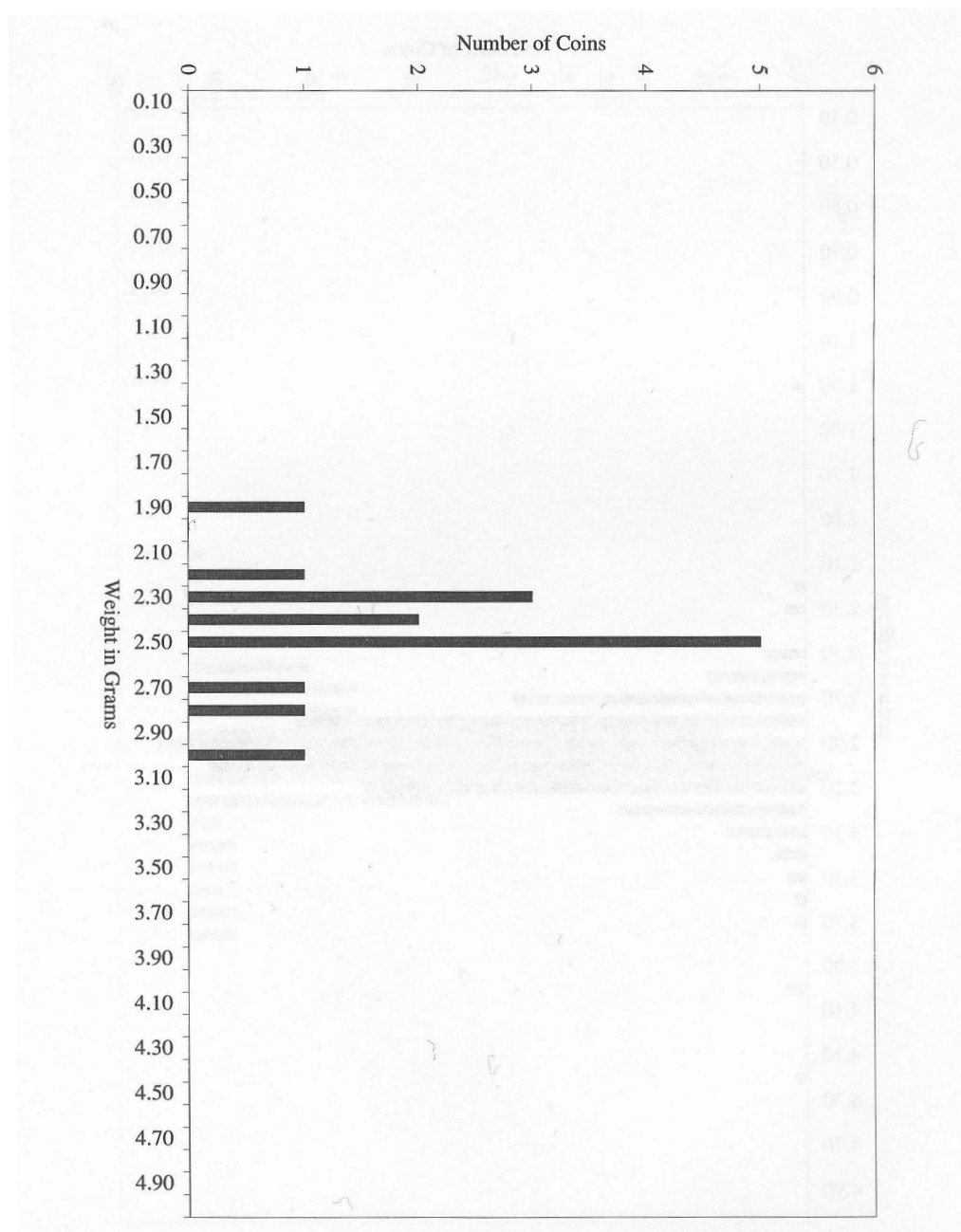


Figure 4. Cairo *Fulūs* of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, *CMSES* type 242-3 (15 coins)



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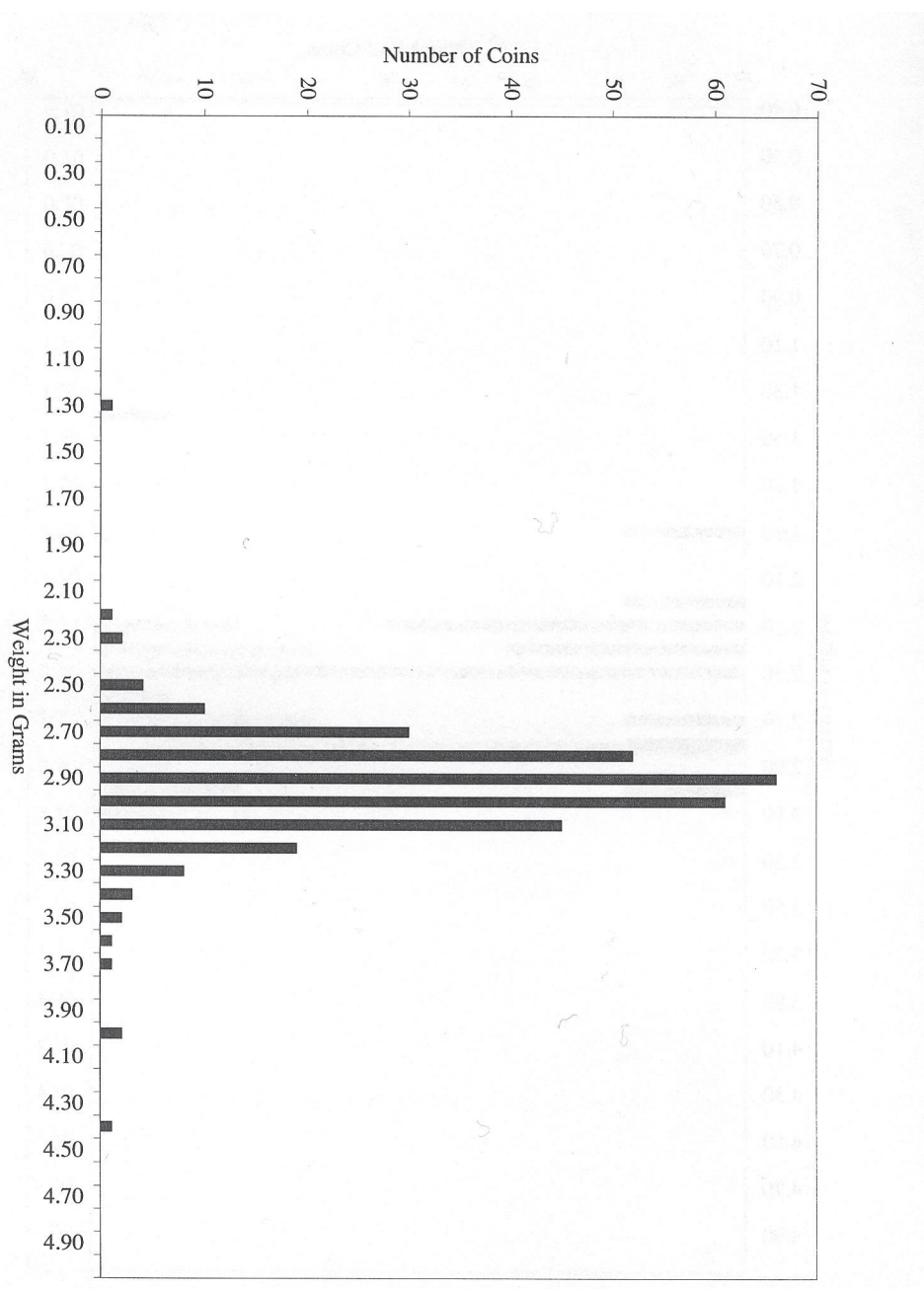


Figure 5. Cairo *Fulūs* of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, *CMSES* type 220-1 (299 coins)



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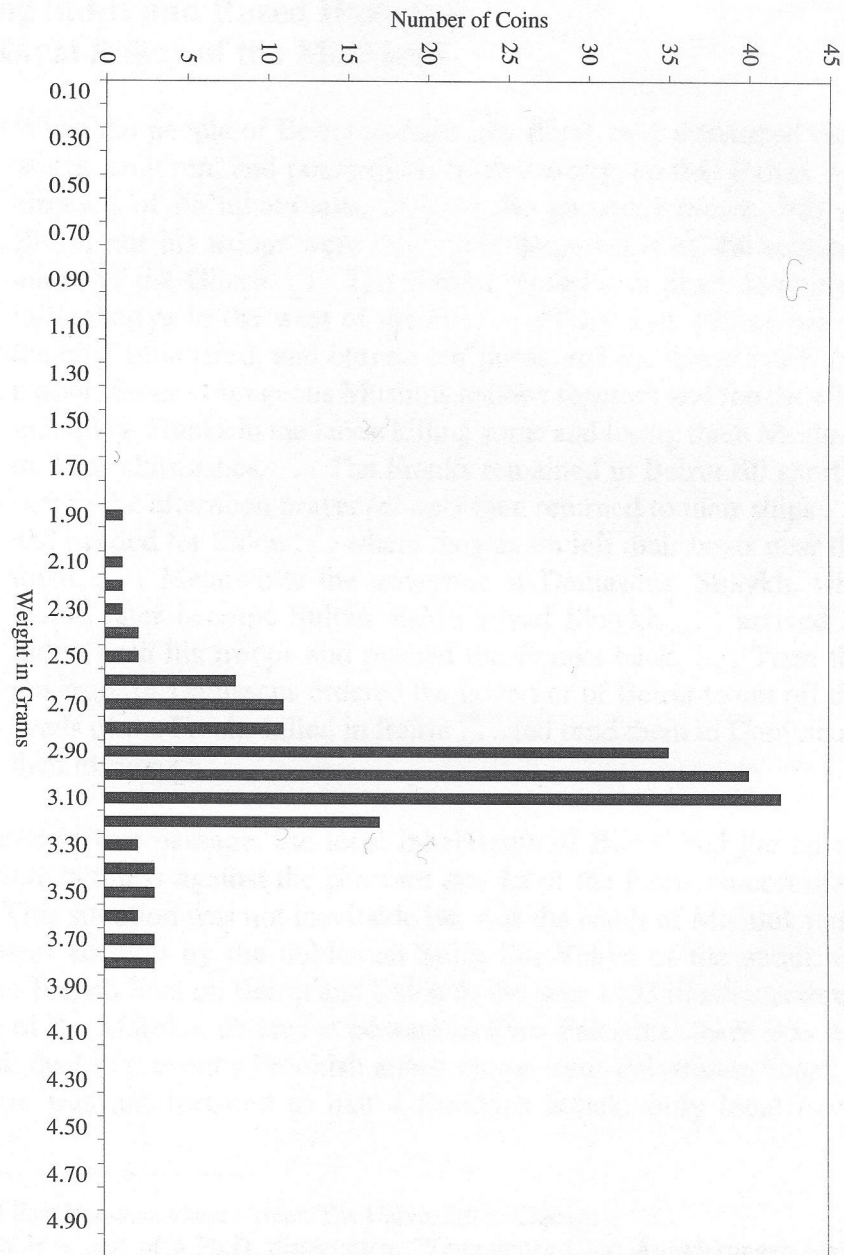


Figure 6. Cairo *Fulūs* of al-Şālih Ismā’īl, *CMSES* type 285-86 (188 coins)



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ALBRECHT FUESS
UNIVERSITY OF COLOGNE

Rotting Ships and Razed Harbors: The Naval Policy of the Mamluks*

When the people of Beirut noticed [the fleet], they evacuated their wives, children, and possessions from the city, so that Beirut was emptied of its inhabitants. Neither the governor (*mutawallī*) of Beirut nor his troops were there, just the soldiers of the regional amirs of the Gharb. . . . The Franks landed at a place known as al-Ṣanbaṭīya in the west of the city. . . . They took possession of the city, plundered, and burned our house and the market near the harbor. Some courageous Muslims banded together and fought with individual Franks in the lanes, killing some and losing three Muslims in these skirmishes. . . . The Franks remained in Beirut till shortly before the afternoon prayer (*al-aṣr*) then returned to their ships . . . and headed for Sidon . . . where they again left their boats near the town. . . . Meanwhile the governor of Damascus, Shaykh, who would later become Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh . . . arrived in Sidon with his troops and pushed the Franks back. . . . Then the governor of Damascus ordered the governor of Beirut to cut off the heads of the Franks killed in Beirut . . . and send them to Damascus, then to Egypt.¹

As related in this passage, the local inhabitants of Beirut and the other coastal cities were helpless against the constant attacks of the Frankish corsairs on their towns. This situation was not inevitable but was the result of Mamluk policy. This eyewitness account by the nobleman Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá of the attack of a joint Genoese-French fleet on Beirut and Sidon in the year 1403 illustrates three crucial aspects of the Mamluk defensive posture in Syro-Palestine: there was no regular Mamluk fleet to prevent a Frankish attack on the Syro-Palestinian coast; Beirut at that time was not fortified to halt a Frankish attack; only local troops were

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*This article is part of a Ph.D. dissertation, "Verbranntes Ufer: Auswirkungen mamlukischer Seepolitik auf Beirut und die syro-palästinensische Küste in mamlukischer Zeit (1250-1517)," submitted to the University of Cologne.

¹Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá (d. after 1436), *Tārīkh Bayrūt: Akhbār al-Salaf min Dhurrīyat Buḥtur ibn 'Alī Amīr al-Gharb bi-Bayrūt*, ed. Francis Hours and Kamal Salibi (Beirut, 1969), 32-34.



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stationed on the coast and the Franks were therefore free to plunder the harbor towns until the regular Mamluk army arrived from Damascus.

This article will review the three most important components of Mamluk naval policy and assess the effectiveness of that policy in securing the coast. This three-part review will be followed by a discussion of why the Mamluks never initiated a lasting program to build and maintain a fleet.

The main aim of the Mamluks after the expulsion of the Crusaders from the Syro-Palestinian coast in 1291 was to prevent their return and to that end they destroyed the harbors there. This "scorched earth" policy was designed to prevent the Crusaders from capturing a fortified town on the coast and using it as a base for further operations in Syria. This razing of the harbors was combined with the transfer of the line of defense further inland from the coast, where fortifications were built and troops garrisoned. These troops could deploy to the coast within days if an attack by Frankish forces took place.

The second component of Mamluk naval policy was the building of ad hoc fleets. These were the only manifestations of Mamluk naval activity. The naval squadrons were designed only to transport troops to a destination, not to wage battle in naval encounters. These ships were galleys which depended on oarsmen and thus had a limited range. Because of weather conditions, they were unable to operate year-round and therefore their use was seasonal. A recurring feature of the Mamluk ad hoc fleets was that they did not survive from one reign to the next. Once the sultan who had built the ships died, his successors were so occupied by the ensuing power struggle that they left the boats of their predecessor to rot. This lack of continuity was the main reason no regular fleet was maintained and no lasting naval program ever came into being under the Mamluks.

The third pillar of Mamluk naval policy was their attempt to involve European powers, through alliances and treaties, in the defense of the Mamluk Empire. In the beginning of their reign the Mamluks concluded treaties with the Crusader states and the kingdom of Aragon. In the second half of the fourteenth century the Venetians had emerged as the main trading partner and ally of the Mamluks. But the Venetians could not successfully prevent other European freebooters from constantly attacking the Mamluk coast.

Generally, Mamluk naval policy contributed to the success of the goal of preventing the return of the Crusaders. In doing so they neglected the needs of the local populations on the coast, who as a consequence lived in dilapidated towns and were under the constant threat of Frankish pirate attacks. The question remains why the Mamluks chose this particular naval policy in order to defend their coasts and did not opt for a more aggressive approach at sea like the Ottoman Empire.



THE RAZING OF COASTAL CITIES

The conquest [of Acre in 1291] was followed by the fall of Sidon, Beirut, and ‘Athlīth in the same year. With this conquest the whole coast was liberated, and when these towns were captured they were totally razed out of fear that the Franks could reconquer them. They have stayed in Muslim hands until now.²

With these words the Mamluk historian al-Qalqashandī hailed the successful defense of the coast as proven by the results. This defensive strategy of destroying the coastal cities was no Mamluk invention. It harkens back to the example set by the Ayyubid sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (Saladin) (1171-93). On several occasions his fleets were defeated by the Franks, and his biographer al-Kātib ‘Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī had much to say about these maritime disasters. He explained that something like this was bound to happen because the rulers of Egypt had preferred to employ only worthless riffraff rather than recruit good sailors.³

Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had experienced a serious setback when he could not break the blockade of the Crusader ships around Acre in the year 1191. The Crusaders therefore were able to reconquer Acre, which Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had taken from them in 1187.⁴ Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn was so disappointed by that failure that he decided to destroy Ascalon when the English King Richard I Lionheart (1189-99) was advancing on it. He preferred to destroy this coastal town rather than let it fall into the hands of his enemy.⁵

When the Mamluks seized power they emulated the practice Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn employed at Ascalon by destroying and razing all the harbors of the Syro-Palestinian coast reconquered during the following years. After the Crusaders were repelled, the towns of the coast were never again fortified by the Mamluks. The worst destruction of coastal towns took place in Palestine because of the geographical

²Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Qalqashandī (d. 1418), *Ṣubḥ al-A‘shá fī Ṣinā‘at al-Inshā’* (Cairo, 1914), 4:178.

³‘Imād al-Dīn al-Kātib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 1201), *Al-Faṭḥ al-Qussī fī al-Faṭḥ al-Qudsī*, ed. Muḥammad Maḥmūd Ṣubḥ, (n. p., 1965), 161-62; David Ayalon, "The Mamluks and Naval Power: A Phase of the Struggle between Islam and Christian Europe," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 1, no. 8 (1967): 4; reprinted in Ayalon, *Studies on the Mamluks of Egypt (1250-1517)* (London, 1977), VI, 1-12.

⁴Hans Eberhard Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge* (Stuttgart, 1989), 124, 131-34; Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442), *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma‘rifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah (Cairo, 1934), 1:1:104-5; idem, *A History of the Ayyūbid Sultans of Egypt*, trans. with introduction and notes by R. J. C. Broadhurst (Boston, 1980), 90-93.

⁵Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 1:1:106; idem, *A History of the Ayyūbid Sultans of Egypt*, 93; Moshe Sharon, *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum Palaestinae* (Leiden, 1997), 1:139.



proximity of Jerusalem, the potential target of any new Crusade. Beirut and Tripoli were relatively favored by their location further away from the Holy City. Beirut would become the most important trading city on the coast, and Tripoli under the Mamluks played an important role as a center of provincial administration.⁶

The Syro-Palestinian coast was systematically razed from Ascalon in the south to the harbor of Antioch, St. Simeon (al-Suwaidā'), in the north. The only exception to this pattern was Tripoli, which fell in 1289 to the Mamluks. It was totally destroyed but then rebuilt in a new location three kilometers inland, at the foot of Mount Lebanon. The new location of Tripoli was chosen for strategic reasons. At the foothills the Mamluks could fight Frankish attackers already present in the plain between Tripoli and the shore. Contemporary observers did not like the new location of the city. Ibn Taghrībirdī said it was built in a place where foul winds reigned and the town generally had an unhealthy atmosphere.⁷

The location of the new Tripoli was part of the Mamluk strategy to move the defense lines away from the coast to locations further inland. All the major fortresses on the shore disappeared. They were replaced by smaller towns and a few walls with small garrisons. These fortifications were only shadows of the former Crusader castles. Even Beirut, the only remaining real harbor on the Syro-Palestinian coast, was stripped of its walls and only had some fortifications near the harbor to blunt the initial impact of a Frankish attack.

Such a policy meant that local notables like the Druze family of the Buhturids of the Gharb and the so-called Turcomans of the Kisrawān were responsible for regional defense.⁸ These local notables had the task of delaying Frankish attackers until the regular Mamluk troops could arrive from Damascus. Communications with Damascus were conducted by means of pigeons during the day and fire signals at night.⁹

As it usually took some days before reinforcements reached Beirut, the town had often already been pillaged when the troops finally arrived. Thus the Mamluk system of destroying coastal cities and building a defense line inland from al-Bīrah in the north to al-Karak proved to be successful, when we consider that no new Frankish invasion could gain a foothold in Mamluk territory, but unsuccessful in terms of personal security for the local inhabitants. For them the initiation of a fleet-building program would have been a better long-term option than destroying

⁶On the political development and the social and economic history of the Syro-Palestinian coast in Mamluk times, see parts 2 and 3 of the author's dissertation, "Verbranntes Ufer."

⁷Abū al-Maḥāsīn Ibn Taghrībirdī (d. 1470), *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah*, ed. Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wa-al-Irshād al-Qawmī (Cairo, 1938), 7:322.

⁸Šāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt*, 29, 70-72.

⁹Ibid., 35.



their cities. Very little of the vast wealth generated by the Levant trade stayed in the Syro-Palestinian coast, which remained poor.

In contrast to the Syro-Palestinian cities, Egyptian coastal cities were not razed, probably because previous attempts by the Crusaders to land in the delta had been successfully repulsed by the Muslims. The Mamluks had faith in their ability to defend the Egyptian coast and therefore did not destroy the cities there, although they too suffered from neglect.

As a consequence of the total devastation of the Syro-Palestinian coast, these towns recovered only slowly, and did not flourish during the Mamluk period. The military interest of the Mamluks was directed toward their eastern frontier where they expected an attack from the powerful Ilkhans. There the Mamluks built their fortresses directly on the frontier. The Mamluk sultan Baybars I (1260-77) described the contrasting military policies in the west and in the east as follows:

One part (of the Muslim armies) uproots Frankish fortresses and destroys (their) castles, while (another) part rebuilds what the Tatars destroyed in the East and increases the height of their ramparts (compared with what they were).¹⁰

The devastation of the Syro-Palestinian littoral and the transfer of the defense line was very effective in preventing the return of the Franks. This was the Mamluk credo which never changed. Only minor fortification works were undertaken by the Mamluks. The victims of this policy, as mentioned previously, were the local inhabitants of the coast who lived in dilapidated towns and were under constant threat of a Frankish attack.

While it is clear that the destruction of the coastal cities was the cornerstone of Mamluk defense policy along the Syro-Palestinian coast, there is some evidence of Mamluk naval activity throughout the two hundred and fifty years of their rule. This evidence will be examined below. From this it can be concluded that the Mamluks tried, at least from time to time, to fight on the sea.¹¹

ATTEMPTS TO WAGE WAR ON THE SEA

The great naval powers in the Mediterranean at the time of the Mamluks were the Venetians, Genoese, Catalans, and the Hospitaller Knights of Rhodes. Later in the fifteenth century, the emerging Ottoman fleet would manage to change the balance in favor of the Muslims. However, the few Mamluk naval endeavors that

¹⁰Quoted in Ayalon, "The Mamluks and Naval Power," 12.

¹¹For a more detailed description of the following events, see part 1 of the author's dissertation, "Verbranntes Ufer."



were undertaken were directed mainly against Cyprus in an attempt to stop pirate activity against Mamluk shores.

Baybars I undertook the building of a fleet but the performance of the Mamluk navy bordered on the comic. In 1270 twelve enemy vessels entered the harbor of Alexandria and sacked a merchant ship. During this episode the newly-constructed Mamluk vessels were not deployed because the admiral was visiting the sultan in Cairo.¹² In 1271 this fleet was dispatched against Cyprus, presumably with the intention of stopping the flow of supplies to the Crusader states along the Syro-Palestinian coast from there.¹³ This took place while the Cypriot ruler, Hugh III of Lusignan, was accompanying the English Prince Edward on a military expedition in Palestine.¹⁴ When Baybars learned of this, he ordered his fleet into action, hoping to benefit from the absence of the Cypriot ruler from the island.¹⁵ The Mamluk fleet, disguised as Christian ships and flying flags displaying the Christian cross, was not up to the task at hand. The fleet was dashed on the reefs when approaching the harbor of Limassol (al-Nimsūn) in Shawwāl 669/May-June 1271. The local inhabitants completed the destruction of the ships and took custody of the surviving Mamluk sailors.¹⁶ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, eschewing other explanations for this inept performance, attributes the destruction of the fleet to the wrath of God because the ships had displayed Christian symbols.¹⁷ Although this first Mamluk naval expedition had ended in a fiasco, Frankish supremacy on the sea did not prevent Baybars from continuing his military advance in Palestine.¹⁸

¹²Peter Thorau, *Sultan Baibars I. von Ägypten: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Vorderen Orients im 13. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 1987), 246.

¹³P. M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (London-New York, 1997), 95-96; Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*, 246.

¹⁴Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 1:2:592; Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir (d. 1292), *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Khuwayṭir (Riyadh, 1976), 383; Peter Thorau, *Sultan Baibars I.*, 251; Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*, 247.

¹⁵Quṭb al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī (d. 1326), *Dhayl Mir’āt al-Zamān fī Tārīkh al-A’yān* (Hyderabad 1955), 2:453. According to Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir it was planned that the Mamluk attack would force Hugh to go back to Cyprus (see Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, 386). It is unclear whether the Mamluks intended to conquer the island or only to loot. Thorau argues the fleet did not contain enough ships or men for a possible conquest of the island (see Thorau, *Sultan Baibars I.*, 253).

¹⁶Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, 386-87; Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-‘Aynī (d. 1451), *Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo, 1988), 2:73-74; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 1:2:594; idem, *Al-Mawā’iz wa-al-I’tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār*, ed. Muḥammad Zaynhum and Madīḥah al-Sharqāwī (Cairo, 1998), 3:18; Thorau, *Sultan Baibars I.*, 253.

¹⁷Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, (d. 1292), *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, 387.

¹⁸Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*, 247.



Undaunted, Baybars built a new fleet in Cairo, the number of ships exceeding the number destroyed at Cyprus.¹⁹ This fleet, however, apparently never set sail, as no fighting by these vessels is mentioned in the sources.

The next Mamluk ship-building project was undertaken after the fall of Acre in 1291 and the end of the Crusaders in Palestine, at the initiative of the Mamluk sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl (1290-93), in the year 692/1293. Sixty well-equipped ships were constructed and high-ranking Mamluk officers were made part of the crew. After the boats were finished, a review on the Nile was staged. For the spectators special lodgings were built on the island of al-Rawḍah and outside of Cairo. Each boat had, besides a tower and fortress for defense purposes, a ram and special equipment to throw naphtha. Allegedly, when the Franks heard of this fleet, they immediately sent envoys who sued for peace.²⁰ This report obviously is greatly exaggerated, and there is no evidence that this new navy was ever engaged in any serious naval encounter. It is more likely that these vessels were left to decay when rebellious amirs killed Sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl in Muḥarram 693/December 1293.

The first known success achieved by Mamluk ships was the conquest of the small island of Arwād just off the shore of Ṭarṭūs (Anṭarsūs). Arwād had remained in the hands of the Crusaders while the rest of their territory had been lost. The island was finally taken in 702/1302. Even though Arwād lay just off the coast, the local governor needed help and asked for ships to come all the way from Egypt,²¹ clearly indicating that there were no Mamluk ships cruising the Syrian coast.

The year 1366 saw the collapse of yet another fleet-building project of the Mamluks. This project was initiated in response to the attack on Alexandria in 1365 by the Cypriot King Peter I of Lusignan (1359-69). Peter, who was also titular king of Jerusalem, was one of the last Frankish rulers to try to revive the Crusades. Between 1362 and 1365 he went to Europe to seek help for his planned excursion against the Mamluks and to recruit troops for this expedition.²² In spite of receiving little support from Europe he attacked Alexandria. He landed in Muḥarram 767/October 1365 with his fleet of Cypriot ships and some European

¹⁹ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, 387; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 1:2:594.

²⁰ Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 3:18-19.

²¹ Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Umar Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah fī al-Tārīkh*, ed. Aḥmad Abū Mulḥim (Beirut, 1987), 7:14:23; Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Alī Abū l-Fidā’ (d. 1331), *Al-Mukhtaṣar fī Akhbār al-Bashar* (Cairo, n.d.), 3:47; Muḥammad Kurd ‘Alī, *Kitāb Khiṭaṭ al-Shām* (Damascus, 1925), 2:142.

²² P. W. Edbury, “The Crusading Policy of King Peter I of Cyprus, 1359-1369” in *The Eastern Mediterranean Lands in the Period of the Crusades*, ed. P. M. Holt (Warminster, 1977), 90.



boats.²³ Although he may have intended to remain in Alexandria and exchange the city for Jerusalem, he was forced to abandon the totally-plundered city because he could not expect to hold it against the main Mamluk forces arriving from Cairo.²⁴

Although the troops of the Cypriots stayed just a few days in Alexandria, this event showed clearly the inability of the Mamluks to defend against attacks from the sea. A relatively small fleet of Franks had managed to occupy and sack the most important Mamluk harbor without any real resistance. In response the commander-in-chief (*atābak*) Yalbughā al-‘Umarī ordered an expeditionary fleet to be built in order to avenge the Cypriot assault on Alexandria.²⁵ The governor of Damascus, Baydamur al-Khwārizmī, announced at the end of 1365 the assembling of craftsmen in a wood near Beirut to build ships.²⁶ Baydamur then went personally to Beirut to supervise the construction work, while pains were taken to hide the building site from the Cypriots.²⁷ This ambitious project was doomed when Yalbughā al-‘Umarī was killed by Mamluk rivals at the end of 1366. With him his navy also died.²⁸

When Yalbughā al-‘Umarī died on Sunday, 10 Rabī‘ II 768/15 December 1366, work on the ships stopped. Only two ships were brought to the sea. Their names were Sanqar and Qarājā, named after two prominent amirs of the time. Baydamur hurried to build them and equipped them with masts and rudders. They remained at a place near Beirut where they were left to rot in the same way as the rest of the fleet, which was not brought down from al-Maṣṭabah to the sea at Beirut. A lot of money had been spent on the project but no one benefited from it. The only useful thing remaining was the iron, which the local people took from the rotting ships.²⁹

In Egypt at least some of the ships had made it into the water. In Rabī‘ I 768/November 1366 a review of this fleet was held in Cairo, where it allegedly frightened the Catalan envoys. Music was played and the sky was lighted by

²³P. W. Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191-1374* (Cambridge, 1991), 166.

²⁴Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:105-7; Leontios Makhairas (d. after 1432), *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus*, ed. and trans. R. M. Dawkins (Oxford, 1932), 1: § 171-73.

²⁵Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*, 7:14:329.

²⁶Ibid., 330, 334, 335.

²⁷Šāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt*, 30.

²⁸Holt, *The Age of the Crusades*, 127.

²⁹Šāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt*, 30.



naphtha bombs. Nevertheless, this fleet was never put into service after the death of its builder Yalbughā al-‘Umarī.³⁰

In the following years the Cypriots attacked several Mamluk coastal installations. A peace treaty was signed in 1370 only after Peter I of Lusignan was killed by his nobles, who were unhappy with the expenses of his war.³¹ This peace agreement was also due to Genoese and Venetian pressure on the kingdom of Cyprus, because of the disruption in trade occasioned by these hostilities. The Venetians especially emerged after this as the main trading partners of the Mamluks, whereas the Genoese took a more hostile approach. Genoese pirates became a constant nuisance for the Mamluks thereafter. Cyprus had overextended its forces and as a result had lost its leading role in maritime trade to the Italian seafaring nations. The impotence of the kingdom of Cyprus was fully demonstrated when Genoa conquered Famagusta, the most important harbor of the island, in 1373.³²

The lessons of the skirmishes with the Cypriots were inescapable for the Mamluks. They had been unable to defend their coastal territory from the raids of a seemingly insignificant power and had utterly failed in their attempt to carry the battle to the shores of Cyprus. What they needed was a disciplined and well-outfitted fleet capable of performing these roles in defense of their kingdom.

Some fifteen-odd years later, the Cypriot King Janus (1398-1432) supported Catalan corsairs in their pirate activities, and henceforth, the Catalans supplanted the Genoese as the main sea-borne threat to the Mamluks.³³ These pirate attacks intensified after the Catalan King Alfonso V (1416-58) came to power and pursued an aggressive policy in the eastern Mediterranean as king of Catalonia, Sicily, and Naples.³⁴ In response to this threat and to rumors of a new Crusade under Alfonso V, Sultan al-Ashraf Barsbāy (1422-38) initiated several successful expeditions against Cyprus. In 1424 he sent a small fleet to Famagusta, which was cordially received by the Genoese governor, who seems to have chosen to remain neutral in this particular Mamluk-Cypriot conflict. From Famagusta the Mamluk expedition

³⁰ Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 3:1:129-130; Muḥammad ibn Qāsim al-Nuwayrī al-Iskandarānī (d. after 1374), *Kitāb al-Ilmām bi-al-I'lām fīmā Jarat bi-hi al-Aḥkām wa-al-Umūr al-Maqḍīyah fī Waq'at al-Iskandarīyah* (Hyderabad, 1968), 3:231-34; Werner Krebs, *Innen- und Aussenpolitik Ägyptens, 741-784/1341-1382* (Hamburg, 1980), 100-103.

³¹ Krebs, *Innen- und Aussenpolitik Ägyptens*, 324.

³² Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades*, 179.

³³ Aḥmad Darrāj, *L'Égypte sous le règne de Barsbay (825-841/1422-1438)* (Damascus, 1961), 241.

³⁴ For Alfonso V see Alan Ryder, *Alfonso the Magnanimous, King of Aragon, Naples and Sicily, 1396-1458* (Oxford, 1990).



proceeded to Limassol, where they sacked the town.³⁵ Encouraged by this success, Barsbāy planned a larger expedition.³⁶ In the arsenals of Būlāq near Cairo new ships were built. In the following year a grand total of forty ships were gathered in Tripoli, representing the most impressive Mamluk fleet to date. This fleet departed Tripoli in Ramaḍān 828/July 1425 and sailed for Cyprus, once again availing themselves of the neutrality and hospitality of the Genoese governor of Famagusta. Near Larnaka the Mamluk fleet engaged and defeated twelve Cypriot ships under the command of the brother of the Cypriot king. This was the first Mamluk victory in a naval battle. The Mamluks then sacked the fortress of Limassol, but departed for Egypt in Shawwāl 828/August 1425 after rumors reached them that naval help from Europe was on its way to Cyprus.³⁷

Janus, fearing a new Mamluk attack the following year, attempted to rally support from European allies, but with little success. Venice stood with the Mamluks, and even Alfonso V demanded money and then sent only a token force.³⁸ Janus's fears proved to be well-founded, and an even larger Mamluk fleet landed troops on the island who then marched on Nicosia.³⁹ In the ensuing battle King Janus was captured and his palace put to the torch.⁴⁰ The victorious fleet then returned to Egypt, where it had to be anchored at several coastal towns because no Egyptian harbor had the capacity to accommodate the entire fleet.⁴¹ Janus was compelled to pay a 200,000 dinar ransom and agree to an annual tribute. He also had to

³⁵Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah*, trans. by William Popper as *History of Egypt 1382-1469* (Berkeley, 1954), 4:18-19; Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt*, 242; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:2:668; Makhairas, *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus*, 1:§ 652.

³⁶Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:2: 684; Aḥmad ibn 'Alī Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 1449), *Inbā' al-Ghumr bi-Abnā' al-'Umr*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1972), 3:346; Subhi Labib, *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens im Spätmittelalter (1171-1517)* (Wiesbaden, 1965), 353.

³⁷Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt*, 242-47; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 4:21, 25-28; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:2:679, 694; Makhairas, *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus*, 1:§ 654-58; Darrāj, *L'Egypte sous le règne de Barsbay*, 246.

³⁸Darrāj, *L'Egypte sous le règne de Barsbay*, 247-52.

³⁹Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt*, 249; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, 3:366; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:2:720; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 4:33-34.

⁴⁰Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt*, 250-51; Darrāj, *L'Egypte sous le règne de Barsbay*, 256; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, 3:368; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:2:722; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 4:37; Makhairas, *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus*, 1:§ 672-96.

⁴¹Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt*, 251; Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, 3:369; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 4:40.



promise to stop pirate activity originating from his island directed at Mamluk shores.⁴²

At this juncture it would seem that the Mamluks could have changed the balance of power in the eastern Mediterranean had they occupied Cyprus. Barsbāy, however, seems to have been content that Cyprus had become a Mamluk vassal and promised to halt piracy. Although these expeditions against Cyprus were the highlight of Mamluk naval activity, they still did not reach a very high standard. The testimony of the Venetian merchant Piloti, who resided in Egypt for lengthy periods between 1396 and 1438, that the Mamluks did not have enough rudders to equip their galleys, and that they were compelled to transport troops to Cyprus on Nile barges, is certainly telling.⁴³ Indeed, there are only a few passing references to Barsbāy's fleet later in the sources.

Meanwhile, a new center of Frankish pirate activity developed at Rhodes, and the task of responding to this threat fell to Sultan Jaqmaq (1438-53), who dispatched a fleet of fifteen vessels from Būlāq in 1440. The fleet sailed via Cyprus to Rhodes, where they succeeded only in plundering a sugarmill. A subsequent naval encounter with the Hospitallers ended without a clear result and the Mamluk fleet, frustrated, returned to Egypt.⁴⁴ Jaqmaq waited two years before attempting a new expedition against Rhodes. In 1442 he ordered the construction of new ships in Cairo, Tripoli and Beirut,⁴⁵ and this fleet sailed in the direction of Rhodes in 1443, where an attack was launched against the nearby island of Castolorizo. Castolorizo was sacked and 200 captives taken, but before an attack on Rhodes could take place bad weather forced the fleet back to Egypt. Although the sultan was disappointed, the people considered this campaign more successful than the first.⁴⁶ Jaqmaq launched a third campaign in 1444, the fleet arriving at Rhodes in August, where troops were landed and the fortress besieged. This assault was repelled by the Hospitallers and the Mamluk force retreated.⁴⁷ In commenting on

⁴²Sālih ibn Yahyā, *Tārīkh Bayrūt*, 252; Makhairas, *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus*, 1:§ 701.

⁴³Emmanuel Piloti (d. after 1438), *L'Égypte au commencement du quinzième siècle d'après le traité d'Emmanuel Piloti de Crète (Incipit 1420)*, ed. Pierre Herman Dopp (Cairo, 1950), 108-9.

⁴⁴Hassanein Rabie, "Mamlūk Campaigns Against Rhodes (A.D. 1440-1444)" in *The Islamic World from Classical to Modern Times*, ed. C. E. Bosworth (Princeton, 1989), 284; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 5:81-82; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:3:1205.

⁴⁵Ibn Iyās (d. ca. 1524), *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā' i' al-Duhūr*, ed. Mohamed Mostafa (Wiesbaden, 1972), 2:233; Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497), *Wajīz al-Kalām fī Dhayl 'alā Duwal al-Islām*, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf (Beirut, 1995), 2:583.

⁴⁶Rabie, "Mamlūk Campaigns Against Rhodes," 284-85; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 5:95; Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 2:238.

⁴⁷Rabie, "Mamlūk Campaigns Against Rhodes," 285; Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 2:243; Ibn



this defeat, Ibn Iyās says that God did not want Jaqmaq to enjoy the same success as his predecessor Barsbāy.⁴⁸ The Mamluks posed no subsequent threat to Rhodes, which eventually fell to the Ottomans in 1522.

The Mamluk overlordship of Cyprus led to their involvement in its internal affairs when King John (1432-58) died and the succession to his throne was disputed. His daughter Charlotte, with the support of Cypriot noblemen, was installed as queen (1458-64),⁴⁹ even though her rule was challenged by John's illegitimate son, Jacob, who sought the intervention of the Mamluks on his behalf.⁵⁰ He presented himself as the rightful heir since he was male and respected Mamluk suzerainty. While this argument won over some of the Mamluks, Ibn Taghrībirdī comments that, because he was a bastard, the laws of the Franks did not permit him to claim the throne.⁵¹ The Mamluks nevertheless intervened on his behalf, al-Ashraf Īnāl sending a message claiming the island on behalf of Jacob.⁵² Some factions of the Mamluks, however, disputed the intervention on grounds that Charlotte also recognized Mamluk supremacy and paid the tribute. While the sultan wavered, Jacob seems to have gained the support of powerful amirs through his generous spending in Cairo. These amirs insisted that Īnāl should install Jacob as king⁵³ and to this end a fleet was once again constructed and passed in review on the Nile before setting sail for Cyprus in autumn, 1460.⁵⁴ With the help of this Mamluk force Jacob conquered Nicosia, the capitol, although Charlotte escaped to the coastal city of Kyrenia, where she was besieged by her half brother.

Inexplicably, most of the Mamluk force supporting Jacob suddenly returned to Egypt, whether due to concerns about bad weather,⁵⁵ or more likely due to reports relating to the health of the sultan. When the inevitable struggle to place a new sultan on the throne began, no leading amir wanted to be away from Cairo. Shortly thereafter Īnāl died, and the small Mamluk force remaining on the island under Jānibak al-Ablaq was not sufficient to influence the outcome of the succession dispute.⁵⁶ The situation in Cyprus remained in limbo even though the new sultan,

Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 5:93-95.

⁴⁸Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 2:243.

⁴⁹Sir George Hill, *A History of Cyprus* (Cambridge, 1948), 3:548.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 553; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 6:87.

⁵¹Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 6:87.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 88.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 100.

⁵⁴Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 2:361-62; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 6:87; idem, *Ḥawādith al-Duhūr fī Madā al-Ayyām wa-al-Shuhūr*, ed. William Popper (Berkeley, 1942), 342-43.

⁵⁵Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, 3:561-63.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 564; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 6:104.



al-Zāhir Khushqadam, sent additional Mamluk contingents to the island in support of Jacob in 1461 and again in 1463. In each case these troops returned without having accomplished their objective, much to the consternation of the sultan. According to Ibn Taghrībirdī, Khushqadam was unable to prevent these troops from returning to Egypt, even though in 1462 he issued an order forbidding the entrance into Mamluk harbors of any ship returning from Cyprus.⁵⁷

Ultimately Jacob prevailed, even managing to conquer Famagusta, which had been in the hands of the Genoese for nearly one hundred years.⁵⁸ Shortly thereafter Jacob killed the Mamluk amir Jānibak, even though Jānibak had fought by his side. Jacob appeased Khushqadam's anger about this murder with large sums of money.⁵⁹ This ended the presence of Mamluk troops on the island. In the autumn of 1464 Jacob finally became lord of the whole of Cyprus when he conquered Kyrenia, the last stronghold of his half sister. Jacob II was the first king of Cyprus to rule over the entire island in a hundred years. However, the rule of the Lusignans over Cyprus would soon end. Jacob II had married the Venetian noblewoman Katherine Cornaro and when Jacob III (1473-74) died after only one year in power, she became queen and then abdicated in 1489, leaving Cyprus to the Venetians.⁶⁰ The island would later fall to the Ottomans, who were able to secure their conquest with a powerful navy, something the Mamluks lacked.

The feat of Vasco da Gama in sailing around the Cape of Good Hope in 1498 resulted in a Portuguese presence near the east African coast which presented a threat to Mamluk and Venetian trade in the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. In fact, the Portuguese had produced a naval revolution with a fleet of ocean-going, cannon-heavy sailing ships possessing great range, mobility, and fire power and capable of operating the year around far from home. Neither the Mamluks nor the Ottomans could compete on the open seas with them. The Portuguese presence had a great impact on the revenues the Mamluks derived from the spice trade, and Mamluk merchants increasingly complained that the Portuguese captured Muslim trading ships in the Indian Ocean.⁶¹ The Mamluks attempted to counter the Portuguese by striking an alliance with the rulers of Gujarat in Northwest India;

⁵⁷Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 7:42, 46, 51, 57-58; idem, *Ḥawādith al-Duhūr*, 409, 434-37; Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 2:385.

⁵⁸Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, 3:590; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 7:60.

⁵⁹Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, 3:591-92; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 7:60-61.

⁶⁰Mayer, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*, 217.

⁶¹Marino Sanuto (d. ca. 1533), *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto (1496-1533)*, ed. Guglielmo Berchet (Venice, 1881), 6:246, 249; Palmira Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower and Levantine Diplomacy in the Age of Discovery* (New York, 1994), 112.



the Portuguese seaman Lopo-Soares reports a passing encounter with a fleet of the Mamluk-Gujarat alliance near Malabar in 1504.⁶² The Portuguese also posed a threat to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina and it was for this reason that Sultan Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī dispatched several vessels in the direction of India in 1505, although they seem to have had no effect on Portuguese activities.⁶³ The impotence of the Mamluk response to these Portuguese incursions may be gauged by the fact that al-Ghawrī had to resort to threats that he would destroy the grave of Jesus and other Christian places of pilgrimage if Portuguese actions in the Indian Ocean did not stop.⁶⁴ The Portuguese clearly considered these idle threats and the Portuguese King Manuel I (1495-1521) soothed the nerves of the Pope by pointing out the Mamluks were too interested in the money derived from Christian pilgrims to do anything which would interrupt this steady flow of revenue.⁶⁵

During the waning days of the Mamluk Sultanate the Mamluks enlisted help from both the Ottomans and the Venetians in their attempts to counter Portuguese naval activities, which, among other things, sought to divert the spice trade away from its old routes through the Gulf and the Red Sea.⁶⁶ In spite of the strained relations resulting from the Mamluk-Ottoman war in Anatolia from 1485 to 1491, there is clear evidence that from 1507 on, the Ottomans provided the Mamluks with war materials such as wood and copper, and also sent marine soldiers.⁶⁷ According to Portuguese sources, the Venetians assisted the Mamluks by providing boat-building experts and cannons.⁶⁸ Such help from the Venetians is very probable because the Levant trade, now clearly threatened by the Portuguese, was a major source of income for them. With Venetian assistance, the Mamluks now intensified the building of ships at Suez.⁶⁹ At the same time Qānṣawh created a small flotilla in the Mediterranean to facilitate the transfer of important war materials from

⁶²Genevieve Bouchon, "Le Premier Voyage de Lopo Soares en Inde 1504-1505," *Mare Luso-Indicum* 3 (1976): 67-68.

⁶³Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr*, 4:84-85, 95-96.

⁶⁴Virginia de Castro e Almeida, ed., *Chroniques de Garcia de Resende, João de Barros, Damião de Goes, Gaspar Correa, Fernão Lopes de Castanheda*, Les grands navigateurs et colons portugais du XVe et du XVIe siècles, vol. 5 (Paris, 1940), 33-36; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower*, 113; S. M. Imamuddin, "Maritime Trade under the Mamluks of Egypt (644-923/1250-1517)," *Hamdard Islamicus* 3, no. 4 (1980): 73.

⁶⁵*Chroniques de Garcia de Resende*, 36-37; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower*, 113.

⁶⁶Andrew C. Hess, "The Ottoman Conquest of Egypt (1517) and the Beginning of the Sixteenth-Century World War," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4 (1973):75.

⁶⁷Sanuto, *I Diarii*, 7:12-13, 128, 152; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower*, 114.

⁶⁸*Chroniques de Garcia de Resende*, 158-59.

⁶⁹Sanuto, *I Diarii*, 10:110-11; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower*, 115.



Asia Minor to Egypt. These ships were later lost in September 1510, when they were sunk by ships of the Hospitallers of Rhodes.⁷⁰

The fleet resulting from this new collaboration with the Ottomans and the Venetians went to sea in 912/1507, destined for India under the joint command of the Mamluk Ḥusayn al-Kürdī and the Ottoman Salmān Ra'īs.⁷¹ The fleet was initially victorious in an encounter with the Portuguese at Chaul in January 1508,⁷² but in a return engagement the Portuguese destroyed a great number of the Mamluk ships at Diu on the northwest coast of India.⁷³ The manifest inability of the Mamluks to guarantee the security of maritime trade in the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea finally moved the Indians to threaten collaboration with the Portuguese. A delegation carried this threat to Cairo in 1510. Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī tried to appease them, but it was another full five years before a new expedition could be mounted to the Red Sea.⁷⁴

In the spring of 1514 the sultan had personally gone to Suez to observe the construction of his new fleet. There he found that the command of the fleet was in the hands of the Ottoman captain Salmān, who had at his disposal two thousand Ottoman troops.⁷⁵ Although rumors abounded that Sultan Selīm I (1512-20), having just registered a tremendous victory over the Safavids of Iran in August 1514, might next attack the Mamluks,⁷⁶ the joint Mamluk-Ottoman fleet—consisting of twenty ships outfitted with cannons—sailed for India in the summer of 1515.⁷⁷

The story of the end of the Mamluk Sultanate is well known, and was played out while this fleet was at sea. Perhaps the Ottomans, during this period of collaboration, had discovered the true state of Mamluk military preparedness. Whatever the case, the Ottoman army shortly defeated the Mamluks in the field at Marj Dābiq, north of Aleppo, on 25 Rajab/24 August 1516,⁷⁸ Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī

⁷⁰Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 4:191-92; Sanuto, *I Diarii*, 10:432, 636, 799; 11:76, 105, 227-28, 394; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower*, 116.

⁷¹Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower*, 115.

⁷²Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 4:142. The news of the Mamluk naval success led to three days of celebrations in Cairo.

⁷³*Chroniques de Garcia de Resende*, 186-91; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower*, 115; Jean Louis Bacqué-Grammont and Anne Kroell, *Mamlouks, Ottomans et Portugais en Mer Rouge: l'Affaire de Djedda en 1517* (Cairo, 1988), 2. The news of the total Mamluk defeat led to the despair of the Mamluk Sultan Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī (see Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 4:156).

⁷⁴Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 4:182, 185; Sanuto, *I Diarii*, 11:65, 75-76, 105, 479; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower*, 116.

⁷⁵Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 4:362-65.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 446.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 467.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 5:85.



losing his life in defense of his kingdom. The Ottomans then took Cairo the very next year, hanging the last Mamluk sultan Ṭūmān Bāy (1516-17) at the Bāb al-Zuwaylah gate.⁷⁹ When the Mamluk-Ottoman naval forces returned in August 1517, the Ottoman captain Salmān had thrown his Mamluk co-commander into the sea once he had heard of the Ottoman victory.⁸⁰ This expedition had never made it to India, although Salmān had launched an unsuccessful attack against Aden.⁸¹ He did repulse a Portuguese attack on Jiddah in April 1517, after which the Portuguese departed from the Red Sea.⁸²

In summarizing Mamluk attempts to wage sea-borne warfare, the following observations may be made. There was never a regular fleet operating in Mamluk waters, but rather fleets were built on an ad hoc basis for specific expeditions, and when the expedition was over, the ships were left to rot. This happened after the expeditions against Cyprus under Barsbāy, and again against Rhodes under Jaqmaq. There was no continuity to programs of ship building and naval preparedness from one sultan to the next, and such attempts as there were ceased with the death of the sultan who initiated them, as was the case with Baybars I, al-Ashraf Khalīl, and Yalbughā al-'Umarī. The only sustained naval activity during the entire period of the Mamluk Sultanate was that which took place in the Indian Ocean and Red Sea, lasting more than ten years. Most naval operations were carried out in close proximity to the Mamluk coast, the main focus being Cyprus. The attacks against Rhodes and activities in the Red Sea were exceptions. Mamluk naval expeditions were reactions to specific acts of aggression against Mamluk coastal towns or merchant activities. Acts of piracy against Mamluk shores continued throughout the entire period of the sultanate, in spite of Mamluk attempts to put a stop to this activity. For the whole of the Mamluk era there is no evidence of a state-sponsored trading fleet, but only of a few vessels owned by merchants. Apparently, no Mamluk ship was ever seen in a European harbor. This second component of Mamluk naval policy, the waging of sea-borne warfare, had only one great success: the capture of the Cypriot King Janus in 1426. All other expeditions ended in failure.

NAVAL DEFENSE THROUGH TREATY

Another facet of Mamluk naval policy was their attempt to secure their naval defenses through alliances and treaties with European powers. Two phases can be

⁷⁹Ibid., 5:172.

⁸⁰Ibid., 5:199; David Ayalon, *Gunpowder and Firearms in the Mamluk Kingdom* (London, 1956), 82.

⁸¹Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 5:81.

⁸²Bacqué-Grammont, *Mamlouks, Ottomans et Portugais en Mer Rouge*, 28-29.



distinguished in this effort. The first lasted until 1291 and concluded with the final expulsion of the Crusaders. The diplomatic thrust of treaties concluded during this period was to insure Mamluk rule of the Holy Land. The majority of these treaties were concluded with the Crusader states, which found it necessary and expedient to accept certain compromises due to heavy Mamluk pressure. One early treaty, dating from 669/1271 and concluded between Baybars I and the Hospitallers,⁸³ required the Hospitallers to stop any foreign incursion into Mamluk territory, whether by land or sea, save one by a large force headed by a European king.⁸⁴ Similarly, Sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn concluded a treaty in 680/1281 with Bohemond VII of Tripoli, which extracted from Bohemond a promise that he would not aid any enemy of the Mamluks who attacked them.⁸⁵ An agreement struck between Qalāwūn and the Kingdom of Jerusalem in 682/1283 went even further. It required the authorities in Acre to give the Mamluks two months' advance warning of any landing of an overseas force on Mamluk shores.⁸⁶ A similar treaty of Qalāwūn's was concluded with Tyre in 684/1285, wherein the Europeans pledged to secure the Mamluk state against foreign invaders and to withhold assistance from other Franks attempting to harm the Mamluks.⁸⁷ It should be noted that, in spite of these treaties, both Tyre and Acre fell to Mamluk forces in 1291. In addition to the Crusader states, the Kingdom of Lesser Armenia was forced to enter into a similar pact at the end of the fifteenth century.⁸⁸

The greatest success of this policy of securing naval defense through diplomacy was the Catalan-Mamluk treaty of 689/1290, an agreement reached between Alfonso III (1285-91) and Qalāwūn. The Catalans became an emerging power in the eastern Mediterranean after occupying Sicily in 1282. Searching for new allies, the Catalans approached the Mamluks.⁸⁹ In the resulting treaty they pledged they were prepared to fight in defense of the Mamluk Empire on the sea and proclaimed their desire to be friends with all the friends of the Mamluks. The treaty is explicit in its mention of the pope, other Frankish rulers, Venice, Genoa, and the Crusaders:

⁸³P. M. Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy (1260-1290): Treaties of Baybars and Qalāwūn with Christian Rulers* (Leiden, 1995), 49.

⁸⁴Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*, 14:50; Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, 55; Urbain Vermeulen, "Le traité d'armistice relatif à al-Marqab conclu entre Baybars et les Hospitaliers (1. Ramadan 669/13. Avril 1271)," *Orientalia Loveniensia Periodica* 22 (1991): 185-93.

⁸⁵Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 1:3:977; Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, 65.

⁸⁶Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrīf al-Ayyām wa-al-'Uṣūr fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Manṣūr*, ed. Murād Kamīl (Cairo, 1961), 41-42; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*, 14:59-60; Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, 84-85.

⁸⁷Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrīf al-Ayyām*, 109; Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, 116.

⁸⁸Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrīf al-Ayyām*, 102; Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, 103.

⁸⁹Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, 129-31.



if any of these intended harm to the Mamluks, the Catalan king would prevent it. He would sequester the enemy's galleys in order to prevent them from attacking the Mamluk coast and harbors. If one of the Crusader states should break its treaty commitments to the Mamluks, the Catalans pledged not to provide troops or weapons to that state. They would never conspire with the pope or others against the Mamluks, and if they should learn of such a conspiracy, they would be under obligation to inform the Mamluks.⁹⁰

This treaty was renewed in 692/1293 between al-Ashraf Khalīl and Jacob II (1291-1327).⁹¹ Most Europeans were shocked that such a treaty would be concluded by a European power with the Mamluks after they had taken Acre in 1291. Pope Nicholas IV (1288-92) had, in fact, already announced a total embargo on trade with the Mamluks.⁹² And in fact, the Catalans concluded peace with the Holy See in 1302, after which they joined the trade embargo.⁹³ In the end, the Catalans never had to demonstrate whether or not they would truly have provided a naval defense for the Mamluks. After 1292 the Mamluks controlled the entire Syro-Palestinian littoral, but since their naval inferiority remained, they continued to try to bolster their defenses against piracy through treaties.

The intent of Mamluk policy during the second phase was to prevent the possible return of the Crusaders to positions from which they had been driven and to combat Frankish piracy on Mamluk shores. For a time immediately after the fall of Acre and the resulting papal ban on trade with the Mamluks, there could be no commercial treaties between Europe and the Mamluk state. Observance of the embargo was fairly strict during the first half of the thirteenth century, but even then it was not completely effective. During this period what remained of the Levant trade passed through Cyprus, European merchandise being transported to the island from where it was transhipped on small Cypriot boats to the Mamluk coast. By the second half of the fourteenth century the embargo began to loosen, due in part to the desire of the Italian seafaring nations to trade with the Mamluks and the possibility of purchasing exemptions from the papal ban. This arrangement proved to be lucrative for the popes, and Italian merchants availed themselves of the opportunity to purchase exemptions allowing them one or even more trips to

⁹⁰Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrīf al-Ayyām*, 159-60; Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, 134-35.

⁹¹Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*, 14:67-68; Maximiliano A. Alarcón y Santón and Ramón García de Linares, *Los documentos árabes diplomáticos del Archivo de la Corona de Aragón* (Madrid, 1940), 341-42.

⁹²Gherardo Ortalli, "Venice and Papal Bans on Trade with the Levant: The Role of the Jurist" in *Intercultural Contacts in the Medieval Mediterranean: Studies in Honour of David Jacoby*, ed. Benjamin Arbel (London, 1996), 242.

⁹³Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1983), 18.



the Muslim Levant.⁹⁴ When the Venetians concluded a new trade agreement in 1345, they noted that they had not been in Mamluk territory for twenty-three years.⁹⁵

The Italian maritime powers replaced Cyprus in the Levant trade after the Cypriot attack on Alexandria in 1365. Subsequently, Venice became the main trading partner and ally of the Mamluks, with whom they maintained harmonious relations. Genoese and Catalan pirates, however, continued to harass the Mamluks.⁹⁶ Venetian support for the Mamluks against Frankish corsairs was demonstrated during the Cypriot-Mamluk war in 1366, when they ordered an embargo on the export of weapons and military support for Cyprus, despite the protests of Pope Urban V.⁹⁷ Another instance of Venetian support for the Mamluks took place in 1403, when they warned the Mamluks of an imminent Genoese attack on the Syro-Palestinian coast. The commander of the Genoese fleet, the French Marshal Boucicaut,⁹⁸ learned of the betrayal when he captured a Venetian ship near Beirut, whose captain confessed to having warned the coastal towns.⁹⁹ In an act of revenge, the Genoese looted a Venetian spice repository in Beirut.¹⁰⁰

The Mamluks and Cypriots concluded a treaty in 1414, the Cypriots pledging to cease pirate activities and to return all Muslim prisoners who had not been baptized.¹⁰¹ This peace was fleeting, however, and in 1425 Barsbāy dispatched another expedition against the island. During this operation both the Genoese and the Catalans agreed to remain apart from the conflict in return for a Mamluk agreement to favorable trade relations.¹⁰² The Genoese governor of Famagusta, acting in accord with this new relationship, allowed the Mamluk expeditionary fleet to

⁹⁴Ortalli, "Venice and Papal Bans on Trade with the Levant," 242-48; Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 17-18.

⁹⁵*Diplomatarium Veneto-Levantinum sive Acta et diplomata res venetas, graecas atque Levantis, illustrantia*, ed. G. M. Thomas and R. Predelli (Venice, 1880), 1:291; Ortalli, "Venice and Papal Bans on Trade with the Levant," 248.

⁹⁶Eliyahu Ashtor, "The Venetian Supremacy in Levantine Trade: Monopoly or Pre-Colonialism?," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 3 (1974): 11-16.

⁹⁷Hill, *A History of Cyprus*, 2:342.

⁹⁸At that time Genoa had fallen under French influence.

⁹⁹Jean Le Maingre de Boucicaut, "Livre des faicts" in *Nouvelle collection des mémoires pour servir à l'histoire de France*, series 1, vol. 2, ed. Joseph Fr. Michaud and Jean-Joseph-François Poujoulat (Paris, 1850), 631-32; Joseph Delaville Le Roulx, *La France en Orient au xive siècle* (Paris, 1886), 1:438.

¹⁰⁰Šāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt*, 32-34.

¹⁰¹Makhairas, *Recital Concerning the Sweet Land of Cyprus*, 1:§ 636, 646.

¹⁰²Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 289.



anchor in his harbor.¹⁰³ This signaled a change from the aggressive policy of the Genoese toward the Mamluks that had characterized this relationship at the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth century. Catalan piracy, however, remained a significant irritant to the Mamluks during the fifteenth century, even though the Catalan King Alfonso V and Sultan Barsbāy had concluded a peace treaty.¹⁰⁴ Ashtor thinks Alfonso V agreed to peace in the hope of achieving better conditions for trade, and when these did not materialize, he unleashed his pirates in the quest for booty.¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, the Mamluks were successful in pacifying Cyprus and the Cypriots were compelled to cooperate. The Mamluks were able to use the island as an intermediate port in 1440 and 1443 on the way to and from Rhodes.¹⁰⁶

The Venetians continued through the fifteenth century the policy of cooperation with the Mamluks, which, though not a formal alliance, was seen by both sides to be mutually advantageous. The Venetians continued to benefit from favorable trade relations with the Mamluks and took care to secure Mamluk interests when possible, as, for example, in 1444, when they participated in a Crusader alliance against the Ottomans, but ordered their captains not to attack the Mamluks or Mamluk possessions during this anti-Ottoman campaign.¹⁰⁷ Twenty years later the Venetians demanded the release of Muslim merchants who had been seized by the Hospitallers of Rhodes while on board a Venetian vessel. This show of force secured the release of the merchants,¹⁰⁸ and bolstered the Venetian role in the transport of Mamluk merchants and their goods between Alexandria and Beirut. Mamluk-Venetian relations drew even closer in 1489, when the last Cypriot queen abdicated in favor of the Venetians. When Sultan Qāyrbāy expressed some displeasure at this development and the fact he had not been consulted before the fact, he was mollified by assurances that a Venetian government and fleet in Cyprus would be all the more effective in providing protection against pirates, due to closer proximity, and that the yearly tribute of 8000 ducats would be paid by the Venetians as it had been by the Cypriots.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰³ Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 4:20, 26; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:2:671-72, 694.

¹⁰⁴ Reginaldo Ruiz Orsati, "Tratado de Paz entre Alfonso V de Aragon y el Sultan de Egipto, al-Mālik al-Ashraf Barsbāy," *Al-Andalus* 4 (1939): 342-44 (Arabic text), 365-68 (Spanish translation).

¹⁰⁵ Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 301.

¹⁰⁶ Rabie, "Mamlūk Campaigns Against Rhodes," 284-85; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 5:81-82, 95; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:3:1205; Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 2:224, 238.

¹⁰⁷ Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 292.

¹⁰⁸ Archivio di Stato, Venice, Senato-Secreta, 22, fol. 37b.; Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 452-53.

¹⁰⁹ Hill, *The History of Cyprus*, 3:821-23.



The relationship, of course, had a few ups and downs. In 1512 Sultan Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī felt obliged to send a communication via a Venetian envoy complaining that the Venetians had become lax in patrolling for pirates and Cyprus had once again become a haven for freebooters. The Venetians responded that they wanted to fulfill their obligations but had been temporarily distracted by affairs in Europe.¹¹⁰ Venice promised to redouble their efforts in order that the Mamluks would have no reason to complain.¹¹¹ This exchange is clear evidence of the fact that the Mamluks had placed at least a part of the responsibility for their naval defense in the hands of the Venetians. The Venetians also assisted the Mamluks in the construction of ships and cannons in response to the Portuguese appearance in the Red Sea at the beginning of the sixteenth century.¹¹²

Another aspect of the Mamluk policy of relying on others to provide their naval defenses was their employment of Maghribi mercenaries, probably recruited from territories controlled by the Hafsiids, who, in contrast to the Mamluks, possessed considerable skills in equipping and manning ships.¹¹³ A number of Maghribi mercenaries were involved in the unsuccessful defense of Alexandria against Peter I of Lusignan in 1365.¹¹⁴ When a counter offensive was planned under the command of Yalbughā al-‘Umarī in the following year, both Maghribi and Turcoman mercenaries were employed to man Mamluk vessels. The planned attack never took place, however, due to the death of al-‘Umarī.¹¹⁵ Contemporary observers noted the prowess of the Maghribis in naval defense. When an enemy ship was captured in the harbor of Alexandria in 1368, the Mamluk historian al-Nuwayrī suggested the use of Maghribi mercenaries to secure the harbor.¹¹⁶

Maghribi seamen were held in high regard throughout the Mamluk period. When the Mamluks constructed their Red Sea fleet in 1505 to fight the Portuguese,

¹¹⁰The unfortunate events had been the military successes of the League of Cambrai, which was under the leadership of France and Germany, directed against Venice. The fighting led to territorial losses for Venice. Things looked better in 1511 when the League of Cambrai had cracked and the partners of the League started to fight each other.

¹¹¹M. Reinaud, "Traité de commerce entre la république de Venise et les derniers sultans mameloucs d'Égypte," *Journal Asiatique*, 2nd series, 4 (1829): 34-35.

¹¹²*Chroniques de Garcia de Resende*, 158-59.

¹¹³Hans-Rudolf Singer, "Der Maghreb und die Pyrenäenhalbinsel bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters" in *Geschichte der arabischen Welt*, ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Munich, 1991), 315.

¹¹⁴Krebs, *Innen- und Aussenpolitik Ägyptens*, 287.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, 100.

¹¹⁶Al-Nuwayrī al-Iskandarānī, *Kitāb al-Ilmām*, 279-82, 393; Martina Müller-Wiener, *Eine Stadtgeschichte Alexandrias von 564/1169 bis in die Mitte des 9./15. Jahrhunderts: Verwaltung und innerstädtische Organisationsformen* (Berlin, 1992), 57-58; Krebs, *Innen- und Aussenpolitik Ägyptens*, 324-25.



the majority of the crews consisted of Turcomans, black slaves, and Maghribis.¹¹⁷ The evidence for these Maghribi mercenaries is confined to Egypt. There is no evidence that they served along the Syro-Palestinian coast. The Turcoman naval mercenaries derived from the Turcoman principalities along the coast of Asia Minor, where they were active as corsairs. This activity gave rise to Venetian demands that the Mamluks prevent Turcoman piracy against Venetian vessels, to which the Mamluks agreed in a Mamluk-Venetian commercial treaty in 1415.¹¹⁸ This promise to restrain the Turcomans does not seem to have been strictly enforced, however, because in 1471 we read about the Venetian senate complaining to the Mamluk sultan that the Mamluk governors in Syria were allowing Turcoman pirates into their harbors, where they were attacking Venetian vessels.¹¹⁹ Finally, we also find mention of a Castilian, Pedro de la Randa, who fought as a naval mercenary for the Mamluks, but was in the end beheaded because he refused to become a Muslim.¹²⁰ To sum up, it seems that naval mercenaries were only occasionally employed by the Mamluks. This happened in cases of urgent need, such as the Mamluk-Cypriot War of 1365-70 and during the few seaborne military expeditions of the Mamluks.

When all other avenues failed, the Mamluks were not averse to buying security from attacks from the sea. According to the Venetian merchant Emmanuel Piloti, Sultan Faraj (1399-1405, 1405-12) dispatched an important spice merchant in 1403 with a large sum of money to Alexandria in order to bribe a Genoese fleet which had already looted Beirut and was threatening Alexandria. In this instance, fate was on the side of the Mamluks. The fleet had departed before the merchant arrived to pay the bribe, its crews having been decimated by the outbreak of a virulent disease.¹²¹

If I may use a currently topical term, the attempts of the Mamluks to “outsource” their naval defenses met with mixed success. The treaties with the Crusader states prior to 1291 allowed the Mamluks to gain total control over the Holy Land. The second phase of treaties and alliances, after the fall of Acre in 1291, achieved a limited success in that the Crusaders were unable to reestablish themselves in the Levant, but proved ineffective in preventing attacks by Frankish corsairs. Although the Venetians assisted the Mamluks on many occasions, they could not provide a

¹¹⁷Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 4:84-85.

¹¹⁸*Diplomatarium Veneto-Levantinum*, no. 168, 2:312-13; Riccardo Predelli, *I Libri commemoriali della Repubblica di Venezia, Regesti*, no. 168 (Venice, 1883), 3:376.

¹¹⁹Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 454.

¹²⁰Pero Tafur, *Travels and Adventures 1435-1439*, ed. and trans. Malcolm Letts (London, 1926), 97-99.

¹²¹Piloti, *L'Egypte*, 90.



defense over the entire Mamluk coast, which was subjected to repeated corsair attacks. The deployment of naval mercenaries had only a very limited effect and was not carried out continuously or on a large scale. Meanwhile, the populations of the Mamluk coastal cities suffered from this inability of the Mamluks to protect them from continuing pirate attacks. The frustrations of the local population are illustrated by an incident in 1439, when a group of locals tried to take matters into their own hands. Declaring jihad, they boarded three vessels in Damietta and set sail to defend Beirut, but were sunk in Beirut harbor by four Frankish ships.¹²²

WHY DID THE MAMLUK EMPIRE FAIL TO BECOME A NAVAL POWER?

The question of why the Mamluks did not create a regular fleet and thereby extend their influence and power in the eastern Mediterranean has been addressed by David Ayalon in his short study, "The Mamluks and Naval Power."¹²³ He cites two principal causes: a lack of natural resources, especially wood and iron, and their social and military preferences based on their tradition of mounted warfare. The ingrained disdain of these archers on horseback for other forms of combat not only worked against their ever becoming a naval power, but also extended to their reluctance to embrace and develop an infantry and its concomitant weaponry such as the cross bow and, later, firearms. He also cites the absence of a credible naval challenge outside the Mediterranean prior to the emergence of the Portuguese threat in the Indian Ocean. The Mamluks were prepared to accept naval inferiority in the Mediterranean so long as their trade with India was not at risk.¹²⁴

The scarcity of wood has often been cited as a reason for the inferiority of Muslim ship building.¹²⁵ Such arguments may have led Ayalon to conclude that the Mamluks lacked sufficient wood for ship building on a large scale. Nevertheless, the Mamluks ruled over North Syria and parts of Cilicia, where there were ample forests. There were also considerable timber resources near Beirut and Tripoli. The Mamluks constructed large parts of their few transport fleets in Syria in proximity to these forests. Even Egypt had wood. The fleet that transported Jacob II to Cyprus to install him as king in 1460 was constructed in Egypt in a single year.¹²⁶ Wood could be found in the Delta and along the Nile. Fahmy has written

¹²² Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:3:1170-72.

¹²³ David Ayalon, "The Mamluks and Naval Power," 1-12.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹²⁵ George F. Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times* (Princeton, 1951), 5; Ekkehard Eickhoff, *Seekrieg und Seepolitik zwischen Islam und Abendland: Das Mittelmeer unter byzantinischer und arabischer Hegemonie (650-1040)* (Berlin, 1966), 134, 155-56.

¹²⁶ Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah (History of Egypt 1382-1469)*, 7:87, 102.



about a variety of trees which grew in Egypt in the Middle Ages.¹²⁷ Christides thinks the argument about the alleged scarcity of wood is highly questionable. According to him the amounts by which the forests in the Middle East are alleged to have diminished in the Middle Ages have been greatly exaggerated.¹²⁸

Besides relying on their own timber resources, the Mamluks could also import wood from Asia Minor, if needed. They did this several times during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.¹²⁹ The facts surrounding the alleged lack of iron suggest this argument too is fallacious. Iron was especially of value for shipbuilding in the Mediterranean because here the planks of the vessels were held together with iron nails, whereas “in the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean they were stitched.”¹³⁰ Iron was mined in the Mamluk Empire and both Ibn Baṭṭūṭah and al-Qalqashandī wrote about an iron mine near Beirut.¹³¹ According to Ayalon, this mine did not produce enough iron and, moreover, it was the only one in all of Syria and Egypt at the time.¹³² On the other hand, Fahmy writes about iron found in Egypt in the eighth century and made into nails for the construction of ships.¹³³ Even if it is not clear if there was still sufficient iron in Egypt in Mamluk times, it could have been imported from elsewhere within the Muslim realm, for example, from Asia Minor¹³⁴ or the Maghrib.¹³⁵ Moreover, there was always a possibility of importing iron from Europe, despite papal injunctions. In a Catalan-Mamluk treaty of 689/1290, for example, the Catalans promised to sell iron to the Mamluks.¹³⁶ Subsequently, after Catalan-Mamluk relations had deteriorated, the Venetians exported iron to the Mamluks.¹³⁷ If iron was in such short supply, it is hard to explain events like the one which took place near Beirut in 1366, when the local

¹²⁷ Aly Mohamed Fahmy, *Muslim Naval Organisation* (London, 1950), 75-79.

¹²⁸ Vassilios Christides, *The Conquest of Crete by the Andalusians (ca. 824-961)* (Athens, 1984), 49.

¹²⁹ Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, 4:2:689; Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr*, 2:356; 4:191-92; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira* (*History of Egypt 1382-1469*), 6:88; Sanuto, *I Diarii*, 10:432, 636, 799; 11: 76, 105, 227-28, 394; Brummet, *Ottoman Seapower*, 116; Ashtor, *Levant Trade*, 480.

¹³⁰ Fahmy, *Muslim Naval Organisation*, 80.

¹³¹ Ibn Baṭṭūṭah (d. 1368), *Rihlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭah* (Beirut, 1964), 62; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*, 4:111.

¹³² Ayalon, *Gunpowder and Firearms*, 102.

¹³³ Fahmy, *Muslim Naval Organisation*, 81-82.

¹³⁴ Ayalon, *Gunpowder and Firearms*, 102.

¹³⁵ Eickhoff, *Seekrieg und Seepolitik*, 124-25.

¹³⁶ Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif al-Ayyām*, 161; Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*, 136.

¹³⁷ Rolf Sprandel, “Le commerce du fer en méditerranée orientale au moyen âge” in *Sociétés et compagnies de commerce en Orient et dans l'océan Indien* (Actes du huitième colloque international d'histoire maritime, Beirut 5.-10. September 1966), ed. Michel Mollat (Paris, 1970), 389-92.



population was allowed to scavenge the abandoned fleet which had been constructed for the planned invasion of Cyprus, carrying away iron and other salvageable materials.¹³⁸ The locals clearly knew how to make use of it.¹³⁹

We must agree with Ayalon, however, regarding the Mamluks' commitment to a social order based on mounted warfare and its concomitant training and exercises as predisposing the Mamluks to reject the idea of seafaring.¹⁴⁰ There was not only no prestige associated with waging war on the sea, but to address someone as “*yā ustūlī*” (sailor) allegedly would send him into a rage, even though in earlier times seamen had been referred to as “warriors in the path of God.”¹⁴¹ Young mamluks were inculcated in the art and discipline of *furūsīyah* as a component of their formal education,¹⁴² and with few exceptions, only members of the Mamluk military class were allowed to ride horses.¹⁴³ The bond between mamluks, their horses, and their social hierarchy was thus complete. It goes without saying that no part of their education or training broached the subject of seamanship or waging seaborne warfare.

The Mamluks were not unaware of their naval weakness. Baybars I, writing to the king of Cyprus after his naval forces had been defeated by the latter in 1271, notes that the horses of the Franks were their ships and the ships of the Mamluks were their horses, meaning that the Franks might have the upper hand on the sea with their ships, but on land where it really counted, the Mamluks had more success with their horses.¹⁴⁴ This weakness was commented on by some contemporary historians. Al-Maqrīzī contrasts the situation of the Mamluks with that of the Fatimids, who he claims had five thousand naval captains in Egypt in the eleventh century. He also notes that under Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn there existed a special secretariat for the fleet (*dīwān al-usūl*), which administered the construction of fleets and the payment of crews. But the later Ayyubids and the Mamluks turned their backs on this heritage.¹⁴⁵ Ayalon has shown that from more than a thousand

¹³⁸ Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá, *Tārīkh Bayrūt*, 30.

¹³⁹ This has not changed until now. During the Lebanese civil war a great part of the rails of the trains between Beirut and Tripoli vanished without a trace.

¹⁴⁰ Ayalon, “The Mamluks and Naval Power,” 1.

¹⁴¹ Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 3:17-18.

¹⁴² Ulrich Haarmann, “Der arabische Osten im späten Mittelalter 1250-1517” in *Geschichte der arabischen Welt*, ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Munich, 1991), 222-25.

¹⁴³ David Ayalon, “The Muslim City and the Mamluk Military Aristocracy,” *Princeton Near East Paper* 20 (1975): 25.

¹⁴⁴ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir*, 376-77.

¹⁴⁵ Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 3:14, 17-18.



biographies from the Mamluk era, not a single one recounts the life of a naval commander.¹⁴⁶

There was a considerable conservatism in the Mamluk Empire which resulted in a reluctance to embrace change. Ayalon's point that the Mamluks were uninterested in naval warfare due to the absence of a credible seaborne challenge outside the Mediterranean prior to the emergence of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean underlines this conservatism. They would accept their naval inferiority in the Mediterranean as long as their trade with India was not at risk. This conservatism emerged in other military areas as well, most notably in their reluctance to adopt firearms, well-illustrated by the overthrow of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (1496-98) when he attempted to form a military unit of black slaves with firearms.¹⁴⁷

It is interesting to speculate on what might have been. Had the Mamluks not ceded the Mediterranean to the Europeans, might not they have profited to a much greater degree from trade? One can only guess at the possibilities that might have existed for Mamluk merchants in Europe. Had they understood that the idea of a new Crusade had become increasingly unpopular and unlikely, might not they have rebuilt their coastal towns? Had they not been wed to a social and military structure so imbued with an ethos dependent upon horses, might they not have challenged Europe for naval supremacy in the Mediterranean?

A single Mamluk officer has left us a rather amazing document. Muḥammad ibn Mengli wrote a treatise on naval warfare, "Al-Aḥkām al-Mulūkīyah wa-al-Ḍawābit al-Nāmūsīyah fī Fann al-Qitāl fī al-Baḥr."¹⁴⁸ He was a member of the *awlād al-nās*, his father having come to Egypt from Central Asia.¹⁴⁹ While his exact rank is unclear, he refers to himself as *naqīb al-jaysh* in Alexandria in 770/1368-69, and has been judged by a modern biographer to have been among the most important dignitaries in Alexandria at the time.¹⁵⁰ Ibn Mengli was aware of the work on naval warfare written by the Byzantine Emperor Leon VI (886-912), the "Naumachia,"¹⁵¹ and incorporates part of it in his own work.¹⁵² Ibn Mengli

¹⁴⁶ Ayalon, "The Mamluks and Naval Power," 5.

¹⁴⁷ Holt, *The Age of the Crusades*, 198.

¹⁴⁸ Gerhard Zoppoth, "Muḥammad ibn Mängli: Ein ägyptischer Offizier und Schriftsteller des 14. Jahrhunderts," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 53 (1957): 289.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 293.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 296.

¹⁵¹ Muḥammad Ibn Mengli (d. after 1378), "Al-Aḥkām al-Mulūkīyah wa-al-Ḍawābit al-Nāmūsīyah fī Fann al-Qitāl fī al-Baḥr," *Dār al-Kutub*, Cairo, MS 23 Taymūr (microfilm, University of Chicago Library), fol. 71.

¹⁵² Christides, *The Conquest of Crete*, 63; idem, "Naval Warfare in the Eastern Mediterranean (6th-14th centuries): An Arabic Translation of Leo VI's Naumachia," *Graeco-Arabica* 3 (1984): 138.



demonstrates a detailed knowledge of naval warfare in this work and even asserts that Muslim methods of waging naval warfare were superior to those of the Byzantines.¹⁵³ At the very least this is evidence that a high-ranking Mamluk officer had given serious thought to the theory of naval warfare.

Another possible source of inspiration for the Mamluks was Muslim naval experience in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.¹⁵⁴ This is most impressively illustrated at the end of the fifteenth century in the book *Kitāb al-Fawā'id fī Uṣūl al-Baḥr wa-al-Qawā'id* by Ibn Mājid al-Najdī. Ibn Mājid writes about the use of stars and compass in navigation and describes the particularities of seafaring in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean.¹⁵⁵ There is no evidence, however, that experience gathered in the Red Sea and Indian Ocean was ever put to work in the Mediterranean by Mamluk seafarers, and perhaps because they were never challenged or stimulated, these mariners found themselves both technically and tactically wanting when the Portuguese suddenly appear in these “Muslim” waters.¹⁵⁶ What might have been if the Mamluks could have combined the theoretical knowledge of naval warfare of Ibn Mengli with the seafaring abilities of a Red Sea captain like Ibn Mājid?

¹⁵³Christides, “Naval Warfare,” 139.

¹⁵⁴G. R. Tibbetts, introduction to *Arab Navigation in the Indian Ocean Before the Coming of the Portuguese, Being a Translation of Kitāb al-Fawā'id fī uṣūl al-baḥr wal-qawā'id* by Ibn Mājid al-Najdī (d. before 1535), ed. and trans. G. R. Tibbetts (London 1971), 1.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 28-37.

¹⁵⁶Ayalon, “The Mamluks and Naval Power,” 2.



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Al-Suyūṭī and His Works: Their Place in Islamic Scholarship from Mamluk Times to the Present

Editor's note: The article that follows was written by Dr. Saleh at my request. It is my intention that from time to time we will publish a biographical article summing up what is known about an important person who lived during the rule of the Mamluks. The article should provide more detail than, for example, the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* and should include an extensive bibliographical apparatus. In short, it should provide a starting point for anyone wanting to know about a particular person who flourished under the Mamluks. Dr. Saleh compiled a list of famous Mamluk intellectuals, those usually referred to in the scholarly literature as "polymaths" because they contributed to so many different fields. From this list she selected al-Suyūṭī, both because of his inherent interest and because his life has been well documented in the primary and secondary literature. Dr. Saleh has agreed to produce a second biography for a future issue. If you are interested in participating in this project, please let us know.

Recognized as the most prolific author in the Islamic world, past and present, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī is represented in virtually every genre of scholarly and literary production that existed during the Mamluk age. He believed himself to be the most learned man of his time, and this as well as even bolder claims that he made polarized his contemporaries into ardent supporters versus vehement adversaries. The controversy over the value of his contribution to scholarship continues to this day.

Al-Suyūṭī's life has been described in great detail elsewhere,¹ and here it is necessary to give only a brief outline. 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr ibn Muḥammad

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¹Al-Suyūṭī's own autobiography, *Al-Taḥadduth bi-Ni'mat Allāh*, has been edited with extensive and valuable commentary by Elizabeth Sartain (*Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, University of Cambridge Oriental Publications, no. 23 [Cambridge, 1975]). Two of al-Suyūṭī's pupils wrote full-length biographies of their teacher: 'Abd al-Qādir al-Shādhilī, *Bahjat al-'Ābidīn bi-Tarjamat Ḥāfiẓ al-'Aṣr Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, ed. 'Abd al-Ilāh Nabḥān (Damascus, 1998) and Shams al-Dīn al-Dāwūdī, "Tarjamat al-Suyūṭī," of which an unedited manuscript is held in Tübingen (Sartain, *Al-Suyūṭī*, 1:148). Full-length modern biographies include Ṭāhir Sulaymān Ḥammūdāh, *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī: 'Aṣruhu wa-Ḥayātuhu wa-Āthāruhu wa-Juhūduhu fī al-Dars al-Lughawī* (Beirut, 1989), Sa'dī Abū Jīb, *Hayāt Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī ma'a al-'Ilm min al-Mahd ilá al-Laḥd* (Damascus, 1993), Muḥammad al-'Arūsī al-Maṭwī, *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī* (Beirut, 1995), and Iyād Khālid al-Ṭabbā', *Imām al-Ḥāfiẓ Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, Ma'lamat al-'Ulūm al-Islāmīyah* (Beirut, 1996), in addition to numerous books and articles devoted to specific aspects of al-Suyūṭī's work.



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ibn Abī Bakr ibn ‘Uthmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Khiḍr ibn Ayyūb ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Humām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Khuḍāyri al-Suyūṭī was born on 1 Rajab 849/3 October 1445. His mother, a Circassian slave, was said to have given birth to him in the family library, where his father had sent her to retrieve a book; hence his prophetic nickname “*ibn al-kutub*” (son of books).² Al-Suyūṭī’s father, a scholar, died while al-Suyūṭī was a small child, but guardians made sure that the boy received the education usual for one of his background, beginning with memorizing the Quran and proceeding to the various religious sciences, grammar, *adab*, and Shafi’i jurisprudence. He was given his first *ijāzah* to teach grammar and *adab* at the age of sixteen, and by the following year had been given permission to teach Shafi’i jurisprudence and issue *fatwās* by the chief qadī, ‘Alam al-Dīn Ṣāliḥ al-Bulqīnī.

At the age of eighteen al-Suyūṭī inherited his father’s former post as professor of Shafi’i jurisprudence at the mosque of Shaykhū, and later added the post of teacher of hadith at the Shaykhūnīyah. He also was appointed to two other positions which seem to have been administrative rather than instructional: shaykh of sufis at the mausoleum of Barqūq al-Nāṣirī, and supervisor of the Baybarsīyah *khanqāh*.

Even as al-Suyūṭī’s scholarly fame began to spread abroad, his career in Egypt became mired in numerous disputes. Disagreements with other ulama on specific points of theology and law invariably degenerated into reciprocal personal attacks. There were also a number of widespread controversies (which involved the entire community of the ulama and in some cases the amirs and up to the sultan himself) into which al-Suyūṭī waded, including the question of the orthodoxy of the famous sufis Ibn al-Fāriḍ and Ibn al-‘Arabī (al-Suyūṭī defended it) and the question as to whether or not women would see God in the afterlife (al-Suyūṭī denied that possibility). His contentiousness and irascibility progressed to the point that he refused to pay the customary monthly courtesy call on the sultan Qāyṭbāy in order to receive personally his stipend as shaykh of the Baybarsīyah *khanqāh*, citing the practice of the early pious Muslims in refusing to frequent worldly rulers.³

²Abd al-Qādir ibn Shaykh al-‘Aydarūsī, *Al-Nūr al-Sāfir ‘an Akhbār al-Qarn al-‘Ashir*, ed. Muḥammad Rashīd al-Ṣaffār (Baghdad, 1934), 51.

³This incident provides a good example of al-Suyūṭī’s wont to vindicate his actions by writing one or more books. The result in this case was *Mā Rawāhu al-Asāṭīn fī ‘Adam al-Majī’ ilā al-Salāṭīn* (What the masters related regarding not frequenting sultans), ed. Majdī Fathī al-Sayyid (Tanta, 1991), as well as several books justifying his habit of wearing the *ṭaylasān*, a sort of shawl, to the few meetings he did have with Qāyṭbāy, a habit which had drawn negative comment from one of his arch-enemies, Ibn al-Karakī, a favorite of the sultan’s: *Ṭayy al-Lisān ‘an Dhamm al-Ṭaylasān* (Holding the tongue from censure of the *ṭaylasān*) in *Majmū’ Tisa’ Rasā’il* (Lahore, 1890) and “Al-Mufākharah bayna al-Ṭaylasān wa-al-Ṭarḥah” (Contest between the *ṭaylasān* and



In the late 890s/1480s, al-Suyūṭī began to withdraw from public life. He progressively resigned from his various teaching and administrative posts and stopped delivering *fatwās*. In 906/1501 he was dismissed from his post at the Baybarsīyah *khānqāh* following acrimonious disputes with the sufis there,⁴ and when the sultan Ṭūmānbāy, in support of the sufis, sought to have him killed he went into hiding. Upon the sultan's death al-Suyūṭī reappeared but retreated completely to his house on Rawḍah Island, announcing that he was devoting himself to God, refusing to leave the house and receiving visitors only reluctantly. There he remained, writing and revising his works, until his death on 19 Jumādā I 911/18 October 1505.

What was al-Suyūṭī's stature as a scholar? There can be no doubt that he was endowed with an incredibly agile and retentive mind. He claimed to have memorized 200,000 hadiths, which were all that had come to his attention; if he had located more, he would have memorized them as well.⁵ In speed of writing and composition al-Suyūṭī was "one of the great signs (*āyāt*) of God,"⁶ and he was able to edit and dictate several works simultaneously; his pupil al-Dāwūdī is reported to have said: "I have seen the shaykh write three quires in one day, both composing and writing down, as well as dictate hadith and answer opponents."⁷

Quite early in his scholarly career al-Suyūṭī claimed special expertise in a number of subjects: "I was endowed with deep penetration in seven sciences: Quran commentary, hadith, jurisprudence, grammar, rhetoric (*ma'ānī*), rhetoric (*bayān*)⁸, and style (*badī'*)⁹ (in the style of Arabs, not in the style of Persians and

the *ṭarḥah* [a sort of veil]), Chester Beatty MS 3420. On Ibn al-Karakī's relationship with Qāyṭbāy see Helena Hallenberg, "The Sultan Who Loved Sufis: How Qāyṭbāy Established a Shrine Complex in Dasūq," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 4 (2000): 147-66. An additional factor in al-Suyūṭī's reluctance to meet with the sultan, according to his sufi biographer 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī (d. 973/1565), was the fear that the Prophet, who had appeared to al-Suyūṭī more than seventy times while he was awake, would hide himself from him if he did so (*Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣuḡhrā*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā [Cairo, 1970], 29-30).

⁴These reached the point that the sufis "rose up against their shaykh . . . and almost killed him, then they carried him in his clothes and threw him into the fountain." Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn Iyās, *Badā'i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā'i' al-Duhūr*, ed. Paul Kahle and Muṣṭafā Muḥammad (Istanbul, 1931), 3:378.

⁵'Abd al-Ḥayy ibn Aḥmad Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār Man Dhahab* (Beirut, 1966), 8:53.

⁶Najm al-Dīn ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib al-Sā'irah bi-A'yān al-Mī'ah al-'Āshirah*, ed. Jibrā'īl Sulaymān Jabbūr (Beirut, 1945), 1:228.

⁷Ibid.

⁸"Al-*ma'ānī* wa'l-*bayān*: two of the three categories into which, since the time of al-Sakkākī (d.626/1229), the study of rhetoric has often been divided, the other being *badī'*. '*Ilm al-bayān* can best be translated with 'science of figurative speech,' as it only deals with the simile (as an



philosophers); and I believe that what I attained in these seven sciences (with the exception of jurisprudence) was never attained by any of my teachers, let alone others. I do not make this claim for jurisprudence, for there my teacher¹⁰ has a wider perspective.”¹¹ He also claimed mastery, though to a lesser degree, of *uṣūl al-fiqh*, polemics, morphology, division of inheritances, elegant prose writing, letter-writing, Quranic recitation, medicine, and accounting.¹² He consciously avoided the “sciences of the ancients,” particularly logic.

Al-Suyūṭī came to feel that he had been born into an age of widespread ignorance and scholarly decline, and that as the most knowledgeable person of his time he had a special mission to assemble and transmit the Islamic cultural patrimony before it disappeared entirely due to the carelessness of his contemporaries.¹³ This consciousness of his own superiority led him to make several very controversial claims.

Al-Suyūṭī’s conviction that “he alone, in an age of increasing ignorance, was a true scholar”¹⁴ first led him to claim that “. . . the tools of *ijtihād* have been perfected in me—I say that praising God and not out of pride.”¹⁵ Al-Suyūṭī noted that one could be a *mujtahid* in one field but not necessarily another, acknowledging that “most people are not aware of *ijtihād* in hadith and Arabic, but are aware of *ijtihād* in shari‘ah only.”¹⁶ Al-Suyūṭī, however, claimed *ijtihād* in all three of these fields, a rank unequalled, in his view, by anyone since the time of al-Subkī (d. 756/1355).¹⁷

introduction to the discussion of metaphor), the metaphor, the analogy, the metonymy and the allusion, and statement by implication. ‘*Ilm al-ma‘ānī* indicates a set of rather strict rules governing the art of correct sentence structure, the purpose of which was to demonstrate that changes in word order almost invariably lead to changes in meaning.” *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., *Glossary and Index of Technical Terms to Volumes I-VIII and to the Supplement, Fascicules 1-6*, 195-96.

⁹“Badī‘: the branch of rhetorical science which deals with the beautification of literary style, the artifices of the ornamentation and embellishment of speech.” (Ibid., 33)

¹⁰ Alam al-Dīn al-Bulqīnī.

¹¹Muḥammad Sulaymān Faraj, “Thaqāfat al-Imām al-Suyūṭī wa-Intājuhu wa-Juhūduhu al-‘Ilmīyah fī al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmīyah” in *Al-Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī: al-Iḥtifā’ bi-Dhikrā Murūr Khamsat Qurūn ‘alā Wafātih: Buḥūth al-Nadwah allatī ‘Aqadat’hā al-Munaẓẓamah bi-al-Ta‘āwun ma‘a Jāmi‘at al-Azhar, al-Qāhirah, 11-13 Shawwāl 1413 H/3-5 Abrīl 1993 M.* ([Rabat], 1416/1995), 1:70, quoting from al-Suyūṭī’s *Asbāb Wurūd al-Ḥadīth* without giving an exact citation.

¹²Al-Sha‘rānī, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣuḡhrā*, 22.

¹³Éric Geoffroy, “Al-Suyūṭī,” *EI*², 9:914.

¹⁴Sartain, *Al-Suyūṭī*, vol. 1, *Biography and Background*, 61.

¹⁵Faraj, “Thaqāfat al-Imām,” 70. This matter is discussed in detail by Sartain, *Al-Suyūṭī*, 1:61-69.

¹⁶Al-Sha‘rānī, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣuḡhrā*, 23 f.

¹⁷Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Taḥadduth*, vol. 2 of Sartain, *Al-Suyūṭī*, 205-14.



The rejection of this claim by most of his contemporaries led al-Suyūṭī to explain himself in the face of what he felt was their misunderstanding. Their accusation that he had claimed unrestricted, independent *ijtihād* like that wielded by the four imams who had founded the major schools of law was false. Rather, he was entitled to “derivative” (*muntasab*) unrestricted *ijtihād* within his *madhhab*: “When I attained the rank of unrestricted *ijtihād*, I did not depart in giving legal opinions from the *madhhab* of al-Shāfi‘ī.”¹⁸

Al-Suyūṭī set out his claim to *ijtihād* at length in his *Al-Radd ‘alá Man Akhlada ilá al-Arḍ wa-Jahila anna al-Ijtihād fī Kull ‘Aṣr Farḍ* [Refutation of those who abide on the earth and are ignorant of the fact that *ijtihād* is a duty in every age].¹⁹ As the title implies, al-Suyūṭī believed that anyone who denied the possibility of *ijtihād* was ignorant; it is a collective duty (*farḍ kifāyah*) which he, as the only qualified person, was discharging on his contemporaries’ behalf. He admitted, however, that while most of his opposition came from those who mistakenly denied the possibility of the current existence of any *mujtahid*, another group admitted that possibility but considered al-Suyūṭī unworthy of it.²⁰

Al-Suyūṭī’s conviction of his intellectual superiority, indeed uniqueness, grew until he was impelled to make a yet bolder claim: to be the restorer of religion (*mujaddid*) expected at the end of every century:

. . . I hope . . . to be the *mujaddid* at the end of this ninth (fifteenth) century, just as al-Ghazālī had hoped for himself, because I alone have mastered all kinds of different disciplines, such as Qur’ānic exegesis and its principles, Prophetic tradition and its sciences, jurisprudence and its principles, language and its principles, syntax and morphology and their principles, polemics, rhetoric and good style, and history. In addition to all this, there are my outstanding, excellent works, the like of which nobody has written before, and their number up till now is about 500. I have originated the science of the principles of language (*uṣūl al-lughah*) and its study, and nobody has preceded me in this. It follows the same lines as Prophetic tradition and principles of jurisprudence. My works and my knowledge have travelled to all countries, and have reached Syria, Rūm, Persia, the Hijaz, the Yemen, India, Ethiopia, North Africa, and Takrūr, and have spread from Takrūr to the ocean. In all that I

¹⁸Al-Sha‘rānī, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣuḡhrá*, 17-21.

¹⁹Ed. Fu‘ād ‘Abd al-Mun‘im Aḥmad (Alexandria, 1985).

²⁰Al-Suyūṭī, “Irshād al-Muhtadīn ilá Nuṣrat al-Mujtahidīn” [Guidance for the rightly guided to support of the *mujtahids*], quoted in Sartain, *Al-Suyūṭī*, 1:68.



have mentioned, I have no equal, nobody else living has mastered the number of disciplines that I have, and, as far as I know, nobody else has reached the rank of unrestricted *ijtihād* except for me.²¹

Undaunted by his contemporaries' reaction to this claim, which will be discussed below, al-Suyūṭī went on to convince the shadow 'Abbasid caliph, al-Mutawakkil 'alā Allāh 'Abd al-'Azīz, to appoint him qadi-in-chief over all qadis in all the lands of Islam, with the power to appoint and dismiss whomever he liked. When the qadis predictably rose in outraged protest, the caliph backed down and rescinded the appointment, saying, "What part did I have in this? It was the shaykh Jalāl al-Dīn who persuaded me that it was desirable; he said that this was an ancient post, and the caliphs used to grant it to whomever they chose among the ulama."²² Uncharacteristically, al-Suyūṭī unfortunately does not seem to have left an account of this affair from his point of view;²³ one can only speculate that it represented another aspect of his attempt to secure recognition as the foremost scholar of his time.

It appears that this recognition was more readily granted by those who were separated from al-Suyūṭī by either distance or time. He was widely revered outside of Egypt, and a great proportion of his writing consists of the *fatwās* he issued in response to requests from abroad. After his death a superstitious awe began to accrue to the scholar, at least according to his student Ibn Iyās, who reported that upon his death, some people bought his shirt and cap, hoping to obtain blessing through them.²⁴ There were even claims of miracles circulated, which purportedly al-Suyūṭī had requested be kept secret until after his death. These included the report of a servant that he and his master had miraculously been transported in an instant to Mecca and then just as quickly returned to Cairo,²⁵ and prediction of the Ottoman invasion and subsequent ruination of Egypt in 923/1517.²⁶

Among al-Suyūṭī's contemporary peers, however, his own pupils seem to have been somewhat isolated in their great admiration and respect for the man. His arrogance and combative personality made it virtually impossible for other scholars to appreciate his undeniable accomplishments, and his more extravagant claims in particular were met with outrage and scorn. His professional life consisted

²¹ Al-Suyūṭī, "Al-Tanbi'ah bi-Man Yab'athuhu Allāh 'alā Ra's Kull Mi'ah" [Announcement of he who is sent by God at the beginning of each century], quoted in Sartain, *Al-Suyūṭī*, 1:70-71.

²² Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 3:331.

²³ Sartain, *Al-Suyūṭī*, 1:93.

²⁴ Ibn Iyās, *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr*, 4:83.

²⁵ Al-Sha'rānī, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣuġhrá*, 30.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 31.



largely of disputes with other scholars (another large body of his writing consists of refutations of others' opinions, numerous titles beginning with *Al-Radd 'alá . . .*).

Perhaps the most powerful individual with whom al-Suyūṭī was in conflict was Ibn al-Karakī, a favorite of the sultan Qāyṭbāy—a conflict that caused him serious difficulties.²⁷ His bitterest rival, however, appears to have been al-Sakhāwī.

Al-Sakhāwī's entry on al-Suyūṭī in his biographical dictionary, *Al-Daw' al-Lāmi' li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi'*, drips with vitriol. He accused al-Suyūṭī firstly of plagiarism: ". . . he would take . . . a lot of earlier works in various fields which were not well known to his contemporaries, change a little bit, and then present them attributed to himself, and make a great fuss in presenting them such that the ignorant would suppose them to be something unequalled."²⁸ He added sarcastically, "If he were going to steal them, I wish at least he had not distorted them—if he had just copied them it would have been more useful."²⁹

Al-Sakhāwī went on to denigrate al-Suyūṭī's mastery of grammar (of which, we may recall, al-Suyūṭī was particularly proud) by accusing him of phonetic corruption (*tahrīf*) and misspelling or misplacement of diacritics (*tashīf*). This he attributed to al-Suyūṭī's faulty education which resulted from his having acquired much of his learning by reading independently rather than receiving it orally from a teacher.³⁰

Al-Sakhāwī was particularly scornful of al-Suyūṭī's claim to *ijtihād*; and not al-Sakhāwī alone but, he claims, "Everybody rose against him when he claimed *ijtihād*."³¹ In fact, al-Sakhāwī said, the claim was made "to cover up his mistakes."³² In sum, al-Sakhāwī admitted grudgingly that al-Suyūṭī was "quick at writing," but his truly distinguishing feature was his "folly and excessive arrogance, even to his mother, so that she continually complained of him."³³

As noted before, al-Suyūṭī seems to have been appreciated best at a distance. The sufi writer al-Sha'rānī (d. 973/1565), for instance, venerated al-Suyūṭī and wrote of him, "He was the most knowledgeable person of his time in the sciences and arts of hadith."³⁴ Complimentary entries on him appear in many later biographical

²⁷See note 3.

²⁸Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Daw' al-Lāmi' li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi'* (Beirut, 1966), 4:66.

²⁹Ibid., 68.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., 69.

³²Ibid., 68.

³³Ibid., 69.

³⁴Al-Sha'rānī, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣuḡhrá*, 28.



dictionaries and histories, from that of his pupil Ibn Iyās (d. ca. 930/1524)³⁵ through al-Ghazzī (d. 1061/1651)³⁶ and Ibn al-‘Imād (d. 1089/1679).³⁷ The centuries following al-Suyūṭī’s death are replete with abridgements, commentaries, and supercommentaries on his works (the pre-modern counterpart to our secondary literature).

With the rise of European interest in Islamic history and literature, al-Suyūṭī came in for his share of the disdain generally heaped on all authors post-dating the “golden” Abbasid period. Ignaz Goldziher (d. 1921), for instance dismissed a lifetime of work with the scathing comment: “. . . our ingenious al-Suyūṭī did not shrink from drawing up treatises which, at a cursory glance, purport to have no other end than the elucidation of the subject set down on the title page, but which, on closer examination, prove to be nothing other than polemical works whose sole purpose is to serve as an exaggerated advertisement for their author and as instruction to his contemporaries in his unsurpassed and unsurpassable greatness and erudition.”³⁸

Goldziher apparently shared al-Suyūṭī’s contemporaries’ outrage at his daring to claim the right of *ijtihād* as well as the status of the most learned man of the time:

Even if a not inconsiderable degree of vanity and self-esteem is required to list the description of his own life and scholarly labors among the biographies of the mujtahidūn—a vanity which is best illustrated by the pompous style and manner in which al-Suyūṭī speaks of his own works and refers to his own academic career—this is to a large extent overshadowed by the almost nauseating kind of self-adulation we find in his lesser works.

Despite his ability and diligence, and despite the value of his achievement, he must naturally have become an insufferable figure to many of his learned contemporaries, to whom the circumstance of his laying claim to all merit for himself seemed to detract from their own worth.³⁹

³⁵Ibn Iyās, *Badā’ i’ al-Zuhūr*.

³⁶Al-Ghazzī, *Al-Kawākib al-Sā’ irah*.

³⁷Ibn al-‘Imād, *Shadharāt al-Dhahab*.

³⁸Ignaz Goldziher, “Zur Charakteristik Gelāl ud-dīn us-Sujūtī’s und seiner literarischen Thätigkeit,” *Sitzberichte der philosophisch-historischen Classe der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Wien* 69 (1871), translated with notes by John Hunwick, “Ignaz Goldziher on al-Suyūṭī: A Translation of his Article of 1871, with Additional Notes,” *The Muslim World* 68, no. 2 (April 1978): 80-81.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 80.



Many earlier modern Arab scholars, and some up till the present, share this assessment, though without Goldziher's venomous and curiously personal dislike. They tend to dismiss al-Suyūṭī as a mere compiler. Sa'dī Abū Jīb, for instance, while titling his article "Al-Suyūṭī: Allāmat 'Aṣriḥ" [al-Suyūṭī: the most erudite of his age], opined that al-Suyūṭī's writings are not innovative nor do they show creative thought; this is only to be expected as that was the style for scholarly writing in his day. His value lies in the fact that he preserved for us earlier writings that were otherwise destroyed by the Mongol invasions and the fall of Spain.⁴⁰

Al-Suyūṭī's modern Western biographer, Elizabeth Sartain, cautiously agreed, at least partially, with this negative evaluation of scholarship in the Mamluk age and, by extension, that produced by al-Suyūṭī. While defending al-Suyūṭī against al-Sakhāwī's charges of plagiarism, Sartain deferred final judgment as to the "originality" of his work to "specialists in the fields of Muslim learning in which he wrote."⁴¹ She did note that the age's emphasis on oral transmission and memorization helped to discourage original thought,⁴² and concluded that despite the favorable conditions, and "in spite of the great activity of scholars, few outstanding contributions to knowledge were made, and by al-Suyūṭī's time there was evidence of steady decline in academic standards."⁴³

In contrast, and perhaps in reaction to this, in recent times there has been what might be termed a revival of interest in al-Suyūṭī and his work. An only moderately intensive search for books and articles dealing exclusively or substantially with the subject of al-Suyūṭī yielded a total of 192 titles, the vast majority written within the last thirty years. Following the traditional path, many of these are commentaries (s. *sharḥ*) on specific works. Others discuss al-Suyūṭī's sources and methodology in his endeavors in such fields as Quran commentary, philology, jurisprudence, and history, while still others attempt to evaluate his contributions and his significance as a scholar to those fields.

Two international conferences devoted solely to al-Suyūṭī have been held in Egypt, one in 1976 and a second in 1993, the latter commemorating the five hundredth anniversary of al-Suyūṭī's death.⁴⁴ (That same year an entire issue of

⁴⁰Sa'dī Abū Jīb, "Al-Suyūṭī: 'Allāmat 'Aṣriḥ," *Al-Turāth al-'Arabī* 13, no. 51 (1413/1993): 63-78.

⁴¹Sartain, *Al-Suyūṭī*, 1:115.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 123.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 119. Al-Suyūṭī, of course would have agreed with her assessment of scholarship in his age while excepting himself. See Sartain's lengthy discussion of this topic, which is much more nuanced than my extracts might suggest, pp. 112-33.

⁴⁴The proceedings of both conferences have been published: *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, prepared by al-Majlis al-A'lā li-Ri'āyat al-Funūn wa-al-Ādāb wa-al-'Ulūm al-Ijtimā'īyah, 13-19 (Cairo, 1978) and *Al-Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī: al-Iḥtifā' bi-Dhikrā Murūr Khamsat Qurūn 'alā Wafātih:*



the journal *Al-Turāth al-‘Arabī*⁴⁵ was devoted to articles treating various aspects of his life and work.) While the first conference was attended only by Egyptian participants, the second widened its scope to include contributors from a wide range of Muslim countries: Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Palestine, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Morocco, Kuwait, Pakistan, Senegal, Malaysia, Qatar, Iraq, and Tunisia. Neither, however, included any Western participants, and the papers published in the proceedings of both conferences (which treated basically the same themes as other literature on al-Suyūṭī) showed virtually no awareness of, or perhaps interest in, Western contributions to Suyūṭī studies.

Spokesmen for both conferences expressly stated that their purpose was to “revive” the memory of al-Suyūṭī, which had been unfairly allowed to lapse. The second conference went on to lay out a number of ambitious goals in this regard. These included, among others, organizing competitions (with prizes) for students carrying out al-Suyūṭī studies; production of a film on al-Suyūṭī; translating some of his works into world languages; urging journalists and other disseminators of information in all Islamic countries to educate the people about al-Suyūṭī’s contributions to Islamic culture; and enlisting the cooperation of various Muslim institutions to revive al-Suyūṭī’s beloved *ijtihād*.⁴⁶

Some Western scholars as well have become more appreciative of the value of al-Suyūṭī’s work. For instance, Éric Geoffroy’s 1997 *Encyclopaedia of Islam* article on al-Suyūṭī disputes the widespread condemnation of al-Suyūṭī as merely a compiler. No doubt he did do a great deal of compiling, extracting, summarizing, and commenting on earlier works (including his own) in keeping with his perceived mission of preserving the Islamic scholarly heritage. Yet he went beyond that, according to Geoffroy: “. . . he prefigures the modern period by certain aspects, such as being partly an autodidact, presenting to a public, which he wanted to be widened, manuals which were centered around precise themes. . . . He indeed takes up themes which were usually neglected in Islamic literature. . . . As for form, al-Suyūṭī’s procedure is scientific in so far as he quotes his sources with

Buḥūth al-Nadwah allatī ‘Aqadat’ hā al-Munazzamah bi-al-Ta‘āwun ma‘a Jāmi‘at al-Azhar, al-Qāhirah, 11-13 Shawwāl 1413 H/3-5 Abrīl 1993 M./Commemorating the 5th Centennial of the Death of Imam Jalal-Eddine Al-Souyouti: Papers presented at the Symposium organized by ISESCO and Al-Azhar University, Cairo, 11-13 Shawal 1413 H/3-5 April 1993/Commémoration du 5e centenaire de la mort de L’Imam Jalal-Eddine Al-Souyouti: Communications présentées au colloque organisé par l’ISESCO et l’Université Al-Azhar Le Caire, 11-13 chaoual 1413 H/3-5 avril 1993 ([Rabat], 1416/1995).

⁴⁵Vol. 13 (1413/1993).

⁴⁶*Al-Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, 2:602-3. I cannot say whether any of these goals have actually been met.



precision and presents them in a critical way. In the introduction to a work, he often defines the method which he is going to follow. His works benefit from a clear structure, and he often broke new ground by expounding his material according to its alphabetical order.⁴⁷

In any discussion of al-Suyūṭī, one is bound to express admiration, whether frank or grudging, and astonishment at the sheer massive quantity of his literary output. Al-Suyūṭī incorporated lists of his own works in other works on several occasions, and the biographies written by his students al-Shādhilī and al-Dāwūdī contained such lists approved by him. These lists differ from one another, ranging in size from 282 to 561 titles. Later biographical descriptions of al-Suyūṭī almost always include a count of his works if not a list; these range up to the nearly one thousand titles claimed (but not listed) by Ibn al-Qāḍī (d. 1025/1616).⁴⁸

The first modern Western attempt to compose a list of al-Suyūṭī's works, drawing from various sources, was carried out by Gustav Flügel in 1832,⁴⁹ and named more than 500 titles. Carl Brockelmann (who was concerned only with extant manuscripts) listed 415.⁵⁰ Since then a number of works have been devoted to the question of al-Suyūṭī's production and to attempting to pin the list down.⁵¹

⁴⁷Éric Geoffroy, "Al-Suyūṭī, Abū'l Faḍl 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr," *EI*², 9:914-15.

⁴⁸Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Qāḍī, *Durrat al-Ḥijāl fī Asmā' al-Rijāl*, quoted in Yaḥyá Maḥmūd Sā'ātī, "Mushkilat al-'Unwān fī Mu'allafāt al-Suyūṭī wa Atharuhā fī Iḍṭirāb Iḥṣā' 'Adadihā bayna al-Dārisīn" in *Al-Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, 1:141.

⁴⁹Gustav Flügel, "Sojuti's Leben und Schriften," *Jahrbücher der Literatur, Anzeige-Blatt* 58; 59; 60 (1832): 25-40; 20-36; 9-29.

⁵⁰Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* (Leiden, 1949), 2:180-204, S2:179-98.

⁵¹'Abd al-Ḥayy ibn 'Abd al-Kabīr Kattānī, *Fihris al-Fahāris wa-al-Ithbāt wa-Mu'jam al-Ma'ājim wa-al-Mashyakhāt wa-al-Musalsalāt* (1928; reprint Beirut, 1982-86), 2:1010-22; Jāmi'at al-Riyāḍ, Qism al-Makhtūṭāt, *Fihris Makhtūṭāt al-Suyūṭī al-Mawjūdah bi-Jāmi'at al-Riyāḍ*, prepared by Yaḥyá Maḥmūd Sā'ātī (Riyadh, 1972); Aḥmad al-Sharqāwī Iqbāl, *Maktabat al-Jalāl al-Suyūṭī: Sijill Yajma'u wa-Yasifu Mu'allafāt Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Suyūṭī* (Rabat, 1397/1977); 'Iṣām al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ra'ūf, "Mu'allafāt al-Suyūṭī" in *Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, 103-32; 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Izz al-Dīn Sayrawān, *Mu'jam Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥuffāz wa-al-Mufasssīrīn, ma'a Dirāsah 'an al-Imām al-Suyūṭī wa Mu'allafātih* (Beirut, 1984); 'Abd al-Ilāh Nabhān, "Fihris Mu'allafāt al-Suyūṭī al-Maṭbū'ah, Mansūqah 'alā al-Ḥurūf," *Ālam al-Kutub* 12, no. 1 (Rajab 1411/Jan 1991): 33-53; Muḥammad Khayr Ramaḍān Yūsuf, "Al-Mustadrak 'alā Fihris Mu'allafāt al-Suyūṭī al-Maṭbū'ah," *Ālam al-Kutub* 12, no. 3 (Muḥarram 1411/Aug 1991): 440-49; Yaḥyá Maḥmūd Sā'ātī, "Fihris Mu'allafāt al-Suyūṭī al-Mansūkh fī 'Āmm 903: Dirāsah wa-Taḥqīq," *Ālam al-Kutub* 12, no. 2 (Shawwāl 1411/Jan 1991): 232-48; idem, "Fihris Makhtūṭāt al-Suyūṭī: Nuskhah min Awākhir al-Qarn al-Thālith 'Ashar," *Ālam al-Kutub* 13, no. 6 (al-Jumādīyān 1413/Oct-Nov 1992): 639-47; idem, "Mushkilat al-'Unwān fī Mu'allafāt al-Suyūṭī"; Badī' al-Sayyid al-Lahhām, "Al-Mustadrak al-Thānī 'alā Fihris Mu'allafāt al-Suyūṭī al-Maṭbū'ah," *Ālam al-Kutub* 14, no. 3 (Dhū al-Qa'dah-Dhū al-Hijjah 1413/May-Jun 1993): 321-34; Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu, "Makhtūṭāt Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī fī Maktabāt Turkiyā" in *Al-Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, 1:171-74; Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm al-



Each list contains, and omits, works respectively omitted and contained in other lists.

Elizabeth Sartain, in her work on al-Suyūṭī's autobiography, detailed the difficulties that preparing a definitive list of his works would entail:

At one stage of my research, I had hoped to be able to prepare a complete list of al-Suyūṭī's works. Regrettably, this turned out to be impossible. Al-Suyūṭī's works number altogether some 600; one could conceivably prepare an accurate and complete list even of so large a number of works, were it not for the obscurity and confusion concerning the exact titles and subjects of many of them. Some of these problems can be solved by reference to existing MSS, other obscurities cannot be clarified because the works concerned have been lost. This confusion has several causes: firstly, many of the works have more than one title, for instance, a book referred to in one context by its proper title, may be mentioned in another context merely as "Commentary on such-and-such a work" or "Treatise on such-and-such a subject". These titles then become recorded in lists of al-Suyūṭī's works as if they are separate works. I suspect that al-Suyūṭī himself occasionally made this mistake in his own lists of his works, and certainly Brockelmann's list has several examples of such confusion. Secondly, it was al-Suyūṭī's habit to rewrite his works, to abridge them, sometimes more than once, to issue parts of a larger work separately, and sometimes to join short works together in a larger one. This means that there may be two or more works on exactly the same subject, sometimes with very similar titles; once the titles are misrecorded by copyist or cataloguer, it becomes impossible to distinguish between them except by reading them, if copies have survived and are accessible. The task of drawing up a list of al-Suyūṭī's works would be easier if he had written less; as it is, anyone who embarks on this task will be obliged to consult many of those MSS of al-Suyūṭī's works which have survived, and these probably run into thousands, scattered in libraries all over the world.⁵²

Shaybānī and Aḥmad Sa'īd al-Khāzindār, *Dalīl Makḥṭūṭāt al-Suyūṭī wa-Amākin Wujūdhā* (2nd ed., Kuwait, 1995); Nāṣir ibn Sa'ūd ibn 'Abd Allāh Salāmah, *Mu'jam Mu'allafāt al-Suyūṭī al-Makḥṭūṭah bi-Maktabat al-Mamlakah al-'Arabīyah al-Sa'ūdīyah al-'Ammah* (Riyadh, 1996).

⁵²Sartain, *Al-Suyūṭī*, 1:179.



Although valiant efforts have been made in this direction, notably by Aḥmad al-Sharqāwī Iqbāl and Muḥammad Ibrāhīm al-Shaybānī with Aḥmad Sa'īd al-Khāzindār in their identifications of extant manuscripts,⁵³ it appears that for the matter to be solved (to the extent possible given the survival or lack thereof of any given work) it would require implementation of the primary recommendation set forth at the 1993 conference. This called on ISESCO (the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) to appoint a committee of experts to prepare a detailed, indexed list of al-Suyūṭī's works, indicating manuscript locations of extant works, and date and place of publication of published titles.⁵⁴

How was it possible for one man to produce such a huge quantity of work? 'Iṣām al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ra'ūf admonished us not to dismiss this as impossible; after all, al-Suyūṭī began writing at the age of seventeen and spent the last years of his life in seclusion, totally devoted to his work of composing and editing.⁵⁵ Moreover, as Sartain and others have noted, al-Suyūṭī often divided single works into sections, giving each section a separate title. Al-Sakhāwī sniffed, "He [al-Suyūṭī] mentioned that his compositions exceed three hundred books. I saw of them what consisted of a single sheet of paper [e.g., a *fatwā*]; as for those that are less than one quire, they are many."⁵⁶ To be fair to al-Suyūṭī, though, we must note that conversely a number of his works consist of many volumes. Clearly there is no getting around the fact that the man was extraordinarily productive.

The range of subjects which al-Suyūṭī covered is equally impressive. Lists of al-Suyūṭī's works are typically divided by subject. His student al-Shādhilī's list, approved by the master himself in the year 904/1498-99, for instance, is classified as follows: Quran commentary and what relates to it, 37 titles; hadith and what relates to it, 207 titles; what is related to the terminology (*muṣṭalah*) of hadith, 24 titles; jurisprudence, 73 titles; principles of jurisprudence, principles of religion, and sufism, 17 titles; philology, grammar, and morphology, 57 titles; rhetoric, 7 titles; works combining various subjects, 10 titles; literature, anecdotes, prose

⁵³See note 51.

⁵⁴*Al-Imām Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, 2:602.

⁵⁵'Abd al-Ra'ūf, "Mu'allafāt al-Suyūṭī," 24.

⁵⁶Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Daw' al-Lāmi'*, 4:68.



composition, and poetry, 97 titles;⁵⁷ and history, 32 titles.⁵⁸ This is virtually a syllabus of classical Islamic scholarship.

What, then can be said about the true value, the quality as opposed to quantity of this vast corpus? Al-Suyūṭī clearly considered his work qualitatively and not just quantitatively superior to that of any of his peers: "It is my wont to write only on matters in which I have no precursor and then to exhaust the subject completely."⁵⁹ Yet he never claimed to have authored four or five or six hundred weighty tomes. He was well aware of the different levels of significance of his various works (one might quibble with his decision to award a title to a one-page *fatwá* and list it as a "work"). A valuable glimpse into his thinking is provided by his list of his own works that appears in his autobiography *Al-Taḥadduth bi-Ni'mat Allāh*. This list, unlike all others including those drawn up by him, is divided not by subject matter, but into seven classes delineated by worth and degree of originality.

Al-Suyūṭī described the first class of his works as follows: "Those for which I claim uniqueness. The meaning of this is that nothing comparable has been composed in the world, as far as I know. This is not due to the incapability of those who came before—God forbid—but it simply did not happen that they undertook anything like it. As for the people of this age, they cannot produce its like due to what that would require of breadth of vision, abundance of information, effort, and diligence."⁶⁰

This section consists of 18 titles:

Eight in the field of philology and grammar:

"Jam' al-Jawāmi' fī al-'Arabīyah"

Its commentary, entitled "Ham' al-Hawāmi'"

"Al-Ashbāh wa-al-Nazā'ir fī al-Qawā'id al-'Arabīyah," also entitled

"Al-Maṣā'id al-'Alīyah fī al-Qawā'id al-'Arabīyah"

"Al-Silsilah fī al-Naḥw"

"Al-Nukat 'alá 'Al-alfīyah' wa-'Al-Kāfiyah' wa-'Al-Shāfiyah'

⁵⁷Most of these are *maqāmāt*; Brockelmann labelled them al-Suyūṭī's "experiment[s] in belles-lettres" and noted dryly that they ". . . only have the title and the form (rhymed prose) in common with the perfect examples of this genre. . . ." (Carl Brockelmann, "Al-Suyūṭī, Abū'l Faḍl 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad Ḍjalāl al-Dīn al-Khūḍairī al-Shāfi'ī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 1st ed., (reprint), 7:573. While perhaps artistically lacking, the subject matter of these *maqāmāt*, which ranges from information on plants to erotica, once again highlights al-Suyūṭī's amazing versatility.

⁵⁸Al-Shādhilī, *Bahjat al-'Ābidīn*, 175-255.

⁵⁹Al-Suyūṭī, "Ghāyat al-Iḥsān fī Khalq al-Insān," quoted in Goldziher/Hunwick, "Ignaz Goldziher on al-Suyūṭī," 94.

⁶⁰Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Taḥadduth*, vol. 2 of Sartain, *Al-Suyūṭī*, 105.



wa-'Al-Shudhūr' wa-'Al-Nuzhah⁶¹ in one composition
 "Al-Fatḥ al-Qarīb 'alá 'Mughnī al-Labīb"⁶²
 "Sharḥ Shawāhid 'Al-Mughnī"
 "Al-Iqtirāḥ fī Uṣūl al-Naḥw wa-Jadaluḥ"

Six in the field of Quran and its commentary:

"Al-Itqān fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān"
 "Al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi-al-Ma'thūr"
 "Tarjumān al-Qur'ān"
 "Asrār al-Tanzīl"
 "Al-Iklīl fī Istinbāṭ al-Tanzīl"
 Tanāsuq al-Durar fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa-al-Suwar

One each in hadith, biography, jurisprudence, and a rebuttal of logic and scholastic theology:

"Nukat al-Badī'āt 'alá 'Al-Mawḍū'āt"⁶³
 "Ṭabaqāt al-Nuḥāh al-Kubrā," entitled "Bughyat al-Wu'āh"
 "Al-Jāmi' fī al-Farā'id," incomplete
 "Ṣawn al-Manṭiq wa-al-Kalām 'an Fann al-Manṭiq wa-al-Kalām"

Subsequent generations have agreed with al-Suyūṭī's esteem for these 18 works. All of them were valued enough to be represented by extant manuscripts; the value accorded to them in more recent times can be gauged by the fact that all but 3 of them have been published (some many times).

Al-Suyūṭī described his second class as one "for which comparable works have been composed, and a very learned person could produce its like. This class includes works of which at least a volume, more or less, was completed,⁶⁴ though some of them are labeled "unfinished." This class comprises 50 titles; many of these are abridgements of Suyūṭī's or others' works, abridgements of abridgements, and commentaries on commentaries. Of these, 38 titles are extant, and 30 of these titles have been published.

⁶¹"Al-Alfīyah fī al-Naḥw wa-al-Ṣarf" by Ibn Mālik (d. 672/1274); "Al-Kāfiyah fī 'Ilm al-I'rāb" and "Al-Shāfiyah fī 'Ilm al-Taṣrīf" by Ibn al-Ḥājib (d. 646/1249); "Shudhūr al-Dhahab fī Ma'rifat Kalām al-'Arab" by Ibn Hishām (d. 761/1360); "Nuzhat al-Ṭarf fī 'Ilm al-Ṣarf" by al-Maydānī (d. 518/1124). (Sartain, *Al-Suyūṭī*, 1:180, n. 12)

⁶²"Mughnī al-Labīb 'an Kutub al-A'ārīb" by Ibn Hishām (d. 761/1360). (Sartain, *Al-Suyūṭī*, 1:180, n. 13)

⁶³"Al-Mawḍū'āt min al-Aḥādīth al-Marfū'āt" by Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200). (Sartain, *Al-Suyūṭī*, 1:180, n. 7)

⁶⁴Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Taḥadduth*, vol. 2 of Sartain, *Al-Suyūṭī*, 106.



Class three consists of 60 works of small size, ranging from 2 to 10 quires (s. *kurrāsah*).⁶⁵ Of these, 55 are extant, and only 17 of them remain unpublished.

Class four comprises quire-length works, excluding *fatwās*.⁶⁶ Al-Suyūṭī listed here 102 works, including 59 extant works of which 32 have been published. This section includes, among other things, his many *maqāmāt*, which are not here listed individually under their separate titles but have often been so listed and so published.

Fatwās are gathered into a class of their own. Al-Suyūṭī characterizes them as being of the size of "quires—more or less,"⁶⁷ though as we have seen they could be "less" than a quire to the extent of being a single page. There are 80 titles here; of these, a surprising 67 are extant and 60 have been published (though most often in compilations, not separately).

Al-Suyūṭī's class six is quite interesting. These, he said, are "compositions that I do not count because they are of the type done by idlers who are interested merely in transmitting, which I composed at the time I was studying and seeking *ijāzahs*—although they contain good points compared to what other people write."⁶⁸ Most of these 40 titles are "*muntaqās*" [selected extracts] of other works; indeed, they appear to be little more than al-Suyūṭī's study notes. Not surprisingly, only 8 are extant, none of them published.

The final class consists of works "which I started then lost interest in, having written only a little."⁶⁹ These 83 titles again seem mainly to consist of notes and study aids: abridgements, marginal notes on commentaries and supercommentaries, versifications, no doubt to aid in memorization. Of these 15 still exist and 6, all on the subject of hadith, have even been published.

This gives us a snapshot, based on one listing, of the place of al-Suyūṭī's works in Islamic scholarship. We can attempt to judge the value placed on a given work by succeeding generations by seeing whether or not that work was copied and has left surviving manuscripts. As mentioned earlier, a number of attempts have been made to identify the existence and location of manuscripts of all of al-Suyūṭī's works.⁷⁰

⁶⁵Ibid., 111.

⁶⁶Ibid., 115.

⁶⁷Ibid., 121.

⁶⁸Ibid., 126.

⁶⁹Ibid., 129.

⁷⁰Brockelmann, *GAL*, 2:180-204, S2:179-98; Iqbāl, *Maktabat al-Jalāl al-Suyūṭī*; Sā'ātī, "Fihris Makhtūṭāt al-Suyūṭī"; al-Shaybānī and al-Khāzindār, *Dalīl Makhtūṭāt al-Suyūṭī*. Al-Shaybānī and al-Khāzindār located manuscripts representing 724 works and were unable to locate manuscripts for 187 more titles, giving a total of 911 works.



In turn the judgment of more modern times on the worth of a certain work is evidenced by publication or lack thereof. I have come up with a list of 392 works written by al-Suyūṭī that have been published at least once, without counting additional editions of the same title.⁷¹ Surely the production of such a huge number of works judged worthy of publication is a tremendous achievement.

It is an interesting though probably ultimately futile exercise to seek a definitive enumeration of the individual works within the corpus of al-Suyūṭī's literary production and to trace the existence and location of their manuscripts and history of publication. However, stepping back now to focus on the forest instead of the trees, al-Suyūṭī gave the world an enormous quantity of scholarly material, saving and transmitting treasures of the Islamic cultural heritage but also adding his own valuable contribution to it.

⁷¹Other such listings, all of which I have taken into account, include again Iqbāl, *Maktabat al-Jalāl al-Suyūṭī* and al-Shaybānī and al-Khāzindār, *Dalīl Makhṭūṭāt al-Suyūṭī*, as well as Nabhān, "Fihris Mu'allafāt al-Suyūṭī al-Maṭbū'ah"; Salāmah, *Mu'jam Mu'allafāt al-Suyūṭī*; Yūsuf, "Al-Mustadrak 'alā Fihris Mu'allafāt al-Suyūṭī al-Maṭbū'ah"; and al-Lahhām, "Al-Mustadrak al-Thānī 'alā Fihris Mu'allafāt al-Suyūṭī al-Maṭbū'ah."



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Mamluk Legitimacy and the Mongols: The Reigns of Baybars and Qalāwūn

To date scholars have established that the early Mamluk sultans legitimized their rule through the conscious use of Islamic themes.¹ As yet however, one crucial issue that has not been routinely addressed, but should be, is audience. Much of the scholarship on Mamluk legitimacy assumes that this legitimacy was asserted in relation to an internal audience, by which is meant either the military elite, the non-military populace, or both. But Mamluk legitimacy must also be examined in light of various external audiences. The most significant of these, and the one discussed here, was those Mongol sovereigns with whom the Mamluks were in the closest contact, namely, the rulers of the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanids. Mamluk assertions of legitimacy can be detected in the diplomatic letters and embassies Baybars and Qalāwūn exchanged with each Mongol power.

Furthermore, although scholars have already discussed the Islamic foundation on which Mamluk legitimacy rested, as yet no one has asked, "Why this particular

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¹Only Stefan Heidemann ventures into a discussion of the external Mongol audience; the remaining scholars (mentioned below) focus fairly exclusively on the internal audience. This focus itself is quite clear, but rarely made explicit. See Stefan Heidemann, *Das allepiner Kalifat (A.D. 1261): Vom Ende des Kalifates in Baghdad über Aleppo zu den Restaurationen in Kairo*, Islamic History and Civilization, 6 (Leiden, 1994); also P. M. Holt, "The Structure of Government in the Mamluk Sultanate" in *The Eastern Mediterranean Lands in the Period of the Crusades*, ed. P. M. Holt, (Warminster, England, 1977), 44-61; idem, "Some Observations on the Abbasid Caliphate of Cairo," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 47 (1984): 501-7; idem, "The Position and Power of the Mamluk Sultan," *BSOAS* 38 (1975): 237-49; R. Stephen Humphreys, "The Expressive Intent of the Mamluk Architecture of Cairo: A Preliminary Essay," *Studia Islamica* 35 (1972): 69-119; Jacques Jomier, *Le Mahmal et la caravane Égyptienne des Pelerins de la Mecque (XIIIe-XXe siècles)* (Cairo, 1953); Remke Kruk, "History and Apocalypse: Ibn al-Nafis' Justification of Mamluk Rule," *Der Islam* 72 (1995): 324-37; Wilferd Madelung, "A Treatise on the Imamate Dedicated to Sultan Baybars I" in *Proceedings of the 14th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants*, ed. A. Fodor (Budapest, 1995), 1:91-102; Emmanuel Sivan, *L'Islam et la Croisade: Idéologie et propagande dans les réactions musulmanes aux Croisades* (Paris, 1968); Peter Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century*, trans. P. M. Holt, (London and New York, 1992); and John E. Woods, "Islamic History, 1200-1500: The Transition from Late Medieval to Early Modern," a paper presented at the Smithsonian Institution on the occasion of the opening of the Esin Atil exhibition, "Renaissance of Islam: Art of the Mamluks," 1981.



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foundation?" To address this question in part, we must first acknowledge that the ideology expressed in the diplomatic interaction was not the product of any individual Mamluk sultan alone; rather, it arose from an amalgam of existing diplomatic protocol, the wishes of the sultan and his closest military advisors, and the stylistic, rhetorical, and ideological concerns of the religiously-trained scholars who actually produced the letters. Indeed, each diplomatic mission, and thus the ideas embedded within it, must be seen as the product of a great and, unfortunately, largely indiscernible collaboration of minds. Certainly, however, the religious orientation of much of Mamluk ideology must be understood in part as a contribution from the religious scholars who wrote it.

But this alone is not enough to explain the Mamluk recourse to religious symbolism; indeed, they were hardly the first to employ it. In fact, we must also consider the influence of Mongol ideology. It must be remembered that at least until 1335 Mamluk assertions of legitimacy for the external audience were directed primarily at the Mongols on a number of levels. The Mamluk sultans came to power in an age that can be described as one of Nomad Prestige,² and witnessed the appearance of a new and powerful legitimizing ideology, that of the Mongol ruling family. In brief: Chinggis Khān and his descendants saw themselves as a divinely-favored dynasty, whose members were destined to rule the entire world through their possession of a special good fortune (the imperial *su*), which had been granted by the supreme deity Tenggeri, who represented Heaven or the Great Blue Sky itself.³ In such an ideological context, any independent ruler intent on retaining his independence was a rebel, not only against the Chinggis Khanid family, but worse yet, against the Will of Heaven as well. The wholesale and merciless slaughter of such rebels was therefore necessary and good, since it both implemented the Divine Will and provided an excellent object lesson for other would-be rebels. In addition to this clear, uncompromising, and universalist ideology of rule, the Mongols brought with them innovations in concepts of law, among which was the introduction of an all-important set of laws and decrees issued by Chinggis Khān himself, the *yāsā* (Mongolian *yasagh*). This was to play an important role in legitimizing ideology both during and after the Mongol period.⁴

²Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago, 1974), 2:369.

³I. de Rachewiltz, "Some Remarks on the Ideological Foundations of Chinggis Khan's Empire," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 7 (1973): 21-36; J. J. Saunders, *The History of the Mongol Conquests* (London, 1971), 53, 65; Bertold Spuler, *Les Mongols dans l'Histoire* (Paris, 1961), 18.

⁴I. de Rachewiltz, "Foundations," 25, 29; Hodgson, *Venture*, 2:405-6. For a discussion of the *yāsā* see: I. de Rachewiltz, "Some Reflections on Činggis Qan's Ĵasy," *East Asian History* 6 (1993): 91-104; David Ayalon, "The Great *Yāsā* of Chingiz Khan. A Reexamination," *Studia Islamica* 33 (1971): 97-140, 34 (1971): 151-80, 36 (1972): 113-58, 38 (1973): 107-56 (also reprinted in his *Outsiders in the Lands of Islam: Mamluks, Mongols and Eunuchs* (London, 1988); D. O. Morgan,



Mongol claims to legitimacy were made known to others in a variety of ways: first and imperfectly through the Mongols' written and verbal demands for submission from as-yet-undefeated rulers, among them the Mamluk sultans themselves. Second, and more thoroughly, the Mongols disseminated their ideology directly to the newly-subdued either through the command appearance of new vassals at Mongol courts, or through the retaining and "reeducating" of the hostage relatives of such vassals. Likewise some scholars furthered literate knowledge about the Mongols, including their ideology, by writing treatises on them.⁵

The Mamluk sultans in particular had other reasons to be familiar with the Mongol manifestation of legitimacy. Many of the early Mamluks not only had originated in lands controlled by scions of the House of Chinggis Khān, but came from a pagan steppe background similar to the Mongols' own; this the Mamluks' subsequent Arabic Islamic education could only overlay, not erase. More notably, an unspecified number of Mamluks were themselves Mongols, some of whom had fought in the Mongol conquering armies. Likewise the Mamluk sultanate received and absorbed several successive waves of immigrant Mongols in its first fifty-odd years.⁶ These were welcomed into the Mamluk military elite at all levels, including the highest. In fact, with such numbers of Mongols on hand and such a level of expertise among them, the Mamluk sultanate may have had arguably the best possible knowledge of Mongols and their ways for a region not under Mongol rule at that time.

Thus the Mamluks were faced not only with the very real, physical menace of the nearby Ilkhanids, but also with the less tangible but equally real shadow of Mongol prestige from both the Ilkhanids and the Golden Horde. They had no ready ideological response to the Mongol claim of divine favor, the supremacy of the *yāsā* or the apparent superiority of the Chinggis Khanid ruling family. In fact the Mamluks were ideologically weak even without the Mongol menace. In a world where lineage had mattered and would matter for centuries, the Mamluk sultans were singularly ill-suited to justify their rule, for they uniformly suffered from the significant problem of slave origin. They were at worst men whose

"The 'Great Yasa of Chingiz Khan' and Mongol Law in the Ilkhanate," *BSOAS* 49 (1986): 163-76.

⁵I am thinking here, of course, of Juvaynī, whose work became known in Mamluk lands and was eventually the basis for much of Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī's writings on the Mongols. See 'Alā' al-Dīn 'Aṭā Malik Juvaynī, *Tārīkh-i Jahān-Gushāy*, ed. Muḥammad Qazvīnī, E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, 16 (Leiden and London, 1912); tr. J. A. Boyle, *The History of the World-Conqueror* (Manchester, 1958); also see Aḥmad ibn Yaḥyá Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī, *Das mongolische Weltreich: al-'Umarī's Darstellung der mongolischen Reiche in seinem Werk Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*, ed and tr. Klaus Lech (Wiesbaden, 1968).

⁶See David Ayalon, "The Wafidiyya in the Mamluk Sultanate," *Islamic Culture* 25 (January-October 1951): 89-109.



professional careers had begun with a period of servitude, or at best, the sons and grandsons of such men. Slaves were nobodies, their origins mostly unknown and assumed to be unimportant. A slave had no illustrious lineage; if he did, few either knew about it or cared.

Admittedly the Mamluks were military slaves, not domestic or agricultural workers, and military slavery was the most elevated kind of male bondage in terms of career possibilities and relative social status. Nevertheless the stigma of servitude, combined with the resulting perceived lack of illustrious lineage, posed a real, significant, and long-term ideological problem both for Mamluk rulers and for the religious scholars who produced the actual Mamluk diplomatic missives.

That this issue was perceived as an ideological weak spot can be gleaned from Mongol opinion of the Mamluks. In Hülegü's 658/1260 demand for total submission from Qutuz, for example, Hülegü denigrated the latter for his servile origins.⁷ The Ilkhanids' Armenian allies were even more insulting, according to Grigor of Akner, who relates that when Baybars attempted to correspond with the Armenian king Het'um in the early 660s/1260s, Het'um called him a dog and a slave, and refused to have any dealings with him. When Baybars subsequently took Het'um's son Lev'on captive in 664/1266, he reportedly asked the Armenian prince: "Your father called me a slave and would not make peace. Am I the slave now, or you?"⁸ Nor were later Mamluk rulers safe from such accusations—Ghazan reportedly hurled them at both al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and his father Qalāwūn when conversing with local ulama during the Ilkhanid occupation of Damascus in 699/1300.⁹ Nearly a century later Tīmūr, who was not even himself a Mongol, disparaged the slave origin of sultan Barqūq in a letter to the Ottoman Yıldırım Bayazid.¹⁰

Thus given both their own lack of lineage and the awesome challenge of Mongol prestige, it is not surprising that, for the external audience, the early Mamluk sultans and the scholars around the throne turned to an ideology of legitimacy that was defined simultaneously by religion and military action. Using such concepts as Mamluk achievement on the battlefield in the name of religion, and the physical protection of Muslims and Islamic society—both officially

⁷Bar Hebraeus, *Tārīkh Mukhtaṣar al-Duwal*, ed. Fr. Anton Salahani (Beirut, 1890), 484-85; Abū Bakr ibn 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa Jāmi' al-Ghurar*, ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Cairo, 1391/1971), 8:47-48; Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā fī Sinā'at al-Inshā'* (Cairo, 1333/1915), 8:63-64.

⁸Grigor of Akner, "History of the Nation of the Archers," ed. and tr. Robert P. Blake and Richard N. Frye, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 12, nos. 3 and 4 (December 1949): 359.

⁹Rashīd al-Dīn Ṭabīb, *Tārīkh-i Mubārak-i Ghāzānī: Dāstān-i Ghāzān Khān*, ed. Karl Jahn, E. W. J. Gibb Memorial Series, n.s., 14 (London, 1940), 127.

¹⁰Zeki Velidi Togan, "Timurs Osteuropapolitik," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (1958): 108, 279-98.



sanctioned by the Cairene Abbasid caliphs—the Mamluk sultans managed to sidestep the linked issues of slavery and unknown lineage, and respond to the ideological and military challenges of Mongol power in general. The Ilkhanid threat in particular had the unexpected positive side effect of giving Baybars, Qalāwūn, and their civilian and military advisors something on which to focus and by which to find definition. If the Ilkhanids were infidels and Slaughterers of Muslims, Murderers of the Abbasid Caliph, and so on, then the Mamluks could be Defenders of Islam, Protectors of Muslims, Friends of the Caliph, etc. The Mamluks maintained their ideology of religious guardianship in the face of Mongol prestige at least until the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.¹¹

THE MAMLUKS AND THE GOLDEN HORDE

Historians face a paucity of evidence when investigating the relations of the early Mamluk sultans to the Golden Horde. Fortunately this has not deterred the determined, and a number of authors have contributed short, medium, and even lengthy expositions of the subject, among them S. Zakirov, Reuven Amitai, David Ayalon, Stefan Heidemann, Peter Jackson, and Marius Canard.¹² Given the extensive nature of some of these contributions, I will restrict the present study to an investigation of the ideology involved in those relations, although this may still require the presentation of material well-examined elsewhere. Certainly the effort of the aforementioned scholars is to be commended, since none of the letters are preserved in documentary form, and very few remain even in literary form, despite the time, effort, and money Baybars and Qalāwūn expended on establishing and maintaining cordial ties to Saray. We must therefore rely on the particulars of behavior and event, and those snippets of messages that were provided at the discretion and literary judgement of the chroniclers. This situation is further complicated by the chroniclers' own biases, for their initially strong interest in the

¹¹This should not imply that by avoiding genealogical issues the Mamluks lost interest in them. On the contrary, all of the early Mamluk sultans made considerable efforts to develop their own dynasties, although only Qalāwūn was at all successful. Likewise examples exist of individual Mamluks whose illustrious—albeit questionable—lineage is traced in the sources. Quṭuz is one example; al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh (815-24/1412-21) is another. The attempts by chroniclers to discover or uncover lineages worth the name for important Mamluk figures only highlights the concern with which contemporary society viewed the issue.

¹²S. Zakirov, *Diplomaticheskie Otnosheniia Zolotoi Ordy s Egiptom (XIII-XIV vv.)* (Moscow, 1966); Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260-1281* (Cambridge, 1995); Ayalon, "Yasa," parts B and C; Peter Jackson, "The Dissolution of the Mongol Empire," *Central Asiatic Journal* 22, nos. 3-4 (1978): 186-244; Marius Canard, "Un traité entre Byzance et l'Égypte au XIIIe siècle et les relations diplomatiques de Michel VIII Paléologue avec les sultans mamlûks Baibars et Qalâ'ûn" in *Mélanges Gauthier-Demombynes* (Cairo, 1935-45), 197-224.



Golden Horde dwindled over the years. One might surmise that the Golden Horde could not compete with the far more absorbing and dramatic Ilkhanids, who received much more ink. Nevertheless the importance of the Golden Horde to Mamluk rulers should not be underestimated.

As early in his reign as 660/1262 Baybars sent out feelers to the Golden Horde in the form of a letter to Berke Khān, which he entrusted to a reliable merchant.¹³ This attempt was probably spurred by the news of a battle between Berke Khān and Hülegü, which Hülegü had lost.¹⁴ No full copy of the letter remains, but its author, Baybars' redoubtable biographer and head chancellor Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, cannot resist describing his work and even giving an example or two of his style. By this point, Baybars had heard rumors that Berke Khān had converted to Islam. Thus in the letter Baybars urged Berke Khān to fight Hülegü, reminding him that as a Muslim he must wage holy war against other Mongols, even if they were his relatives. (Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir informs us that he himself supported this argument for Baybars by pointing out that the Prophet had fought his own relatives from among the Quraysh in order to ensure their conversion.¹⁵) Clearly as a non-Mongol trying to intervene in the affairs of the Mongol ruling family, this was the only approach Baybars could take. Further emphasizing this Muslim-infidel dichotomy, Baybars/Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir appealed to anti-Christian sentiment: "Reports have come one after the next that, for the sake of his wife and her Christianity, Hūlāwūn [*sic*] has established the religion of the cross, and has advanced the observance of his wife's religion over your religion. He has settled the unbelieving *jathliq* [Nestorian Catholicus] in the home of the [Abbasid] caliphs, [thereby] preferring her over you."¹⁶ Thereafter we learn that the letter urged Berke Khān to fight Hülegü, and discussed Baybars' own efforts as a *mujāhid*.¹⁷

Although Baybars received no immediate answer to his first effort at contacting the Golden Horde, relations nevertheless developed further later that same year, when a group of about two hundred Mongols appeared in eastern Syria, heading for Damascus. Initially their approach triggered the sending out of a Mamluk reconnaissance force, the scorching of a wide swathe of earth around Aleppo and an upsurge of panic throughout the Syrian population. When the Mamluk force actually encountered the Mongols, however, it was revealed that the infidels were

¹³ Muḥyī al-Dīn Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sirat al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz Khuwayṭir (Riyadh, 1976), 88-89.

¹⁴ 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ismā'īl Abū Shāmah, *Tarājim Rijāl al-Qarnayn al-Sādis wa-al-Sābi' al-Ma'rūf bi-al-Dhayl 'alā al-Rawdatayn*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid ibn al-Ḥassān al-Kawtharī (Cairo, 1366/1947), 219; also see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 81.

¹⁵ Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 88.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*



in fact Muslims and bore greetings to the ruler of Egypt from none other than Berke Khān. Once the religious identity of the group had been established, Baybars ordered that they be welcomed warmly, sent robes of honor to them and their wives, and had houses built for them in Cairo.¹⁸ They finally arrived in that city on 24 Dhū al-Hijjah 660/9 November 1262.¹⁹ The Mamluk sultan met them personally two days later on 26 Dhū al-Hijjah/11 November and held a great ceremony of welcome for them in which he handed out robes, horses and money, and appointed their leaders amirs of one hundred and the rest amirs of varying lesser degrees.²⁰

Almost immediately after the arrival of the Golden Horde delegation Baybars hastened to prepare envoys of his own to send to Berke Khān. He also scrambled to present the right image. A week later on 2 Muḥarram 661/16 November 1262 Baybars inaugurated a refugee Abbasid as the caliph al-Ḥākīm in the presence of the Mongol leaders, his own envoys, the senior Mamluk amirs, and the most important religious personnel in Cairo. Al-Ḥākīm's lineage was verified, and a family tree drawn up. Baybars swore allegiance to the caliph, promising to rule in a godly fashion and to fight for God's sake. In return al-Ḥākīm invested Baybars with the care of Muslim lands and Muslims in general, exhorted him to perform jihad, appointed Baybars his partner in supporting the truth [of religion],²¹ and finished by giving two brief sermons. In them al-Ḥākīm focused on the concepts of *imāmah* (leadership of the Muslim community) and *jihād* (here: military struggle against infidels). To underscore the importance of these two themes al-Ḥākīm evoked the horrors of Hülegü's sack of Baghdad, then demonstrated that Baybars had revived the imamate, driven away the enemy, reestablished the Abbasid caliphate to its exalted position, and supplied it with a willing army. Al-Ḥākīm finished by exhorting his listeners to fight the holy fight, and reminded them of their religious duty to obey those in command, i.e., Baybars.²² After the ceremony Baybars had a letter to Berke Khān drawn up, in which he urged the Mongol ruler to perform jihad against Hülegü, described the composition and strength of his own armies, enumerated his allies and enemies, and went on to reassure Berke Khān of the warm welcome the Mongol delegation had received. In addition Baybars discussed al-Ḥākīm's inauguration in Cairo and al-Ḥākīm's lineage. A copy of the caliph's family tree accompanied the letter, and the envoys were sent off in Muḥarram 661/November-December 1262.

¹⁸Ibid., 136-37, and copying him, Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Fuṣūn al-Adab*, ed. Sa'īd 'Āshūr (Cairo, 1410/1990), 30:63.

¹⁹Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:63.

²⁰Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 138.

²¹"*Qasīmahu fī qiyyām al-ḥaqq*," Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 142.

²²Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 143-45.



Stefan Heidemann links the investiture of al-Ḥākim to Baybars' ideological requirements for establishing relations with Berke Khān. Baybars had already legitimized himself to the internal audience through the establishment of his first Abbasid caliph, al-Mustanṣir, whom he had then summarily disposed of by sending him off to die attempting to retake Baghdad.²³ Upon the arrival of Berke Khān's followers, Baybars found himself facing a new audience, but without a caliph. Heidemann points out that the non-Mongol Baybars had several ideological strikes against him when compared to Berke Khān, including Baybars' status as a former slave, and his origin in Qipchak lands, which at that time were subordinate to the Golden Horde.²⁴ Fortunately however, Berke Khān had converted to Islam, and luckily Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad, another Abbasid, had made it back from the debacle in Iraq and was available for the caliphate. Baybars hastily had him recognized, and thereby in his message to Berke Khān was able to refer to a number of legitimizing concepts that could be palatable both to a new believer and to a member of a major ruling house. These included al-Ḥākim's status as (albeit newly-minted) Abbasid caliph, al-Ḥākim's several hundred years of lineage, the caliph's formal recognition of Baybars' rule and Baybars' own position as a successful *mujāhid* bearing the Abbasid seal of approval. In this way Baybars managed to provide himself with enough creditability to approach the ideologically awe-inspiring Chinggis Khanid.²⁵

In all likelihood Berke Khān was willing to be approached, for a few months later in Rajab 661/May-June 1263, i.e., before Baybars' envoys could have traveled to Saray and back, an independent embassy from the Mongol ruler arrived in Alexandria by boat and was conveyed from there to Cairo. The full text of Berke Khān's letter is not included in any of the Mamluk chronicles, but Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir summarizes the contents as follows: After expressing peace and gratitude, Berke Khān got down to business by asking for Baybars' help against their common foe, Hülegü. Portraying Hülegü as defying the law/decrees (*yasaq*) of Chinggis Khān and his family (*ahl*), Berke Khān then explained that his own battles with Hülegü were motivated by the desire to spread Islam and Islamic rule, return the Islamic lands to the condition they had previously enjoyed, and avenge the Islamic community in general.²⁶ Finally he requested that Baybars send a force out to the

²³For a thorough discussion of al-Mustanṣir's disastrous campaign see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 56-60.

²⁴Heidemann, *Kalifat*, 165.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 166.

²⁶Al-Nuwayrī uses *yasaq* in *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:87; Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir uses *sharī'ah* in *Rawḍ*, 171. Jackson understands *yāsā* here as meaning a single decree of Chinggis Khān; namely that Jochi and his descendants (i.e., the Golden Horde) were to enjoy the revenues of northwestern Iran. These were what Hülegü had diverted to himself. See Jackson, "Dissolution," 235.



Euphrates to attack Hülegü, and also come to the aid of the Saljuq ruler, ‘Izz al-Dīn Kay Kā’ūs.²⁷

That the message was received well can be inferred from Baybars’ response, which took up seventy half sheets of Baghdadi paper²⁸ and was again written by none other than Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir. Unfortunately like the others, no copy of this letter has been preserved, so we must rely on Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s own report of its contents. Indeed he assures us that he filled the message with Quranic *āyahs*, hadith exhorting jihad, compliments to the recipient, and heroic descriptions of the Egyptian armies and their own dedication to the holy fight.²⁹ Simultaneously sweetening and further emphasizing the message was the staggering number of gifts Baybars sent to the Mongol ruler. These included items of worship (prayer-carpets, a copy of the Quran alleged to be in the handwriting of the third caliph, ‘Uthmān), items of jihad (swords, helmets, arrows, bows and bowstrings, horses and their trappings), and more conventional gifts (clothes, slaves, candles, rare animals, and so on).³⁰

Nor was this all. In an additional demonstration of piety, manliness and religious solidarity, Baybars had al-Ḥākim invest Berke Khān’s envoys with the *futūwah* trousers during their stay in Cairo. Baybars had already initiated al-Ḥākim through the power delegated to him by his first caliph, al-Mustansir. Thus in what was to be one of only a few diplomatic encounters for the caliph, al-Ḥākim in turn performed the ceremony with both Baybars’ envoys to Berke Khān and Berke Khān’s own envoys. Then he preached a new sermon, the text of which is not recorded, and entrusted the embassy with clothes to present to Berke Khān himself, thereby including him in this special ritual.³¹ Later Berke Khān’s envoys were sent out to visit the Islamic holy cities, where Baybars had the Mongol ruler’s name mentioned in the *khuṭbah* after his own in a further show of Islamic unity.³²

Thereafter ambassadors continued to travel back and forth between the two rulers. On 10 Dhū al-Qa‘dah 662/4 September 1264 another of Berke Khān’s embassies arrived in Cairo, along with Baybars’ own returning envoys. Their arrival fortunately coincided with a comprehensive military review and extensive games, thus the Mongol ambassadors were invited to attend and watch all the

²⁷Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 171.

²⁸Full Baghdadi paper was the largest, best and most prestigious kind, and was used for caliphal documents and letters to “*al-ṭabaqah al-‘ulyā min al-mulūk ka-akābir al-qānāt min mulūk al-sharq*.” However at times smaller sizes of Baghdadi paper might be used for the same purpose, as full Baghdadi could be hard to obtain. Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 6:190.

²⁹Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 171-72.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 172-73; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:97.

³¹For a more complete treatment see Heidemann, *Kalifat*, 169-71.

³²Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 174.



festivities, which included an expansive ceremony of investiture. Baybars must have hoped to impress them by displaying his resources for pursuing jihad. That the desired effect was achieved is suggested by Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, who writes that the envoys asked Baybars during the military review whether these were the forces of Egypt and Syria combined, to which Baybars responded that they were only the forces stationed at Cairo. Naturally Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir portrays the ambassadors as being dumbfounded and amazed.³³

By contrast with Berke Khān’s previous ambassadors, who had met with the caliph al-Ḥākim and attended the *futūwah* initiation ceremony in 661/1263, however, these envoys had no recorded interaction with the caliph. Rather they frequented martial ceremonies and services of investiture. The only specifically Islamic event they attended was the circumcision of Baybars’ son and heir al-Malik al-Sa‘īd.³⁴ This suggests Baybars’ interest in promoting his own would-be dynasty. In fact, as a result of his achieved cordiality with the Golden Horde, Baybars was soon able to dispense with elaborate rituals involving al-Ḥākim, and eventually restricted him to a circumscribed life in the citadel. Heidemann suggests that at this point Baybars’ legitimacy needed no further help from the caliph.³⁵ In addition, al-Ḥākim represented a potential rallying point for would-be rivals in Egypt and Syria, and thus had to be kept in seclusion. Worthy of note is that the chronicles record the arrival of various other Abbasids in Damascus after al-Ḥākim’s establishment; they also report that these claimants were all intercepted and sent straight to Cairo, after which they uniformly disappear from historical view.³⁶

In 663/1265 Baybars sent his own ambassador to Saray. According to al-Nuwayrī the purpose of this embassy was to intercede with Berke Khān on behalf of the Byzantine emperor Michael Paleologus, whose lands the Golden Horde had been raiding for some time. But naturally Baybars did not let slip the opportunity to send gifts to the Mongol ruler, among them such significant religious mementos as three turbans that had been taken to Mecca on the ‘*umrah*’ expressly for Berke Khān, and a bottle of water from the well of Zamzam, as well as some nice balsamic oil.³⁷

Thus Baybars, despite his lowly origin and the tenuous nature of his ideological position, managed to establish a good rapport with Berke Khān based on Baybars’ promotion of proper Islamic military values. Or did he? The image we have is almost uniformly presented from Baybars’ own point of view, as distilled through

³³Ibid., 213, al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:101.

³⁴Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 214, 218.

³⁵Heidemann, *Kalifat*, 173.

³⁶Ibid., 179-80; Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 247-48; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:128.

³⁷Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:116-17.



the historical work of Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir and then copied by later writers. By contrast, two other Mamluk authors suggest that Baybars’ relationship to Berke Khān was anything but that of equal to equal. The first is Ibn Wāsil, who reports, when describing the contents of Baybars’ letter of Muḥarram 661/November 1262, that Baybars enumerated the glories of the Islamic armies (*al-‘asākir*) but then went on to point out that they were all obedient to Berke Khān and awaiting his command, “*fī ṭā’atihi wa sāmī‘ah li-ishāratih*.”³⁸ We discover a similar phenomenon in the work of al-Yūnīnī. In a discussion of Baybars’ subsequent embassy to Berke Khān sent later that same year (661/1263), al-Yūnīnī reports that the accompanying letter suggested that Baybars would enter into a subordinate relationship to Berke Khān. This was to be achieved through Baybars’ joining of the “*īlīyah*” (here: group of subordinates) and becoming obedient to the Golden Horde ruler: “*al-dukhūl fī al-īlīyah wa al-ṭā‘ah*.”³⁹

A related point should be made here about the proposed joint Mamluk-Golden Horde campaigns against the Ilkhanids, which were a common theme of this diplomatic interaction. It is interesting to note that in one Mamluk source the Mongol envoys are made to quote Berke Khān as saying, “I will give you [Baybars] the land that your horses reach in Ilkhanid territory.”⁴⁰ The generous granting of land by one ruler to another in this fashion can hardly be described as a relationship of equals, but rather as that of sovereign and loyal subordinate. Thus whatever Baybars’ understanding of his relationship with the Golden Horde, or more precisely, whatever the view he wanted Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir to present of him, it may in fact have differed from the Golden Horde’s image of the way things were. It seems possible that, despite Berke Khān’s new-found faith and supposedly new, Islamic way of doing things, he may actually have looked on Baybars with the old Mongol world view: that is, as an obedient subject, who happened in this case to be Muslim, and whom he could order to ride out on campaign or promise land to as he pleased. True, Baybars appears to have responded favorably to these suggestions, but no actual military alliance ever took place.⁴¹ Nevertheless, this is not to suggest that Baybars was ever involved in an *actual* overlord-vassal relationship with Berke Khān. There is no evidence that Baybars sent any hostages to Berke’s court at any time or for any reason. Likewise the reports of gifts that Baybars sent to

³⁸Muḥammad ibn Sālim Ibn Wāsil, “Tārīkh al-Wāsilīn min Akhbār al-Khulafā’ wa-al-Mulūk wa-al-Salāṭīn,” Dār al-Kutub, Cairo, MS 40477, fol. 1306.

³⁹Quṭb al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mir’āt al-Zamān* (Hyderabad, 1375/1955), 2:197. The full text is: “*al-dukhūl fī al-īlīyah wa-al-ṭā‘ah wa-ṭalab al-mu‘āḍadah ‘alā hulāku ‘alā an yakūn lahu [i.e., li-baybars] min al-bilād allatī tu’khadh min yadihi [i.e., min yad hulāku] mim mā yalī al-shām nasīb.*”

⁴⁰Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2:195.

⁴¹Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:167.



Saray suggest that these were just that—gifts, and not some kind of obligatory tribute. Thus, the imbalance, if one there was, appears to have existed on a purely ideological level.

At any rate, Baybars' relations with the Golden Horde went on to survive Berke Khān's death in 665/1267, for Baybars wrote to Berke Khān's great-nephew and heir Möngke Temür and set a similar tone to that of his earlier correspondence. Since Möngke Temür was not a Muslim, however, Baybars found himself employing a more limited ideological coin. No text of this letter remains, which is unfortunate since it would be interesting to see how Baybars and his chancellery composed this missive without the religious imagery that had permeated his letters to Berke Khān. All we know is that in the letter Baybars offered his congratulations on Möngke Temür's ascension and his condolences over Berke Khān's death, and urged Möngke Temür to fight Hülegü's son Abaka, who had succeeded to Ilkhanid rule.⁴² Thereafter the two monarchs continued to exchange messages and gifts, and Baybars continued to urge Möngke Temür to attack Abaka.⁴³ In 670/1272 Möngke Temür wrote requesting Baybars' military assistance against the house of Hülegü, and proposing that all the Muslims lands in Abaka's hands be returned to Baybars' control.⁴⁴

After Baybars' death on 28 Muḥarram 676/1 July 1277, the Mamluk chroniclers report little diplomatic activity for the brief reigns of his sons, with the exception of the arrival in Alexandria of a Golden Horde embassy in Rabī' I or II 676/July-August 1277, which went up to Cairo.⁴⁵ Clearly this embassy had been sent before news of Baybars' death reached Saray. We may assume that al-Malik al-Sa'īd met with the embassy, and likewise presumably sent them home again eventually, but the sources are extremely laconic and offer no illuminating details whatsoever. The Mamluk chronicles remain silent on this subject for the rest of al-Malik al-Sa'īd's reign, which could mean that neither side sent envoys, or that diplomatic interaction did occur but the historians were too preoccupied tabulating factional strife among members of the military elite to notice it. But since diplomatic activity with the Golden Horde continued under Qalāwūn, it seems that the nearly

⁴²Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 288.

⁴³Ibid., 335, 400, 404, 411; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 27:362 and 30:221; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Kitāb al-Tuḥfah al-Mulūkīyah fī al-Dawlah al-Turkīyah*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ṣāliḥ Ḥamdān (Cairo, 1987), 71; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:167.

⁴⁴Muḥammad ibn 'Alī Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥuṭayṭ (Wiesbaden, 1983), 36; also Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 399-400, and copying him, al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:192.

⁴⁵Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, "Tārīkh al-Islām wa-Ṭabaqāt al-Mashāhīr wa-al-I'lām," *Dār al-Kutub*, Cairo, MS 10680, fol. 7a.



three-year period from Baybars' death to Qalāwūn's ascension could not have witnessed anything too out of the ordinary.

Unfortunately none of the letters from Qalāwūn's reign have been preserved either as documents or literary works. We do know, however, that Qalāwūn sent a message and sixteen loads of cloth, clothes, objets d'art (*tuḥaf*), mail, helmets, and bows to the Golden Horde quite early in his reign.⁴⁶ Qalāwūn may have been hedging his bets with that embassy, since the gifts were for everyone and anyone of importance in Saray: the ruler Möngke Temür, his brother Töde Möngke and nephew Tölebugha, one of the major Mongol generals, Noghai Noyan, a number of royal ladies and the Saljuq sultan 'Izz al-Dīn Kay Kā'ūs. We may presume that at the very least Qalāwūn intended to maintain cordial relations. He may also have hoped to keep the channels open for the importation of new mamluks from Golden Horde territory, a crucial concern for him.⁴⁷ Nevertheless the Mamluk historians took no notice of the embassy until 681/1282, when Qalāwūn received a message from his *own* envoys to the Golden Horde, who wrote to inform him that Möngke Temür had died before their arrival, so they had presented their gifts to his brother and successor Töde Möngke instead.⁴⁸

In 682/1283 Töde Möngke's first embassy arrived in Cairo. His envoys were both *faqīhs*, and bore news of Töde Möngke's conversion to Islam, his ascension to the throne, and his intention to implement the shari'ah in his lands. Töde Möngke requested that Qalāwūn provide him with a Muslim name and send him both a sultanic and a caliphal banner, as well as some small drums, with which to ride when fighting enemies of the faith.⁴⁹ Here we see Qalāwūn cast in the role of "senior in Islam," requested to provide the necessary paraphernalia for Töde Möngke so that he too could be a good *mujāhid*. Qalāwūn's response was to send the envoys to the Hijaz to perform the pilgrimage, although the sources are silent about whether he had Töde Möngke's name and titles mentioned after his own in the sermons in Mecca, as Baybars had done for Berke Khān in 661/1263. Upon the return of the two *faqīhs* to Cairo, Qalāwūn sent them back to Töde Möngke with envoys of his own in 682/1283-84. Presumably Qalāwūn fulfilled Töde Möngke's request, since there is no word to the contrary, and since such a refusal would have been significant enough to warrant one.

⁴⁶Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif al-Ayyām wa-al-'Uṣūr fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Manṣūr*, ed. Murād Kāmil (Cairo, 1961), 17-18.

⁴⁷That the slave trade was on Qalāwūn's mind is clear from his actions in Rabī' I 679/July 1280, seven months after his ascension to the throne, when he began negotiations with the Byzantine Emperor Michael Paleologus over a treaty in which the free passage of slave merchants ultimately became a significant clause. For a full discussion see Canard, "Traité," 197-224.

⁴⁸Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, 17-18.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 46; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 31:102-103.



In this way Qalāwūn not only perpetuated the relationship of solidarity in religion that Baybars had started, but also managed to establish himself as the religious senior, a concept that seems to be new and specific to him. Peter Jackson has pointed to the importance of hierarchy, status, and seniority among members of the Mongol ruling family; thus Qalāwūn's proclamation of seniority must have resonated strongly in a milieu already imbued with the weight of such claims.⁵⁰

Qalāwūn also based his legitimacy in part on his control of the Abbasid caliph, as Baybars had done before him. Of course al-Ḥākīm played no important foundational role as he had during Baybars' reign. Moreover, as Heidemann has indicated, al-Ḥākīm's activity in general under Qalāwūn was extremely circumscribed: no sermons, no *futūwah* ceremonies, no recorded relationship to the ongoing diplomacy with the Golden Horde.⁵¹ Nevertheless the figure of the caliph, at least, continued to play a role in Qalāwūn's relation with the Golden Horde, although Qalāwūn may not have wanted it to do so. But the token nature of al-Ḥākīm's role during Qalāwūn's reign is underscored by the caliph's forcibly secluded lifestyle—one wonders if the caliph was at all involved in the sending of his own banner to Saray, or whether it was done without his participation.

In addition to fulfilling Töde Möngke's petition, Qalāwūn himself seems to have asked for something from Töde Möngke, although nowhere do we discover what that request was. Indeed we can only infer its existence from the information for the year 685/1286-87, when one of the two *faqīhs* returned from Saray to inform Qalāwūn that he had been granted all that he had asked.⁵² Given the phrasing of the report, it seems possible that Qalāwūn made a number of different requests. But what were they? What might Qalāwūn have wanted from Töde Möngke in 682/1283-84? None of the Mamluk historians tells. Perhaps Qalāwūn was once again seeking to ensure the steady flow of mamluks from the Black Sea region. In addition, it so happens that at that time Qalāwūn was embroiled in unfriendly negotiations with the Ilkhanid ruler Aḥmad Tegüder, as will be discussed below. Was Qalāwūn asking Töde Möngke for military assistance against Tegüder? Did he seek a re-creation of those grand campaigns to divide Ilkhanid territory between two Muslim warriors that Baybars and Berke Khān had discussed but never carried out? After all, Töde Möngke was portraying himself to Qalāwūn as a new convert, and had specifically requested the paraphernalia of holy war from him. What better time for Qalāwūn to encourage him to try it?

It is interesting that Aḥmad Tegüder was also depicting himself to the Mamluk sultan as a new Muslim, which may have put Qalāwūn in an odd ideological

⁵⁰Jackson, "Dissolution," 195.

⁵¹Heidemann, *Kalifat*, 177, 181.

⁵²"*Al-ijābah ḥaṣalat ilá jamī' maṭlūb mawlānā al-sulṭān*," Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, 143.



position. How might he have responded to each of these two Mongol leaders? What arguments could the non-Mongol, former slave, Muslim protector of the Abbasid caliph use when faced with a friendly, newly-converted Mongol ally and a hostile, newly-converted Mongol would-be overlord who was a distant cousin to the ally? Without any documentary or much literary evidence, or even knowledge of the nature of Qalāwūn's request, we can only surmise. But one answer might well be this concept of seniority in religion, which wove through Qalāwūn's ideological interactions not only with Töde Möngke, but also with Tegüder, as we shall see below. At any rate, by the time Töde Möngke's answer arrived, Tegüder was dead, and the danger (if there had been any) had passed, which might explain the laconic quality of the Mamluk chronicles on the subject. This was to be the last substantial mention of Qalāwūn's diplomatic relations with the Golden Horde, who receded into the chronicles' background.

THE MAMLUKS AND THE ILKHANIDS

While relations between the Mamluks and the Golden Horde were characterized by mutual expressions of friendship, religiosity, and solidarity in Islam against the infidels in Iran, Mamluk relations with those very infidels were characterized by hostility, mutual mistrust, and outright warfare. Baybars' reign was largely shaped by bad news from the east, the north, or the northeast, whether reports of Ilkhanid raids, trouble with their allies the Armenians, or full-fledged military endeavors from either or both directions. Most encounters between the two sides involved battles, skirmishes, plotting and subterfuge, inciting middlemen to harass the enemy, or spying. In the interests of preserving space, I shall not here plunge into the intricacies of Baybars' hostilities towards the Ilkhanids, but refer the reader to the work of Reuven Amitai on the subject for a thorough and comprehensive view of the particulars.⁵³ Rather I shall focus on the diplomatic activity between Baybars and Abaka, that is, the exchange of messages or embassies, and the legitimizing ideology embedded within them. Here the relationship was simple and straightforward from each point of view: Baybars was a good Muslim ruler and Protector of Islam faced with a tyrannical dynasty of pagans; Abaka was a divinely-designated ruler from the princely house of Chinggis Khān against whom an illegitimate rebel of tainted slave origin had arisen.

That Abaka felt it was high time the rebel submit can be inferred from his embassy of 664/1265-66. Unfortunately the Mamluk chronicles tell us little on the subject. Abaka's ambassadors met with Baybars in Syria, bringing him a gift and asking for peace (*ṣulḥ*). As Amitai has pointed out, it was most likely that "peace" here meant no more than obedience to Abaka, especially since the Ilkhanids had

⁵³ Amitai-Preiss, *War*.



recommenced military movements against Baybars' territory at the same time.⁵⁴ Likewise the gift, whatever it was, may have been no more than symbolic, with its acceptance conveying Baybars' willingness to submit. We cannot be sure however, since we are told little more about the ultimate fate of either the ambassadors or their gift.⁵⁵

The way was prepared for the next exchange of envoys by a singular chain of events. In 664/1266 a Mamluk force sent to Cilicia captured in battle Lev'on, son of the Armenian king, along with some of his close relatives.⁵⁶ King Het'um entered into negotiations with Baybars for the conditions of his son's release. Among the conditions was that Het'um should send to Abaka and obtain from him one Sunqur al-Ashqar, a former Mamluk, who had been in prison in Aleppo in 658/1260 when Hülegü had captured the city. When Hülegü left, he took Sunqur (among others) with him.⁵⁷ Het'um traveled to Abaka's court in 665-66/1267-68 to make the petition, but Sunqur's whereabouts were unknown.⁵⁸ In the following year, 666-67/1268-69, Het'um sent an envoy back to Abaka, who by this time had managed to find Sunqur.⁵⁹ Sunqur was conveyed back to Cilicia, Baybars was informed of his arrival and the exchange of Sunqur for Lev'on was made.⁶⁰

⁵⁴Ibid., 111-14.

⁵⁵Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Raḥīm Ibn al-Furāt, "Tārīkh al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk," Dār al-Kutub, Cairo, MS 54251, fol. 110a; Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma'rīfat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā M. Ziyādah (Cairo, 1936), 1:553. Also see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 120.

⁵⁶"La Chronique Attribuée au Connétable Smbat," tr. Gérard Dédéyan, in *Documents relatifs à l'histoire des croisades* (Paris, 1980), 118; Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 270; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Tuhfah*, 58; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:118; Grigor, "Archers," 357; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:153.

⁵⁷For an in-depth discussion of Sunqur, Lev'on, and their exchange one for the other see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 118-120. Also see Faql Allāh ibn Abī al-Fakhr al-Suqā'ī, *Tālī Kitāb Waḥyāt al-A'yān*, ed. and tr. Jacqueline Sublet (Damascus, 1974), 85 (Arabic text); Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 327; and the romantic but inaccurate rendition of Grigor, "Archers," 355.

⁵⁸Amitai-Preiss discusses the various accounts of how Sunqur al-Ashqar was located or contacted in Ilkhanid lands; see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 120. Of them all, I personally find the arguments of Smbat and Grigor most convincing, namely, that Sunqur's whereabouts were at first unknown, and that in fact it took Abaka some time to find him. There was, after all, no special reason for Abaka to keep track of one person from among the prisoners his father had brought out of Aleppo nearly 10 years earlier. Likewise it is quite possible that Sunqur's new life and/or career among the Ilkhanids, whatever it was, took him to any number of locations within their territory. Het'um's request would therefore have necessitated that Sunqur be identified, located, and, if far away from Abaka, brought in to the *ordo*, all of which could easily take months.

⁵⁹Smbat, "Chronique," 120; Grigor, "Archers," 371.

⁶⁰Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:154; Smbat, "Chronique," 120; Grigor, "Archers," 371; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Tuhfah*, 64; also see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 119.



By the time of his dramatic ransom for the Armenian prince, Sunqur had been living with the Mongols for several years, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that he spoke Mongolian with a degree of proficiency. Before letting him go to Cilicia, Abaka seems to have entrusted Sunqur with an oral message to deliver to Baybars. Little record of this message can be found; indeed it seems that the chroniclers were initially unaware of it, since the only reference to it appears in the text of Baybars' correspondence with Abaka in 667/1269, as discussed below.

Nevertheless this oral message reestablished diplomatic contact between the two rulers. Thereafter Baybars and Abaka established a wary, short-lived, and unfriendly set of diplomatic exchanges, facilitated in part by the Armenian king. In 667/1269, for example, Baybars permitted an Ilkhanid envoy to enter his realms bearing written and oral messages, both of which are extant today at least in part.⁶¹ A large chunk of the oral message is preserved:

The King Abaka, when he emerged from the East, took control of all the world. All entered into obedience to him, and no opposer opposed him; he who opposed him died. As for you: [even] if you rose up to the sky or sank down to the ground, you would not free yourself from us. The best policy is that you make peace (*ṣulḥ*) with us. . . . you are a mamluk and were sold in Sivas; how do you [dare] oppose the kings of the earth?⁶²

Here we see a combination of the Mongol imperial ideology of world conquest, and Mongol disdain for slave origin. In fact, Abaka took this opportunity to strike Baybars in his weakest ideological point. Apparently Abaka had as little tolerance for the Mamluk sultans' former bondage as had his own father or their mutual allies the Armenians.

Abaka's written letter was likewise short on grammar and shorter on charm.⁶³ In it Abaka acknowledged that Qutuz, not Baybars, had been responsible for executing Hülegü's envoys in 658/1260; such an acknowledgment would allow Abaka to accept Baybars as a vassal. After discussing Sunqur's children and a number of other Qipchak Turks whom Baybars had requested be sent to Mamluk realms, Abaka went on to brag that only discord among the Mongols themselves had kept him from riding towards (and presumably attacking and demolishing)

⁶¹Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 121; also see his "An Exchange of Letters in Arabic between Abaya Ilkhan and Sultan Baybars (A.H. 667/A.D. 1268-69)," *Central Asiatic Journal* 38:1 (1994): 11-33.

⁶²Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:140. For a translation of a slightly different version of the text, see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 121.

⁶³For a translation and commentary see Amitai-Preiss, "Exchange."



Baybars. Abaka then reached the crux of the letter, his call for Baybars to become a vassal: "You suggested that 'We [i.e., Baybars] become subject (*naṣīr īl*) and give power [over to Abaka]'; we deem that appropriate from you."⁶⁴ Abaka went on to emphasize the universal obedience enjoyed by his family, then ordered Baybars to send representatives from among his brothers and sons to the Mongol court, where they would learn about the *yāsā* and then be returned to Baybars (presumably to teach him in turn). This was standard Mongol procedure to initiate subordinates.

Baybars' response was even shorter than Abaka's initiative, and was equally unfriendly. It opened with a disinterested tone, saying that only because of "what Shams al-Dīn Sunqur al-Ashqar said to us"⁶⁵ had Baybars expressed interest to the Armenian king in exchanging embassies. The reference here must be to the oral message sent to Baybars via Sunqur from Abaka, although this is one of the only instances in the histories that we find even this roundabout mention of it. The letter carefully distanced Baybars from Qūṭuz (the Envoy Murderer) by emphasizing how Baybars had sent Abaka's embassy back unharmed. The letter then mocked Abaka's attempts to persuade Baybars to any kind of agreement. As evidence for the impossibility of a relationship between them, it attacked the issue of Chinggis Khanid law by arguing that Baybars' *yāsā* was greater than that of Chinggis Khān.⁶⁶ The use of the word *yāsā* here must be understood as a reference to the shari'ah with its concomitant religious supremacy (to Muslim eyes) over any pagan dynastic law. Certainly there is no evidence that Baybars attempted to found or promulgate a set of laws or decrees similar to the *yāsā* of Chinggis Khān; indeed, such developments in legitimizing strategy appeared much later.⁶⁷

Baybars further belittled the Mongols in his response to Abaka's proclamation of universal obedience by pointing to the battle of 'Ayn Jālūt and the death in it of Hülegü's general Kitbugha. He also reminded Abaka of Abaka's intention to send one of his own relatives to Baybars, and Baybars' willingness to trade the favor. This is a startling statement, since the sending of relatives was one way that the Mongols themselves established their vassals. Combined with Baybars' proclaimed

⁶⁴Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 340.

⁶⁵Ibid., 341.

⁶⁶For the *yāsā* see the references in footnote 4.

⁶⁷The Ottomans, for example, did not develop a special law code until Fatih Mehmed promulgated the *kanunname* and *yasakname* during his reign (1449-80). See Halil İnalçık, "Suleiman the Lawgiver and Ottoman Law," *Archivum Ottomanicum* 1 (1969): 105-38.



superiority of the shari‘ah, this statement suggests that Baybars was envisioning at the very least a relationship of equals, if not even that Abaka should be inferior to him.⁶⁸

Unlike in his letters to Berke Khān, the specifically Islamic content of Baybars’ message to Abaka is noticeably muted. Rather he seems in this exchange to have relied ideologically on evocation of military victories over the Ilkhanid forces, denial of interest in relations with Abaka and allusions to his own equality to the Ilkhanid ruler. Although he asserted the supremacy of his own *yāsā* (the shari‘ah) over that of Chinggis Khān, he did not refer to it by its Islamic name. Nor did the letter mention the Abbasid caliph at any point, which was a significant departure from the correspondence sent to Berke Khān. One probable reason for this omission was the hopelessly un-Islamic nature of the recipient. Berke Khān had presented himself as interested in nothing but Islam, which allowed Baybars and his ideologues to sidestep the daunting issues of Mongol legitimacy and prestige that might otherwise have been raised. But it must have been clear that Islamic terminology would be meaningless to Abaka, which thus led to the use of phrasing that would resonate properly. That the embassy led to nothing positive can be inferred from the events of the next year, in which a Mongol force raided the area around Aleppo.⁶⁹

It was not until 670/1272 that a second attempt at so-called diplomacy took place between the two rulers, again through intermediaries. In that year Baybars received envoys from the chief Mongol in Anatolia, Samaghar, and the chief Anatolia minister, Mu‘īn al-Dīn the Parvānah, who were seeking a peace agreement.⁷⁰ Ibn Shaddād reports that Samaghar invited Baybars to send him envoys for Abaka, with whom Samaghar himself would intercede for the Mamluk sultan.⁷¹ Accordingly Baybars chose two amirs and sent them off via the horses of the *barīd*. They went first to Anatolia, where they met with Samaghar and the Parvānah, and from there were conveyed to meet Abaka. The Persian historians mention nothing of the envoys’ audience with Abaka, or even the presence of Mamluk envoys at the Ilkhanid court. If the Mamluk sources are to be believed, however, the meeting was just as unfriendly as the previous one. If there was a written letter no copy remains, thus our information is confined to snippets of the oral message preserved in the chronicles. Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir credits the Mamluk amirs with saying to Abaka: “The sultan sends greetings to you and says that the

⁶⁸ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 343.

⁶⁹ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:170; Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 361-62; Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh*, 33; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Tuhfah*, 73.

⁷⁰ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 399; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:191.

⁷¹ Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh*, 34.



envoys of Möngke Temür [of the Golden Horde] have come to him repeatedly [saying] that the sultan [Baybars] should ride from his side, and the king Möngke Temür should ride from his side. Wherever Baybars' horse reached would be his, and wherever Möngke Temür's horse reached would be his."⁷² Clearly the riding out and taking of land would be at the expense of Ilkhanid sovereignty. Abaka's response, also as recorded by Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, indicates that he understood this point quite well, for he reportedly became enraged and stormed out of the audience.

Ibn Shaddād presents an alternate, more convincing view: in the oral message Baybars refused vassalage but, in an assumption of personal responsibility for all Muslims, asked Abaka to give back the Muslim lands he held.⁷³ Not surprisingly Abaka found this to be a non-viable option, but suggested that each ruler retain what he already had (and, presumably, refrain from trying to take any more land from the other).⁷⁴ In this report Abaka comes across as willing to consider the establishment of some kind of status quo. Although discussions continued for a time, in the end Baybars' envoys were sent back without any agreement having been reached.⁷⁵

That the negotiations were theoretically still open is indicated by the fact that Abaka sent a second embassy to the Mamluk sultan in the following year; it arrived in Damascus in Šafar 678/August-September 1272. That Baybars was uninterested in an agreement can be inferred from the fact that he seems to have been determined to put the Mongol envoys in their place. Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir indicates that they were required to perform the *jūk* three times before Baybars' governor in Aleppo, likewise in Ḥamāh and so on.⁷⁶ Since the *jūk* was a sign of deference and respect to high-ranking Mongols, Baybars indicated his assumption of at least equal status to Abaka by making the Mongol envoys perform it in front of his own local governors.⁷⁷ There was no celebration upon the embassy's arrival, but Baybars had troops brought in and paraded in front of them to impress or awe them.

⁷²Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 399-400, and copying him, al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:192.

⁷³Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh*, 35.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Ibid.; Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 128.

⁷⁶Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 404.

⁷⁷Here Baybars may well have been portraying his strength to his own troops by using the *jūk*, which involved getting down on one knee and putting an elbow on the ground. Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 27:339. Certainly there might be no small psychological gain for Baybars' own followers from seeing him treat the Mongol envoys in this fashion. For psychological warfare see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 129. Unfortunately, however, in the interest of space I must leave the subject of Baybars' relation to his own troops for a later endeavor.



No copy remains of Abaka's second letter, if there was indeed a written document in addition to the oral message. We know from Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, however, that Abaka wanted a peace agreement (*ṣulḥ*) with Baybars, engineered through the mediation of Sunqur al-Ashqar. But Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir goes on to tell us that Abaka wanted to ratify this treaty by having either Baybars or his heir come to his court. Thus the peace treaty Abaka sought seems to have been no more than the relationship of vassalage he had previously attempted to create. Baybars was not interested, and replied with an echo of his former statement: Abaka might come to Baybars' own court if he desired a peaceful agreement. This reinforced the Mamluk presentation of the relationship as one in which Abaka was at best of equal standing, if not even inferior to Baybars. Of course from Abaka's point of view such a relationship was inconceivable.⁷⁸ Only a few days after Baybars sent the embassy back towards the borders, he himself set out to engage and defeat a Mongol force at the Euphrates. Baybars al-Manṣūrī considers this battle and Baybars' victory in it to have been a turning point for the Mamluk sultan, after which Baybars' reputation increased greatly and his fear of Ilkhanid strength decreased.⁷⁹ Certainly this marked the end of Baybars' attempts at diplomatic interaction with the Ilkhanids as well.

Qalāwūn had no diplomatic exchanges with Abaka, but Mamluk-Ilkhanid relations in general under Qalāwūn did pick up where they had left off under Baybars: in a state of open hostility and an ideological relationship of good Muslim vs. bad infidel on the one hand and Glorious Khān vs. lowly rebel on the other. This culminated in Qalāwūn's defeat of Abaka's brother Möngke Temür⁸⁰ at the battle of Homs in 680/1281. It was only when both Abaka and Möngke Temür died later that same year and another one of Hülegü's sons, Tegüder, converted to Islam that a wrench was thrown into the Mamluk ideological works.

In Jumādā I 681/August 1282 the newly-named Aḥmad Tegüder sent envoys to Qalāwūn. Modern scholars have interpreted this in various ways, for which see the pioneering work of P. M. Holt in particular, as well as the revision of Adel Allouche.⁸¹ Holt points out the caution, hostility, and fear the Mamluks manifested

⁷⁸Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 404.

⁷⁹Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Tuhfah*, 76.

⁸⁰Not to be confused with the Golden Horde ruler of the same name.

⁸¹P. M. Holt, "The Ilkhan Aḥmad's Embassies to Qalāwūn: Two Contemporary Accounts," *BSOAS* 49 (1986): 128-32; Adel Allouche, "Tegüder's Ultimatum to Qalāwūn," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (1990): 437-46. Also see Amitai-Preiss, *War*, 147, 211; Peter Jackson, "Aḥmad Takūdār," *Encyclopedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (London, 1984), 1:661-62; J. A. Boyle, "Dynastic and Political History of the Īl-Khāns," *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge, 1968), 5:365; Bertold Spuler, *The Mongols in History*, tr. G. Wheeler (London, 1971), 44-45; Denis Sinor, "Les relations entre les Mongols et l'Europe jusqu'à la mort d'Arghoun et de Béla



towards the Mongols in general and Tegüder's envoys in particular, but ultimately suggests that Tegüder was seeking some kind of a truce with Qalāwūn.⁸² Allouche proposes a revision of this view by arguing that Tegüder's purpose in contacting the Mamluk sultan was to establish Qalāwūn as a subordinate to himself.⁸³ Here I will follow Allouche's assessment, namely that Tegüder's first communication to Qalāwūn was a call for the latter to become Tegüder's vassal, since divisions of religion no longer separated them.⁸⁴

Tegüder's first set of ambassadors were Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Shīrāzī and Shams al-Dīn ibn al-Taytī al-Āmidī. They were brought under close escort to Cairo, where they met with Qalāwūn in the autumn of 681/1282. According to Shāfi' ibn 'Alī the embassy was received in great style, at night, in an audience lit by numerous candles.⁸⁵ Tegüder had sent both oral and written messages. The letter proclaimed the good news both of Tegüder's conversion and his accession to the throne, from which he intended to set right Muslim affairs. This established Tegüder immediately as a rival to Qalāwūn in the realm of virtuous Muslim rulership, and thereby added a new ideological dimension to the weight of Mongol prestige and Ilkhanid hostility. Tegüder informed Qalāwūn of a Mongol *kuriltai* that had taken place in which all the participants had wanted to attack the Muslims, but he alone had dissented out of a sense of moral good. Here Tegüder may have been hoping to intimidate Qalāwūn with the image of Mongols united against him, while simultaneously reinforcing the portrayal of his own moral integrity.

Thereafter Tegüder's letter included a lengthy section on the various deeds the new Ilkhan had performed for the good of the Muslim community. First and foremost was his establishment of the rule of Islamic law (*nawāmīs al-shar' al-muḥammadī*), which may have functioned as his substitute for the *yāsā* vaunted by Hülegü and Abaka. (It is significant that Tegüder and his cousin Töde Möngke both began their reigns in this fashion, and at approximately the same time.) The letter went on to talk about Tegüder's pardoning of criminals, his inspection of the organization of pious endowments, his construction of new buildings for religious use, and the regularization of protection for the pilgrimage caravans. Particularly in these last two areas Tegüder threatened Qalāwūn's legitimacy, for Qalāwūn was a great founder of religious building projects, and was also responsible not

IV," *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale* 3, no. 1 (1956): 54.

⁸²Holt, "Embassies," 128, 132.

⁸³Allouche, "Ultimatum," 438.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 438.

⁸⁵Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, *Kitāb al-Faḍl al-Ma'thūr min Sīrat al-Sulṭān al-Malik al-Manṣūr*, ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām al-Tadmūrī (Sidon/Beirut, 1418/1998), 101; also see Holt, "Embassies," 129.



only for the pilgrims who passed through his own realms, but for all pilgrimage activities in the Hijaz as well.

The letter went on to inform Qalāwūn that Tegüder had ordered his soldiers not to harass merchants travelling back and forth between his lands and Qalāwūn's territory. Then it reported that Tegüder had caught Qalāwūn's spy disguised as a dervish, whom out of the goodness of his heart he had sent back to Qalāwūn rather than execute. This allowed Tegüder to arrogate the moral high ground to himself, from which he (or his scribes) proceeded to lecture Qalāwūn about the evil effect spies had on the Muslim community. The letter then summed up with the point of Tegüder's message, in which he demanded that Qalāwūn submit to his authority and enter into a vassal-overlord relationship with him.⁸⁶

In his response Qalāwūn was faced with the ideological ramifications of Tegüder's conversion, which denied him the easy defense of a good Muslim ruler facing a non-Muslim foe, and presented him with an imposing rival in the realm of responsible Islamic rule. The Mamluk response was twice as long as the Ilkhanid letter, and it addressed not only Tegüder's written letter point by point, but also the oral message (*mushāfahah*) that accompanied it.⁸⁷ Qalāwūn's letter opened with an acknowledgment of Tegüder's conversion and his emergence from the ways of his relatives. The letter expressed Qalāwūn's relief over Tegüder's new-found faith, then introduced a critical point in the Mamluk sultan's ideological self-defense by praising God that Qalāwūn had converted first and thus had seniority in religion: "We thanked God for making us among the predecessors and first ones to this station and rank [or: to this religion, station, and rank⁸⁸], for making firm our feet in every situation of endeavor (*ijtihād*) and holy fight (*jihād*) where without Him feet would quake."⁸⁹ Ideologically this projected religious primacy was akin to Qalāwūn's status vis-à-vis Töde Möngke of the Golden Horde, and gave the Mamluk sultan a base from which to withstand the Muslim Tegüder's call for vassalage.

Qalāwūn's letter went on to acknowledge the various ways Tegüder had acted as a good Muslim ruler, and assured him that this was correct procedure. Coming on the heels of his assertion of religious seniority, this had the effect of reinforcing

⁸⁶Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrīf*, 9-10; Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, *Faḍl*, 94-100; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:249-54; Bar Hebraeus, *Mukhtaṣar*, 506-10; 'Abd Allāh ibn Faḍl Allāh Vassāf al-Haḍrat, *Tajziyat al-Amṣār wa-Tajziyat al-A'ṣār*, ed. by Joseph Hammer-Purgstall as *Geschichte Wassaf's: persisch herausgegeben und deutsch übersetzt* (Vienna, 1856), 234-39; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:978-80; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 8:65-68. Also see Allouche, "Ultimatum," 438-40.

⁸⁷This allows us to reconstruct much more of the oral message than usual.

⁸⁸Mufaḍḍal Ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il, *Al-Nahj al-Sadīd wa-al-Durr al-Farīd fīmā ba'da Tārīkh Ibn al-'Amīd* (Paris, 1911, 1920, 1932), 512.

⁸⁹Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrīf*, 11.



Qalāwūn's image as a Muslim ruler who already knew what he was doing, and was therefore superior to a newcomer like Tegüder. The letter's tone became critical when it castigated previous Ilkhanids for taking control of other rulers and their kingdoms, notably the Saljuqs, without due cause, and warned that this kind of oppression was not the behavior of a pious king. Such a statement contributed to the image of Qalāwūn as knowledgeable advisor, while further setting the stage for his later treatment of the question of vassalage.

On the freedom of merchants the letter asserted Qalāwūn's own sovereignty by assuring Tegüder that Qalāwūn, too, had ordered his governors not to harass them; this had the effect of making their free passage a matter requiring the attention of both rulers. It is significant that the letter specifically mentioned the governors of al-Raḥbah and al-Bīrah, both of which forts were thorns in the Ilkhanids' military side. Turning to the question of the alleged spy, the letter cast doubts on Tegüder's projection of moral superiority by charging that real dervishes had been mistaken for spies and murdered in Mongol lands, and that Tegüder himself had sent quite a few actual spies into Qalāwūn's territory.

Thereafter Qalāwūn's letter came to the questions of vassalage. Carefully it avoided a direct answer but intimated a certain lack of interest on Qalāwūn's part by going on at length about the importance of true friendship. That Qalāwūn had some misgivings about Tegüder's understanding of the nature of friendship was then made clear when the letter condemned Tegüder for using inappropriately harsh and threatening language in an ostensibly cordial message.

Finally the letter addressed Tegüder's oral message, which can be reconstructed to include three points. First Tegüder said that he would stay in his own territory (and not attack Qalāwūn's lands) if Qalāwūn would reach an agreement with him (*ittifāq*), i.e., become his vassal. In response Qalāwūn's letter suggested that an agreement could only be reached if Tegüder had true friendship in mind, i.e., if it were in fact a peaceful agreement and not a vassal-overlord arrangement. Second, Tegüder suggested that if Qalāwūn were not really interested in expansion, he should stay within his own territories (and stop raiding into Tegüder's territory). In reply the letter lambasted Tegüder for the conduct of his governor and brother Qunghurtai in Anatolia, claiming that Qunghurtai was shedding blood, wreaking destruction, enslaving innocents, selling free persons as slaves, and all while the Islamic tax (*kharāj*) from that land was coming to Tegüder.⁹⁰ This portrayed Tegüder as the bad ruler oppressing Muslims, and left the door open should Qalāwūn decide later to present himself as the virtuous Muslim savior-king freeing the oppressed in Anatolia. Third, Tegüder challenged that if Qalāwūn refused to

⁹⁰Tegüder actually did execute Qunghurtai later, but this had no particular effect on Qalāwūn's letter.



stop raiding into Tegüder's land, he should choose a battlefield (and they would settle the matter that way). In response Qalāwūn's letter ridiculed the Ilkhanid armies by pointing out that they had seen battlefields in Syria before, and were afraid to come back to them any time soon.⁹¹

In this exchange, as in his relationship to the Golden Horde, Qalāwūn's legitimacy rested primarily on the new concept of religious seniority. Nevertheless he and his chancellery did not hesitate to refer to past Mamluk military victories over the Ilkhanids as Baybars had done. Allouche has argued that Qalāwūn may also have relied on the position of the Abbasid caliph, to whom all Muslims (and therefore presumably Tegüder as well) owed allegiance. Allouche's argument centers on the fact that the caliph was in fact mentioned early in the correspondence, for a sentence to this effect was preserved in those copies of the letters found in Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, Vassāf, and Bar Hebraeus.⁹² Reasons for the omission of the caliphal reference from the copies in Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, Ibn al-Dawādārī, and al-Maqrīzī are worth investigation, although we shall not be able to do so here.⁹³ But if the caliph was indeed included in the correspondence, then this confirms that al-Ḥākim continued to play an ideological role in foreign diplomacy, just as he did in Qalāwūn's relations with the Golden Horde. And if the deletion of the caliphal reference in Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir (and through him many of the other Mamluk chronicles) was deliberate, then this could support the thesis that Qalāwūn was uneasy about that caliphal role.

Nevertheless Qalāwūn's ideological position as (potentially) caliph-brandishing religious senior was still tenuous, at least to some minds. Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir went to the trouble of shoring up Qalāwūn's arguments in his biography of the sultan, where he discredited Tegüder at length by portraying his conversion as fake and an attempt to dupe Qalāwūn.⁹⁴ By contrast, other Mamluk historians (especially those not writing under sultanic patronage) were either neutral or even convinced of the genuineness of Tegüder's conversion.⁹⁵ Regardless, this marked the beginning of a trend for Qalāwūn, his descendants, and their ideologues, who were reluctant to believe that any Ilkhanid conversion to Islam could be genuine, although they were quick to believe it from the Golden Horde. Such a point of view was ideologically advantageous for the Qalawunids, since it allowed them to revert to

⁹¹Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, 15-16.

⁹²Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, *Faḍl*, 102-3; Vassāf, *Tajziyah*, 234; Bar Hebraeus, *Mukhtaṣar*, 510-18; also see Allouche, "Ultimatum," 442.

⁹³Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, 8; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:249-54; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:978-80.

⁹⁴Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, 4.

⁹⁵Al-Dhahabī, "Ṭabaqāt," *Dār al-Kutub*, Cairo, MS 10682, fol. 24b; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 4:211.



the older model of Mamluks protecting Muslims from infidels or, in this case, false converts.

Tegüder's second embassy arrived in Damascus on 12 Dhū al-Hijjah 682/2 March 1284. The Ilkhanid's spiritual advisor Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān was in charge, riding with a large, armed escort and the *jitr* or royal parasol.⁹⁶ In Mamluk lands only the sultan rode with the *jitr*, thus Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān's appearance with it was a challenge to Qalāwūn's sovereignty. The shaykh refused to relinquish the parasol at the border, but was deprived of it and of his armed escort against his will by the Mamluk governor of Aleppo, who had gone to meet him.⁹⁷ This cold welcome was designed to convey Qalāwūn's rejection of any further thoughts of vassalage, should Tegüder entertain them. Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān and the truncated remainder of his entourage were conveyed secretly and under heavy guard to Damascus "in the medieval equivalent of a sealed train," as Holt has so aptly put it.⁹⁸ There they were lodged in the citadel and given considerable daily stipends—the shaykh himself reportedly received 1,000 dirhams per day⁹⁹—but were nevertheless forced to cool their heels for six months. During this period their sender Tegüder died, and Qalāwūn met with them only after verifying this fact.

Qalāwūn then received the embassy at night in early Jumādā II 683/August 1284, surrounded by an impressive display of lighted candles (reportedly 1,500¹⁰⁰) and his best mamluks, dressed in their finest. Without telling the envoys of Tegüder's death, Qalāwūn heard the content of the letter.¹⁰¹ It had been dated Rabī' I 682/May-June 1283, and in it Tegüder outlined the way he and his Mongol cousins in various khanates had managed to shelve their past disagreements and agree to return to a state of unity.¹⁰² As in his first letter, Tegüder may have been trying to present a united Mongol front in order to awe Qalāwūn. Tegüder's letter went on to point out that the Ilkhan's sending of the shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān had been at Qalāwūn's request,¹⁰³ then finished by dropping the references to obedience and submission (*tā'ah*) that had been used in the first letter, and requested only a peaceful agreement (*ṣulḥ* and *ittifāq*). Allouche suggests that this change in wording reflected Tegüder's new interest in negotiations as opposed to his previous demand

⁹⁶Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, 49.

⁹⁷Ibid.; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:261.

⁹⁸Holt, "Embassies," 132.

⁹⁹Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz*, 8:261.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 265.

¹⁰¹Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrif*, 68.

¹⁰²Ibid., 70.

¹⁰³Ibid., 71.



for Qalāwūn's vassalage.¹⁰⁴ But immediately thereafter came a warning to Qalāwūn to ignore naysayers: "Perhaps a small group of fools from among those who like discord and hypocrisy will not agree to an accord ([since] their dispositions are incompatible with peaceful agreement), desiring [thereby] to put out the light of God with their mouths (but God's light is complete!), and to go against their community out of a greedy ambition to accomplish their desire. What is required here therefore is that their words not be heard and their deeds left [alone]."¹⁰⁵ If Tegüder had been interested in negotiations then this type of closure, combined with the grandiose manner in which Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān crossed into Qalāwūn's realm, does not suggest negotiation between equals, but rather between superior and subordinate.

Obviously Qalāwūn and his ideologues were saved from the necessity of working out an ideologically appropriate response to Tegüder by the happenstance of the latter's death. Shortly after hearing the content of Tegüder's message Qalāwūn demonstrated the depth of his antagonism towards his deceased co-religionist by moving Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān and the other envoys into different quarters in the citadel, drastically reducing their stipends, relieving them of the bulk of their possessions, and leaving them to languish. Shaykh 'Abd al-Raḥmān himself died shortly thereafter; his cohorts remained incarcerated until most of them were eventually freed dramatically by the intervention of a sympathetic poet and one of the Mamluk amirs.¹⁰⁶ Thereafter Qalāwūn returned to ideological business as usual with Tegüder's pagan successor Arghūn.

To conclude: early Mamluk assertions of legitimacy for the external audience were primarily directed at and defined in relation to the Mongols. For the Mamluk sultans the basic threat of Ilkhanid hostility was further complicated by the more abstract problem of Mongol prestige. Nor was this prestige an issue merely with the Ilkhanids, but also had a significant effect on Mamluk relations with the rulers of the Golden Horde. As former slaves in a world obsessed with genealogy, and as Qipchak Turkish nobodies faced with the weight of the divinely-ordained Chinggis Khanid dynasty, its impressive military legacy, and its obsession with the position of laws and decrees, Baybars, Qalāwūn, and their ideologues turned to a combination of military action and religious principles for definition. These included the manipulation of the Abbasid caliph and his own prestige, an emphasis on those military aspects of the faith in which the Mamluks could excel, proclamation

¹⁰⁴Allouche, "Utimum," 443.

¹⁰⁵Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrīf*, 71.

¹⁰⁶Al-Suqā'ī, *Tālī*, 107; Al-Dhababī, "Ṭabaqāt," Dār al-Kutub, Cairo, MS 10682, fol. 26b with 11 lines of the poetry itself; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 4:217 has 20 lines.



of the shari‘ah’s superiority over the *yāsā*, and, when matters were complicated by Ilkhanid conversion and religious rivalry, the concept of seniority in religion.



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Qalāwūn's Patronage of the Medical Sciences in Thirteenth-Century Egypt*

INTRODUCTION

It is generally held that the medical sciences in the Islamic world reached their peak during the eleventh century and then subsequently declined.¹ Yet there are many indications that, in fact, medicine, or aspects of it, continued to flourish in the following centuries. One thinks particularly of the hospitals founded by Nūr al-Dīn (ca. 548-49/1154) and by al-Qaymarī (ca. 646/1248) in Damascus and by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in Cairo in the twelfth century, as well as the long list of illustrious physicians who served in both, not to mention the biographical dictionaries of Ibn al-Qifṭī (d. 645-46/1248)² and Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘ah (d. 668-69/1270)³ which vividly portray the vitality of intellectual life, including the medical sciences, in their time.⁴ In the late thirteenth century the Mamluk sultan Qalāwūn established a

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¹Joseph Schacht, for example, says of the eleventh century: "It is the last century before the slow and irresistible decline of the Greek scientific spirit in the Arab-Islamic world." (Cited by Michael Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine: Ibn Riḍwān's Treatise "On the Prevention of Bodily Ills in Egypt,"* translated with an introduction by Michael W. Dols; Arabic text, ed. Adil S. Gamal [Berkeley, 1984], 66, n. 344). Joseph Schacht and Max Meyerhof state with regard to some of the great medical figures of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: "The merit of these men to have maintained the ancient sciences is so much the greater, inasmuch as the Islamic orthodoxy which had been always opposed to these studies was very strong ever since the end of the XIth c., and exerted a well-nigh overwhelming influence at the courts of those kings and princes who were inclined to promote learning." (*The Medico-Philosophical Controversy between Ibn Buṭlān of Baghdad and Ibn Riḍwān of Cairo* [Cairo, 1937], 8-9). See also George Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*, (Baltimore, 1927), 1:738.

²*Tārīkh al-Ḥukamā'*, ed. J. Lippert (Leipzig, 1903). A. Dietrich, "Ibn al-Ḳifṭī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 3:840.

³*Uyūn al-Anbā' fī Ṭabaqāt al-Aṭibbā'* (Beirut, 1965). J. Vernet, "Ibn Abī Uṣaybi‘ah," *EP*, 3:692-93.

⁴Ibn al-Nafīs, *The Theologus Autodidactus of Ibn al-Nafīs*, edited with an introduction, translation, and notes by Max Meyerhof and Joseph Schacht (Oxford, 1968), 8-9; also Max Meyerhof, "Ibn



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hospital in Cairo which, as both teaching and treatment center, was clearly intended to be the foremost medical facility of its day in the Islamic world. It was also at this very time that his contemporary, the famous doctor and former Chief Physician of Egypt, Ibn al-Nafīs (d. 687/1288),⁵ advanced his theory regarding the lesser circulation of the blood several centuries before Europeans arrived at similar conclusions.⁶ Indeed, Qalāwūn's hospital in Cairo attracted the support of Ibn al-Nafīs who donated his library and house to the institution.⁷ How then shall we reconcile the judgement of historians with the evidence of interest in, and intellectual vitality of, the medical sciences so apparent in the late thirteenth century?

Consideration of the personal and political agenda involved in Qalāwūn's patronage as reflected in the documentation of his activity in the field may yield clues in this regard. After surveying Qalāwūn's activities more generally, we will focus in particular on evidence found in the diploma of appointment (*taqlīd*) issued by the sultan's chancery to the Chief Physician Muhadhhib al-Dīn Ibn Abī Ḥulayqah on the occasion of his appointment to the professorial Chair of Medicine at Qalāwūn's hospital in Cairo, al-Bīmāristān al-Manṣūrī. Although the evidence of the *taqlīd* may not provide conclusive proof regarding Qalāwūn's intentions, it will nonetheless stimulate further discussion of the intellectual environment which framed his patronage of the medical sciences in late thirteenth century Egypt.

Qalāwūn's patronage is rather richly documented. Although the original hospital founded by the sultan in Cairo in 683/1285 is no longer standing, several narrative reports record its commissioning, the purchase of the site, construction, and inaugural ceremonies.⁸ Two extant *waqfiyahs* describe the site and legally attest to

al-Nafīs and His Theory of the Lesser Circulation," *Isis* 23 (1935): 110; reprinted in idem, *Studies in Medieval Arabic Medicine, Theory and Practice*, ed. Penelope Johnstone (London, 1984), 6:103-4.

⁵Ibn al-Nafīs, *Theologus*, 18; on Ibn al-Nafīs see also Max Meyerhof-[J. Schacht], "Ibn al-Nafīs," *EF*², 3:897-98. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah does not include a biography of Ibn al-Nafīs in his dictionary (see *ibid.*, 897, and Ibn al-Nafīs, *Theologus*, 10).

⁶I.e., the "pulmonary circulation of the blood, from the right ventricle of the heart through the pulmonary artery (*vena arteriosa*) to the lung and from there through the pulmonary vein (*arteria venosa*) to the left ventricle of the heart." According to the authors, Ibn Nafīs's theory "boldly" contradicted "the accepted ideas of Galen and of Ibn Sīnā" and anticipated "part of William Harvey's fundamental discovery." See Meyerhof-[Schacht], "Ibn al-Nafīs," 898; Ibn al-Nafīs, *Theologus*, 26.

⁷Ibn al-Nafīs, *Theologus*, 12-13, 17-18. Among the books donated was his *Kitāb al-Shāmil fī al-Ṣinā'ah al-Ṭibbiyah*, or *Kitāb al-Shāmil fī al-Ṭibb* (*The Comprehensive Book on the Art of Medicine*) (*ibid.*, 22).

⁸Baybars al-Manṣūrī, "Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah," vol. 9, Cairo University Library MS 24028 (photocopy of British Museum Or. MS Add. 23325), fol. 144r; idem, "Al-Tuḥfah al-Mulūkīyah



the details of the endowment, its management, and the facilities and services provided.⁹ To these important sources can be added a copy of the *taqlid* of Muhadhhib al-Dīn Ibn Abī Ḥulayqah¹⁰ on the occasion of his appointment as Chief Physician (*ra'īs al-aṭibbā'*)¹¹ (in Egypt [and Syria?]) and a copy of the diploma issued to the same Ibn Abī Ḥulayqah appointing him to the Chair of Medicine (*tadrīs al-bīmāristān*) at Qalāwūn's hospital in Cairo.¹² Last, but not least, chronicles and biographical dictionaries supply information regarding Qalāwūn's appointees and other well-known physicians of the period, although never enough to satisfy our curiosity.

fī al-Dawlah al-Turkīyah," Cairo University Library MS 24029 (photocopy of Austrian National Library MS Flugel 904), fols. 46r-47v; Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrīf al-Ayyām wa-al-'Uṣūr fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Manṣūr*, ed. with translation and notes by Murād Kāmil (Cairo, 1961), 55; Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, *Kitāb al-Faql al-Ma'thūr min Sīrat al-Malik al-Manṣūr*, ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmurī (Beirut, 1998), 166-68; Shams al-Dīn al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith al-Zamān wa-Anbā' uhu wa-Wafayāt al-Akābir wa-al-'yān min Abnā' ihī*, the years 682-87/1283-88, edited with German translation by Ulrich Haarmann in *Quellenstudien zur frühen Mamlukenzeit* (Freiburg, 1969), 24; Shihāb al-Dīn al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab*, vol. 31, ed. al-Bāz al-'Arīnī (Cairo, 1992), 105-13; Qirtāy al-'Izzī al-Khazindārī, "Tārīkh al-Nawādir mim mā Jārā lil-Awā'il wa-al-Awākhir," microfilm copy of Gotha MS 1655, fols. 122v-124v; Nāṣir al-Dīn Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt*, ed. Quṣṭanṭīn K. Zurayq and Nejla [Abu] Izzedin (Beirut, 1936-42), 8:8-9; Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma'rīfat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. with notes by Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyādah and Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr (Cairo, 1934-72), 1:3:716; *ibid.*, trans. Etienne Quatremère, *Histoire des sultans mamlouks de l'Égypte, écrite en arabe par Taki-eddin-Ahmed Makrizi* (Paris, 1837-45), 2:64; *idem*, *Al-Mawā'iz wa-al-I'tibār fī Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār fī Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Bulaq, 1270; reprint edition, n.d.), 2:406-7.

⁹Ḥasan ibn 'Umar Ibn Ḥabīb, *Tadhkirat al-Nabīh fī Ayyām al-Manṣūr wa-Banīh*, ed. Muḥammad M. Amīn (Cairo, 1976), 1, appendix, study, 296-328; edition, 329-96; excerpts (in French), a plan, and photographs can be found in Ahmed Issa Bey, *Histoire des Bimāristans (hospitaux) à l'époque islamique: discours prononcé au Congrès international de médecine tropicale et d'hygiène tenu au Caire, décembre 1928* (Cairo, 1928), 40-76. See also Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, *Fihrist Wathā'iq al-Qāhirah ḥattā Nihāyat 'Aṣr Salāṭīn al-Mamālīk (Catalogue des documents d'archives du Caire)* (Cairo, 1981).

¹⁰That the name is Ḥulayqah and not Khalīfah, as Ibn al-Furāt or his editor writes, is argued by J. Sublet in a note on Muhadhhib al-Dīn and his brothers. See her edition of Muwaffaq Faql Allāh ibn Abī al-Fakhr al-Kātib al-Naṣrānī Ibn al-Ṣuqā'ī, *Tālī Kitāb Wafayāt al-'yān*, ed. with translation and notes by J. Sublet (Damascus, 1974), 60-61, n. 69, n. 2.

¹¹Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:22-25. The diploma does not specify the geographic jurisdiction of the appointee.

¹²*Ibid.*, 25-27; Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā fī Ṣinā'at al-Inshā'* (Cairo, 1913-20; repr., 1963), 9:253-56.



THE HOSPITAL IN CAIRO

The sources tell us that in 682/1283¹³ Qalāwūn purchased the site and commissioned the construction, in the street known as Bayn al-Qaṣrayn in the heart of what had been Fatimid Cairo, of a hospital, which he intended, along with his tomb (*qubbah*), to be the focal point of his monumental complex. The location chosen for the complex was the site of one of the former Fatimid palaces, now inhabited by some female descendants of the Ayyubid ruling family. The choice of site was quite deliberate. Qalāwūn clearly wished his monumental complex to be located in proximity to the tomb of his master, the last Ayyubid sultan of Egypt, al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb.¹⁴ The sultan purchased the site through his agent (*wakīl*) and compensated the women with Qaṣr al-Zumurrud to which they were expeditiously removed.¹⁵ Construction began in 683/1284-85 and was completed in 684/1285. Inaugural ceremonies, attended by the sultan, at which he dedicated the hospital to all classes of Muslims, were held soon after.¹⁶

Although this complex also included a madrasah and a Quran school for orphans (*maktab al-sabīl*), it is clear that Qalāwūn took special interest in the hospital. It was not the first hospital that he had founded. Early in his reign, in 680/1281-82, Qalāwūn established a hospital in Hebron about which, unfortunately,

¹³Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrīf al-Ayyām*, 55; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, “Zubdah,” fol. 144v; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:106; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 7:278; al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2:406; al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith*, 24. Ét. Combe, J. Sauvaget, and G. Wiet, eds. *Répertoire Chronologique d’Épigraphie Arabe (RCEA)* (Cairo, 1944), 13:34, no. 4850; 36, no. 4852, like no. 4850, mentions that it was begun in 683/1284-85 and finished in 684/1285-86; 37, no. 4853. These inscriptions, though found in the *bīmāristān*, nevertheless also mention the *qubbah* and madrasah. On the selection of this site see Linda S. Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan: The Career of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamluk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678-689 A.H./1279-1290 A.D.)* (Stuttgart, 1998), 119-20.

¹⁴Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrīf al-Ayyām*, 56; Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan*, 119. John Hoag notes that the plan of Qalāwūn’s complex, with its long passageway dividing the tomb and madrasah, mirrors the plan of al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb’s madrasah-tomb complex across the street. See his *Islamic Architecture* (New York, 1987), 80.

¹⁵Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan*, 119.

¹⁶Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Tashrīf al-Ayyām*, 126-29; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, “Zubdah”; Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī, *Faḍl*, 168; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:106-7; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:9; al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2:406-7. Inscriptions from the madrasah containing dates are recorded in *RCEA*, 13:30-36, nos. 4844-50, 4852-53. See also Michael Meinecke, *Die Mamlukischen Arkitektur in Ägypten und Syrien*, *Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Islamische Reihe*, 5 (Gluckstadt, 1992), pt. 2:61. The combination of hospital and tomb in the pre-Mongol period is found in Damascus (Bīmāristān al-Qaymarī, constructed in 646/1248) where, however, the hospital is located across the street from the tomb, and at several sites in Anatolia. Qalāwūn’s complex appears to be the only Mamluk instance of this combination (Dr. Yasser Tabbaa, personal communication). See also *RCEA*, 12, nos. 4408, 4409, 4410, 4411.



no further information has as yet come to light.¹⁷ Also, an inscription at the Nūrīyah in Damascus, dated 682/1283, records that renovations and further embellishments were undertaken at that hospital during Qalāwūn's reign, probably on his orders.¹⁸ Also, although the endowment provided by Qalāwūn for his hospital in Cairo was enormous, that for the madrasah was, say several sources, barely sufficient.¹⁹ In fact, Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, a scribe in Qalāwūn's chancery and the author of a history of Qalāwūn's reign, claims that Qalāwūn had not wanted to build a madrasah in the first place, that this was one of the "ziyādāt,"²⁰ "excesses" or perhaps "additions," of Qalāwūn's mamluk, 'Alam al-Dīn Sanjar al-Shujā'ī, who besides serving several terms as vizier (or *mudabbir al-mamālik*) in charge of the financial administration, also frequently functioned as chief architect, engineer, and project manager in this sultan's building program. In any case nothing was spared with regard to the hospital. Qalāwūn built, as is reported in the diploma for the Chair of Medicine, "a hospital to dazzle the eyes."²¹ Medicine was taught in the hospital²² and also, according to al-Maqrīzī, in the madrasah.²³ The library, housed in the *qubbah*, included medical texts, among them, probably, those donated by Ibn al-Nafīs.²⁴ The importance attached by Qalāwūn to the hospital was underlined by his appointment of the Chief Physician as professor of medicine at this institution. Far from being an honorary post or cushy sinecure, this position carried important responsibilities related to the supervision and regulation of the medical profession and its practitioners, including physicians (*al-aṭibbā' al-ṭabā'īyah*), ophthalmologists (*al-kaḥḥālīn*), and surgeons (*al-jarā' ihīyah*).²⁵ The diploma attests to the fact that a high standard of conduct was expected in the profession and that the responsibility for its upholding was delegated

¹⁷Meinecke, *Arkitektur*, 57, and sources cited therein.

¹⁸Ibid., 59; *RCEA*, 13:13, no. 4820.

¹⁹Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, *Faḍl*, 168, who claims the endowment amounted to one million dirhams per year; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:106; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:9.

²⁰Shāfi' ibn 'Alī (*Faḍl*, 168) claims that Qalāwūn did not order the construction of the madrasah, that he had wanted nothing more than the *bīmāristān*, and that at its inauguration, he almost did not enter.

²¹Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:25; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*, 11:254.

²²Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:108.

²³Al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 2:380; Issa Bey, *Bimāristans*, 43. On the teaching of *ṭibb* in madrasahs, see J. Pedersen-[G. Maḳḳdisi], "Madrasa: 6. Courses of instruction and personnel," *EI*², 5:1130; and Gary Leiser, "Medical Education in Islamic Lands from the Seventh to the Fourteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 38 (1983): 56-59.

²⁴Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:111.

²⁵See the *taqlīd* for the *riyāsat al-ṭibb*, Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8, in which these duties are described. See also Ibn al-Nafīs, *Theologus*, 18; also Leiser, "Medical Education," 71-72.



to the *ra'īs al-ṭibb*. Not only did the Chief Physician have authority over doctors and other practical day-to-day matters, but he was encouraged to pursue the more intellectual and theoretical side of his profession as well. The diploma urges that he "be seized by the desire to occupy himself with works written in the field (*al-muṣannafāt*), the science of nutrition (*'ilm al-taghdhīyah*), knowledge of the questions (*ma'rifat al-masā'il*), *ḥafẓ al-fuṣūl* (attentiveness to or protection of the branches or specializations [?]) and *baḥth* (study of) *al-qānūn wa-al-kulliyāt*."²⁶

QALĀWŪN'S MOTIVES

The founding of hospitals had most often been a royal enterprise, though not exclusively so. One has only to mention the hospitals established by the Buyid ruler 'Aḍūd al-Dawlah (d. ca. 367/978) in Baghdad, Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 270/884) in Cairo, Nūr al-Dīn ibn Zangī (d. 569/1174) in Damascus, and Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (d. 589/1193) in Cairo and Jerusalem to demonstrate this point. Moreover, this prerogative seems to have been exercised most frequently not by the caliph, but by military rulers. Philanthropy of this sort was a particularly effective legitimizing strategy for secular military rulers, perhaps because hospitals functioned primarily as charitable and convalescent institutions along with whatever instruction they may have provided, and their charitable role especially gained widespread support. The *waqfiyah* for Qalāwūn's hospital specifies that it was intended for all Muslims in need of medical attention, whether male or female, residing in Cairo or Miṣr (Fuṣṭāṭ) or their environs, or arriving from other provinces or countries. The Muslim sick and infirm would be treated at the hospital irrespective of race or other characteristics, whether rich or poor, regardless of their station in life.²⁷

Not only was the establishment of hospitals an elite prerogative, but the direction of the hospital at this time was an office of state. In late thirteenth-century and early fourteenth-century Egypt, a high-ranking bureaucrat served in this capacity. Al-Nuwayrī (d. 732/1332), the author of the chronicle *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab*, held this position at Qalāwūn's hospital from 1303 to 1308, which certainly explains why his report, along with the endowment deed itself, provides the most detailed account of the services provided by the hospital.²⁸ Moreover, as already

²⁶Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:23-24. It seems quite probable this last reference alludes to Ibn Sīnā's *Al-Qānūn fī al-Ṭibb* and Ibn Rusd's *Kitāb al-Kulliyāt* although it is possible that the sense intended might also be a more general one.

²⁷Ibn Ḥabīb, *Tadhkirah*, 1, appendix, 358, lines 315-18. See also al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:107; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:9; al-Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 2:406.

²⁸Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:105-13. A well-known amir who later held this post was Ṣarghitmish, appointed by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. See Muḥammad M. Amīn, *Al-Awqāf wa-al-Ḥayāh al-Ijtīmā'īyah fī Miṣr, 648-923/1250-1517* (Cairo, 1980), 126.



noted, the appointment of the Chief Physician to the Chair of Medicine at the hospital signaled the importance attached by the sultan to this institution and also, perhaps, to the teaching of medicine.

Another factor which may have influenced the sultan's decision to found a hospital is the fact that Cairo was now the preeminent capital of the Islamic world. Qalāwūn's career in Egypt and Syria spanned the period in which Baghdad had fallen to the Mongols and the caliph had been killed. Baybars had brought a surviving member of the Abbasid family to Cairo and put him on the caliphal throne.²⁹ Cairo, then, was, in fact, the new seat of the caliphate. In its newly exalted position it was only fitting that this city should display all the trappings of the throne of Islam, including a hospital equal to the 'Aḡūdī hospital in Baghdad or the Nūrīyah in Damascus. The founding of a hospital was an entirely appropriate gesture, given the rising political star of the new seat of both caliphate and sultanate.

Yet another consideration may have been that the institution of *waqf* provided donors with a means to avoid confiscation of property or its fragmentation in adverse times or at death. Qalāwūn may have had such thoughts in mind when he established this institution with a rich endowment. Moreover, the *waqfiyah* allowed him to retain control during his lifetime. As *nāzir* (supervisor) of the hospital, he would retain the right to administer the properties, a privilege his sons would inherit at his death, and which would devolve to his mamluks should his own bloodline die out.³⁰

Finally, although this sultan gives no evidence of a particularly religious personality, perhaps Qalāwūn may have wished to cover his bases in this regard; a good deed now might win rewards in the Hereafter as the endowment deed actually reminds us.³¹ A prophetic hadith, which constitutes part of the founding inscription for the renovations undertaken at the Nūrīyah during Qalāwūn's reign,³² is repeated in a slightly altered form in the *waqfiyah* for the *bīmāristān* ("Idhā

²⁹See P. M. Holt, "Some Observations on the 'Abbasid Caliphate of Cairo," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 67 (1984): 501-7; Mounira Chapoutôt-Remadi, "Une institution mal connue: le khalifat abbaside du Caire," *Cahiers de Tunisie* 22 (1972): 11-23; David Ayalon, "Studies on the Transfer of the 'Abbasid Caliphate from Baghdad to Cairo," *Arabica* 7 (1960): 41-59.

³⁰Ibn Ḥabīb, *Tadhkirah*, 1, appendix, 329. See also al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2:407.

³¹Ibn Ḥabīb, *Tadhkirah*, 1, appendix, 329.

³²RCEA, 13:13, no. 4820 ("Idhā māta ibn Ādam inqāṭa 'a 'amaluhu illā min thalāthin: 'ilm yantafi 'u bi-hi aw walad ṣāliḥ yad 'ū lahu aw ṣadaqah jāriyah").



māta al-‘abd inqāṭa‘a ‘amaluhu illā min thalāthin: ṣadaqah jāriyah aw ‘ilm yantafī‘u bi-hi aw walad ṣāliḥ yad‘ū lahu. . . .’ [When a man dies, his deeds come to an end except in three respects: a permanent charitable donation, or learning from which one benefits, or a pious son who prays for him.]³³ and may have been taken to heart by Qalāwūn.

While the above suggestions are somewhat speculative, the sources suggest other possible, and perhaps more concrete, motives. One anecdote claims that Qalāwūn’s troops had massacred a large number of Cairenes over a three-day period. Remorseful, Qalāwūn vowed to build the hospital in recompense. That Qalāwūn would have ordered or sanctioned such a bloodbath, however, seems out of character, for he is described in contemporary sources as mild-tempered, abhorrent of bloodshed, his only fault being greed.³⁴ Elsewhere it is reported that during his amirate, having fallen ill in Syria as he set out on a campaign, Qalāwūn was treated and cured with medicine obtained from the Nūrīyah, the hospital built by Nūr al-Dīn ibn Zangī in Damascus. With health restored Qalāwūn eventually visited the hospital and was so awed by it that he vowed to build a hospital like it should he ever ascend the throne.³⁵ This explanation seems more plausible than the first and the sources do in a rather nebulous way link Qalāwūn with Nūr al-Dīn’s initiative.³⁶ Whether this motive was conjured up after the fact or actually played a role in Qalāwūn’s building program, however, cannot be known.

Qalāwūn’s decision to undertake this project must have been at least partially inspired by such considerations. Nevertheless, I find it of considerable interest that Qalāwūn should choose at this particular time, and in the context of the major monument of his reign, to patronize the medical, rather than the religious, sciences, for as is well attested, this was a religiously conservative age. The Crusades and the Mongol invasions had made Egypt and Syria in the thirteenth century the bulwark and refuge of Islam. The Mamluk ruling elite, in touch with the mood of the times and seeking to gain legitimacy for themselves and the cooperation of the religious establishment, whatever other projects they might undertake, made it their business to establish religious institutions (madrasahs, *khānqāhs*, *zāwīyahs*)—lots of them. Indeed, the urban landscape of cities like Cairo and Jerusalem was transformed during the Mamluk period by building projects of this kind. With the explosion of religious facilities the demand for religious personnel

³³ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Tadhkirah*, I, appendix, 362, lines 246-247 and 330, n. 3.

³⁴ Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan*, 56, 142.

³⁵ Al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2:406.

³⁶ For example, al-Maqrīzī, *Khīṭaṭ*, 2:408, mentions that whereas Nūr al-Dīn financed his hospital from a legal source, Qalāwūn’s financial sources were suspect. Qalāwūn’s renovations at the Nūrīyah also suggest a link (see above).



also grew. The increasingly well-entrenched religious elite and their religious, scholarly, and pedagogical activities eventually brought about an intensification of the religious atmosphere.

On the other hand the medical sciences, associated as they were with the Ancients, though they had provided the starting point and basis for Islamic medicine, were, at least at some level and in some circles, especially perhaps among Hanbalis,³⁷ regarded with a certain disdain because of their non-Islamic or pre-Islamic, secular, origin. A well-trained physician was expected to have studied philosophy as well, a characteristic that would have won disapprobation in some religiously conservative quarters.³⁸ Also, the medical profession had until the eleventh century been dominated by *dhimmīs*, i.e., Christians and Jews. Even in Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's day in late twelfth-century Egypt, many *dhimmī* physicians were in his service.³⁹ At a time when anti-Christian sentiment was perhaps on the rise, the medical sciences may have suffered to some degree because of their close connection with non-Muslim practitioners. In fact, the *waqfiyah* for Qalāwūn's hospital specifies that Christians and Jews were neither to be treated nor employed there.⁴⁰ It is all the more interesting then that the appointee to the Chair of Medicine was a recent Christian convert to Islam.⁴¹ The medical sciences were, therefore, in some sense "tainted." Among some upper class and well-educated Muslims, however, a more liberal attitude toward the secular sciences does seem to have prevailed. We know, for example, that the medical sciences were among the subjects of interest and discussion in the salons of the ruling elite.⁴²

At the popular level hospitals were seen primarily as charitable institutions, not especially as institutions of medical learning or research associated with a

³⁷Meyerhof and Schacht, introduction to Ibn al-Nafīs, *Theologus*, 6.

³⁸See Emilie Savage-Smith, "Medicine," in *Encyclopaedia of the History of Arabic Science*, ed. R. Rashed (London and New York, 1996), 954.

³⁹Twenty-one physicians were employed in his service, of whom eight were Muslims, eight were Jews, and five were Christians. Max Meyerhof, "Sultan Saladin's Physician on the Transmission of Greek Medicine to the Arabs," *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 18 (1945): 169; reprinted in idem, in *Studies in Medieval Arabic Medicine*, 3:169. See also Leiser, "Medical Education," 49, and references cited therein.

⁴⁰Ibn Ḥabīb, *Tadhkirah*, 1, appendix, 323, lines 250-51.

⁴¹See below.

⁴²Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:23, where in the diploma it is mentioned that Muhadhhib al-Dīn and his father had been in the service of kings and that he and his brothers had grown up in their presence, etc. See also Schacht and Meyerhof, *Medico-Philosophical Controversy*, 9 and Meyerhof and Schacht, introduction to Ibn al-Nafīs, *Theologus*, 16, citing al-Ṣafadī's biography of Ibn al-Nafīs, stating that Muhadhhib al-Dīn was among those amirs and others who used to seek the company of Ibn al-Nafīs at his house.



non-Islamic or pre-Islamic tradition.⁴³ As charitable institutions, hospitals could be used as an instrument to win popular support.⁴⁴ Qalāwūn's reputation as a beneficent ruler flourished at least partly through his association with the hospital as a charitable institution rather than an institution of medical learning. As late as the nineteenth century women visited his tomb to receive the sultan's *barakah* (blessing) which, they believed, would save them from childlessness.⁴⁵ In fact, Qalāwūn's name is still to this day revered; it is now attached to the eye clinic which stands on the site of the original hospital.

Yet, the teaching of the medical sciences was, in my view, a most important aspect of Qalāwūn's hospital.⁴⁶ The *waqfiyah* reiterates the need for members of the medical profession who "are concerned with 'ilm al-ṭibb," not just treatment, to be employed at the hospital.⁴⁷ The *waqfiyah* also specifically provides for the appointment of a doctor who will occupy himself with 'ilm al-ṭibb in its various fields and who will sit in the large "office" (*al-maṣṭabah al-kubrā*, lit. the large stone bench or platform) designated for him.⁴⁸ Al-Nuwayrī, who as *nāzir* of the hospital in the early fourteenth century had personal experience of its administration, records that the *ra'īs al-aṭibbā'*, whose functions have already been described, and who was simultaneously appointed to the Chair of Medicine in the hospital during Qalāwūn's reign, was to give lectures in medicine which the students would find useful ("yajlisu fihi ra'īs al-aṭibbā' li-ilqā' dars ṭibb yantafi'u bi-hi al-ṭalabah").⁴⁹ The *taqlid* for the Chair of Medicine elaborates: included in the *waqf* was the creation of a place specifically for those concerned with 'ilm al-ṭibb "which was [now] almost unknown. . . He selected for the purpose from among the learned in medicine those who were best suited to lecturing (man yaṣluḥu li-ilqā' al-durūs), and from whom both the chief (*ra'īs*) and the deputy (*mar'ūs*) among the people of this profession would benefit."⁵⁰ The emphasis here seems to be on teaching. Thus, though the hospital was perhaps seen primarily as a charitable

⁴³Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 31, 35; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Faṭḥ Allāh and Abū Zakariyya: Physicians under the Mamluks* (Cairo, 1987), 17.

⁴⁴Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 35.

⁴⁵Stanley Lane-Poole, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages* (London, 1921; repr. 1925), 283-84.

⁴⁶In this I disagree with Behrens-Abouseif, who states (*Physicians under the Mamluks*, 17) that though many hospitals had a doctor on staff, not much teaching of the medical sciences actually occurred in them. At the Maṣūriyah, she says, the teaching of medicine was not an important function since, according to the *waqfiyah*, only one doctor was employed.

⁴⁷Ibn Ḥabīb, *Tadhkirah*, 1, appendix, 359, line 220; 366, lines 284-85.

⁴⁸Ibid., 366, lines 284-85.

⁴⁹Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyah*, 31:108.

⁵⁰Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:26.



institution, the teaching of the medical sciences was, nevertheless, an important focus. This once again suggests that Qalāwūn was interested not only in gaining popular favor through charity, but also in fostering medical learning.⁵¹

The documents associated with the hospital and with the appointments to medical posts during Qalāwūn's reign provide further evidence for the importance of the teaching of medicine in the hospital. The *taqlīd* for the Chief Physicianship (*riyāsat al-ṭibb*) suggests that, as has been related, "because 'ilm is of two kinds, the science of religion ('ilm al-adyān) and the science of the body ('ilm al-abdān)," Qalāwūn was determined to improve knowledge (*al-nazar*) in these two sciences.⁵² This idea is reiterated in the *taqlīd* for the appointment to the Chair of Medicine at the hospital. This document states that whereas those kings who had preceded him had occupied themselves with the science of religion, they had neglected the science of the body; each of them had built a madrasah, but none had concerned himself with a hospital.⁵³ Thus, they had neglected the saying of the Prophet that "learning is of two kinds" [*al-'ilm 'ilmān*].⁵⁴ None of his predecessors had encouraged any of his subjects to occupy himself with the science of medicine; none had created a *waqf* to support the pursuit of learning in this science [*'alā ṭalabat hādihā al-'ilm*]. None had prepared a place for those who occupied themselves with this science; nor had they appointed anyone to represent this occupation. When he realized this, Qalāwūn joined through these religious and worldly means ("waṣalnā min hādhihi al-asbāb al-dīnīyah wa-al-dunyawīyah mā faṣalūhu") what his predecessors had severed and he built a hospital.⁵⁵ These passages make it clear that Qalāwūn made a deliberate decision to sponsor the medical sciences.

⁵¹Dols (*Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 32) remarks that "there was keen competition for instruction in these hospitals, which played an increasingly important role in medical education. . . . A close association can be seen between the highly developed hospitals and medical education in medieval Islamic society."

⁵²Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:23.

⁵³To which predecessors does the document refer since, in fact, rulers such as Nūr al-Dīn and Ṣalāh al-Dīn had built hospitals? I would suggest the possibility that the Ayyubids al-Malik al-Kāmil and al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb and the Mamluk al-Zāhir Baybars are intended. Qalāwūn had close ties with all three. He had probably been a mamluk of al-Kāmil before passing into the service of al-Ṣāliḥ and was a close associate of al-Zāhir Baybars. See Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan*, 65-75. Furthermore, the *waqfiyah* states that Qalāwūn built the hospital in the "khaṭṭ" [quarter] of the Kāmilīyah, the Ṣāliḥīyah, and the Zāhirīyah madrasahs, thereby making a visual statement regarding his patronage. See Ibn Ḥabīb, *Tadhkirah*, 1, appendix, 355, lines 194-95. See also Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah's biography (*'Uyūn al-Anbā'*, 590-99) of the father, Rashīd al-Dīn Ibn Abī Ḥulayqah, in which his relations with these three rulers is well documented.

⁵⁴Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:25. Issa Bey (*Bimāristans*, 42) cites a verse by Būsīrī without, unfortunately, giving his source: "Tu fondas une école et un Bimaristan, Pour redresser les religions et les corps."

⁵⁵Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:25.



The problem is how to interpret his choice. Did he, perhaps, simply want to distinguish himself from his predecessors? Should his medical project be seen as a challenge to the religious conservatism or narrowmindedness of certain groups? Or was Qalāwūn's aim to restore balance between the spiritual and the physical as the rhetoric suggests?

The deliberate way in which Qalāwūn approached this project, his previous sponsorship of hospitals and the multiple mentions in the documents of the need to redress the balance between the religious and the medical sciences suggest that his agenda, in addition to whatever political and social goals were involved, was also inspired by concern for the medical sciences themselves. His appointments in the field might be expected to reflect this concern.

THE APPOINTMENT OF MUHADHDHIB AL-DĪN IBN ABĪ ḤULAYQAḤ (B. 620/1223) TO THE CHAIR OF MEDICINE

The quality of institutions is determined, not just by the physical facilities, or the services described in brochures (or in this case the *waqfīyāt*), but by those associated with them, who administer them and who practice and teach in them. In this regard the teaching appointment at the hospital may be significant and an inquiry into the holders of the office during Qalāwūn's reign might be expected to provide insights regarding Qalāwūn's decision to support the medical sciences and the agenda behind his patronage. The qādī Muhadhdhib al-Dīn Ibn Abī ḤulayqaḤ and his brothers, the qādīs 'Alam al-Dīn Ibrāhīm (d. 708/1308-9)⁵⁶ and Muwaffaq al-Dīn Aḥmad Abū al-Khayr, were the sons of Rashīd al-Dīn Abū al-Waḥsh Ibn ḤulayqaḤ (d. 676/1277-78).⁵⁷ Rashīd al-Dīn was the most prominent pupil of the well-known Chief Physician in Damascus, Muhadhdhib al-Dīn Ibn al-Dakhwār (564-65–627-28/1169–1230), who in ca. 622/1225 gave as *waqf* his house for use as a medical school.⁵⁸ Rashīd al-Dīn was thus connected by his training with one of the most outstanding members of the medical profession in thirteenth-century Egypt and Syria. From the diploma for the *riyāsat al-ṭibb* we learn that Rashīd al-Dīn had been in the service of kings (*mulūk*) and that the brothers had grown up in their presence.⁵⁹ This family was, then, also well-connected. Rashīd al-Dīn's three sons were appointed jointly to the *riyāsat al-ṭibb* in 684/1284-85. Muhadhdhib al-Dīn, however, was designated as the primary *ra'īs* among them.⁶⁰ Qalāwūn

⁵⁶Ibn Ḥabīb, *Tadhkirah*, 1:708-9.

⁵⁷Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, *Uyūn al-Anbā'*, 590-98; Ibn al-Ṣuqā'ī, *Tālī*, 263; see also n. 69.

⁵⁸Issa Bey, *Bimāristans*, 16; Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*, 2:1099; Meyerhof, "Lesser Circulation," 110; idem, *Studies in Medieval Arabic Medicine*, 6:103-4, 110.

⁵⁹Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:23.

⁶⁰Ibid., 8:24.



appointed him to the Chair of Medicine at the hospital as well.⁶¹ Al-Ṣafadī's biography of Ibn al-Nafīs yields the interesting bit of information that in addition to the "princes" who used to seek company in his house was Muhadhhib al-Dīn Ibn Abī Ḥulayqah, the Chief Physician.⁶² Muhadhhib al-Dīn, therefore, might be considered a protege of Ibn al-Nafīs and thus linked with the great tradition of medical men connected to the Nūrīyah and even the 'Aḏūdī hospital in Baghdad.⁶³ Yet Muhadhhib al-Dīn leaves little trace in the sources. He does not seem to have distinguished himself in any way, nor to have made any outstanding contribution to the science or profession of medicine while in office, if the silence of the sources is any indication.⁶⁴

In the tradition of medieval Islamic prosopography, the biographical dictionaries and necrologies found in many chronicles of the time reflect an ideal but supply little personal detail. The diplomas provide scant additional information. Nevertheless, it may be worthwhile to give some attention to the way in which Ibn Abī Ḥulayqah is described in the two diplomas at our disposal. The diploma of appointment to the *riyāsat al-ṭibb* simply states that Qalāwūn has appointed Ibn Abī Ḥulayqah to both the *riyāsaḥ* and the *tadrīs* because he has raised him to the place of Ibn Sīnā.⁶⁵ In the diploma for the Chair of Medicine at the hospital, Ibn Abī Ḥulayqah is called the "Ḥakīm Hippocrates," "al-Jalīl Socrates," "al-Fāḏil Galen," and "al-Afḏal Dioscorides." He is the "Socrates of the region (*al-iqlīm*)," the "Galen of his time" and "the Ibn Sīnā of the day." Stock phrases though they may be, expectations were apparently high.⁶⁶

Given the fact that hospitals in general were widely seen as charitable, rather than as teaching institutions, one must also inquire regarding the nature of the Chair of Medicine at Qalāwūn's hospital in Cairo. Qalāwūn appointed not just a learned physician but the same man he had appointed to the *riyāsat al-ṭibb*. Was his main goal simply to elevate the status of the hospital by appointing the Chief Physician to the teaching post in it? Unfortunately, neither the *waqfīyah*, which mentions the teaching function at the hospital, nor the *taqlīd* which appoints Ibn Abī Ḥulayqah to the professorship at the hospital tells us anything about his actual teaching duties or the curriculum other than that he was to sit in the place

⁶¹Ibid., 25.

⁶²Meyerhof, "Lesser Circulation," 110; idem, *Studies in Medieval Arabic Medicine*, 6:110.

⁶³On the chain of teachers and students linking Baghdad with Damascus and Cairo, see Meyerhof and Schacht, introduction to Ibn al-Nafīs, *Theologus*, 8-9.

⁶⁴Issa Bey, *Bimāristans*, 12-74, provides a list of doctors who served at the Bīmāristān. Muhadhhib al-Dīn is not included in his list.

⁶⁵Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:24.

⁶⁶Ibid., 26.



provided for him at the scheduled hours, where he would give lectures of benefit to the students.

Although we may not be able to learn much about Ibn Abī Ḥulayqah himself, the diploma of appointment to the professorship of medicine at the hospital suggests expectations for this individual. Indeed, it contains a curious but extremely interesting reference which may be key and which, I believe, addresses the sultan's aspirations for his appointee. The reference reads: ". . . wa li-yubṭil bi-taqwīmihi al-ṣiḥḥah mā allafahu Ibn Buṭlān . . ." (. . . may he [Ibn Abī Ḥulayqah] negate by his Tables of Health that which Ibn Buṭlān wrote . . .),⁶⁷ a play on words which carries an historical allusion clearly intended to awaken the memory of an incident which had occurred two centuries earlier in Fatimid Cairo, namely, the bitter personal encounter and scientific dispute between two physicians, Ibn Buṭlān and 'Alī ibn Riḍwān, of which a partial written record has been preserved.⁶⁸ What meaning would this reference have had for the thirteenth-century reader of this document? Does it shed any light on Qalāwūn's motives?

IBN BUṬLĀN AND IBN RIḌWĀN: GHOSTS FROM THE FATIMID PAST

Ibn Buṭlān (d. 458/1066) was a resident of Baghdad, a Nestorian Christian and theologian, and perhaps a priest.⁶⁹ But he was also a physician and the author of a number of works, the most important and well known of which was his *Taqwīm al-Ṣiḥḥah* or *Tables of Health* (*Tabula* or *Tacuini Sanitatis*). This work, borrowing a technique from astronomy, systematically arranged information on hygiene, dietetics, and domestic medicine in tabular form, an idea that seems to have been original in this field at that time.⁷⁰ The reference in our document plays both on Ibn Buṭlān's name (from the root *b-ṭ-l*, *yubṭil*) and on the title of his work, *Taqwīm al-Ṣiḥḥah*.

In 440/1049, Ibn Buṭlān set out from Baghdad for Cairo. The primary purpose of his trip seems to have been to make the acquaintance of the learned Muslim Cairene doctor Ibn Riḍwān. They did meet but, unfortunately, took an instant and bitter dislike to each other on several accounts. The acrimonious nature of their relationship can be partially explained by Ibn Riḍwān's difficult personality. He was known for his venomous attacks against both the living and the dead (including such luminaries as Ḥunayn b. Ishāq, the famous Nestorian Christian physician

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Schacht and Meyerhof, *Medico-Philosophical Controversy*.

⁶⁹J. Schacht, "Ibn Buṭlān," *EF*, 3:740. See Ibn Buṭlān, *Le Taqwīm al-Ṣiḥḥah (Tacuini Sanitatis) d'Ibn Buṭlān: un traité médical du XIe siècle*, history of text, edition, translation, and commentary by Hosam Elkhadem (Louvain, 1990), for a well-documented biography.

⁷⁰Sarton, *Introduction to the History of Science*, 1:731.



and translator of ancient Greek medical texts [d. 260/873], al-Rāzī, the illustrious physician and philosopher [d. 313/925 or 323/935], Ibn al-Jazzār, the Qayrawani physician [d. 395/1004-5], and Ibn Buṭlān's own Christian teacher Ibn al-Ṭayyib, learned in medicine but also in the Islamic religious sciences [d. 435/1043]).⁷¹ At the lowest level their mutual dislike turned on physical appearances. Ibn Riḍwān criticized Ibn Buṭlān's looks, but not to be outdone, Ibn Buṭlān responded in verse:

When his face appeared to the midwives
They recoiled in perplexity
And said, keeping their words to themselves:
Alas, had we only left him in the uterus.⁷²

Though their mutual dislike extended to this very personal level, it was also fueled by their disagreement over more serious intellectual issues regarding the method of study, curriculum, and practice of medicine. The dispute itself concerned the "issue of differences in the constitutions of newborn birds and chickens,"⁷³ or which is warmer, the chicken or the bird (?), an issue which was, in fact, central to the Galenic system, the study of bodily humors in relation to disease.⁷⁴ Ibn Buṭlān, though a follower of Hippocrates and Galen, nevertheless challenged the traditional belief in this regard to which his adversary Ibn Riḍwān, also an ardent devotee of Galenism, firmly adhered.⁷⁵ As Dols notes, their dispute over whether the chicken or the bird was warmer presents both of these learned doctors at their absolute worst.⁷⁶ Of greater importance is that it does bring into focus several significant medical issues in the medieval Arab Islamic world, namely: the persistence and strength of the Hellenistic tradition in this period,⁷⁷ the tension between dogmatism and empiricism in Hellenistic learning and in medieval Islamic medicine,⁷⁸ and the question of how best to study medicine.⁷⁹

⁷¹J. Schacht, "Ibn Riḍwān," *Et*², 3:906; Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 61.

⁷²From the *Conflict of the Physicians*, quoted by Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 61.

⁷³Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 65-66.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 10. Humoral pathology is the idea that everything is composed of four elements: earth, fire, air, and water with their respective qualities of cold, hot, dry, and wet. In the body food is transformed into four substances: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile. When these substances are in balance, health and well-being result.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 65-66 and n. 342.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 65.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 66, n. 344, citing Schacht.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 21.

⁷⁹Schacht and Meyerhof, *Medico-Philosophical Controversy*, 19; see also, Dols, *Medieval Islamic*



Ibn Riḍwān and Ibn Buṭlān came from very different backgrounds and had entered the medical profession by very different educational routes. Ibn Buṭlān seems to have led a privileged life. He was well-educated, well-traveled, and, though a Christian, well-versed in the Islamic sciences and in Arabic literature. He knew Greek and Syriac and had studied with some of the most famous physicians of his day. He was also the author of a number of works, including, in addition to his *Taqwīm*, the *Da'wat al-Aṭibbā'* or *The Doctors' Dinner Party* (a criticism of medical charlatanism), a book of remedies, a treatise on the purchase of slaves and detection of physical defects in them, and the memoirs of his trip from Baghdad to Cairo.⁸⁰ Ibn Riḍwān's family in contrast was poor. He was the son of a baker in Giza and had probably never left Cairo. Unable to afford study with any learned doctor, Ibn Riḍwān, by working as an astrologer on the streets of Cairo, managed to earn enough to acquire a basic medical education, largely through self-study. Having become very learned in the medical sciences, he eventually worked his way up through the ranks to the post of Chief Physician.⁸¹ He was, in fact, no slouch. His literary output, consisting mainly of medical treatises, was copious,⁸² and in his writing Ibn Riḍwān demonstrates a thorough knowledge of ancient Greek medicine and a firm loyalty to Galen.⁸³ Yet, despite their widely divergent origins, Ibn Riḍwān and Ibn Buṭlān share some points in common. Both were extremely well-grounded in the classical curriculum, based on Hippocrates and especially Galen. Both expressed dismay at what they perceived to be the slipping standards of medical education in their day.⁸⁴ In other words both shared a common culture which demonstrates the continuing strength of the Hellenistic tradition in the medieval Arab Islamic world.⁸⁵

Their dispute, however, also brings to light the existence of tension within Hellenistic learning itself between Dogmatism on the one hand and Empiricism on the other. The Dogmatists hoped "to create an exact science of medicine on the basis of the largely empirical writings of Hippocrates," "through philosophic speculation formulated on a priori principles or *dogmata* of medical knowledge," "and deduced treatments from them."⁸⁶ The Empiricists, on the other hand,

Medicine, 64.

⁸⁰Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 52, n. 255; Schacht, "Ibn Buṭlān," *EF*², 741.

⁸¹Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, *'Uyūn al-Anbā'*, 563; Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 55-56.

⁸²Schacht, "Ibn Riḍwān," 906.

⁸³Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, *'Uyūn al-Anbā'*, 562; Schacht, "Ibn Riḍwān," 906-7; Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 63.

⁸⁴On Ibn Riḍwān see Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 29; for Ibn Buṭlān see below, his treatise on medical charlatanism.

⁸⁵Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 66.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 21.



recommended "observation and experience and used the inductive method."⁸⁷ Both trends, already present within Galenism, had been absorbed by Islamic medicine.⁸⁸ In this dispute Ibn Riḍwān in some respects appears to be more closely attached to the Dogmatist school whereas Ibn Buṭlān, in his challenge to the traditional Galenic belief regarding the chicken and the bird, demonstrates a more liberal spirit.⁸⁹

Finally, the two men were at each other's throats over the question of how best to study medicine. Ibn Riḍwān was a self-taught man who had learned most of what he knew from books,⁹⁰ and, as has been pointed out by others, he made of that necessity a virtue in his argument with Ibn Buṭlān. Hellenistic learning then was not the issue between them; rather it boiled down to who was better educated in that tradition, and it was in this framework that the issue of how best to acquire a superior medical education arose.⁹¹

Conflicting opinions regarding the two doctors are found in the works of their medieval colleagues as well as in those of modern scholars. Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah considered Ibn Riḍwān "a better medical man and better trained in the philosophical and associated sciences."⁹² On the other hand, Ibn al-Qifṭī summed up Ibn Riḍwān as "a man of narrow mind and not of sound judgment."⁹³ More recently M. C. Lyons has remarked that while Ibn Riḍwān's critique of medieval medicine in the Islamic world is in some respects "self-deceiving," nevertheless it may ring true, for similar thoughts are found in the works of Ibn Rushd.⁹⁴ Finally, Joseph Schacht and Max Meyerhof concluded that Ibn Riḍwān was "not an original thinker but merely a strong exponent of Hippocrates' and Galen's thought, except for his list of remedies that were unknown to the ancients."⁹⁵ Whatever the case may be, it is clear that while sharing a common tradition and some ideas, Ibn Riḍwān and Ibn Buṭlān were of different social background, religious affiliation, and approach to their profession.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Ibid., 65-66, especially n. 342; also Schacht, "Ibn Buṭlān," *EI*², 741. On the Dogmatist (Ibn Sīnā)-Empiricist (al-Rāzī) spectrum, Elkhadem places Ibn Buṭlān closer to al-Rāzī, the leader of the Empiricist tradition. See his commentary in Ibn Buṭlān, *Le Taqwīm*, 25.

⁹⁰Schacht, "Ibn Riḍwān," *EI*², 907.

⁹¹Dols, *Medieval Islamic Medicine*, 66.

⁹²Ibid., 64-65

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid.

⁹⁵Ibid.



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE REFERENCE TO IBN BUṬLĀN IN THE DIPLOMA ISSUED TO MUHADHDHIB AL-DIN IBN ABĪ ḤULAYQAḤ

Now, finally, we must consider the intent behind the inclusion of the reference to Ibn Buṭlān in Ibn Abī ḤulayqaḤ's diploma and what the appointee would have inferred from it. In some respects it seems strange that this dispute should be recalled two centuries later. Yet, the reference assumes that the reader is familiar with what was intended, a point which is in itself of interest. In fact, Ibn Buṭlān's works were still popular. The *Taqwīm al-Ṣiḥḥah* had caused a stir in its day because Ibn Buṭlān had had the novel idea to adapt a method of presenting information, which until then had been used only in astronomy, to the field of medicine. The use of tables allowed him to systematize a great deal of information. The method was eventually applied in still other fields, in geography, for example.⁹⁶ In fact, the use of tables became such a popular way of presenting information that the term "*taqwīm*," which until then had retained the original sense of "rectification," "correction," or "reform," came to mean in thirteenth-century common usage simply "tables."⁹⁷ Further evidence of the enduring popularity of this work in the thirteenth century is that the first translation of the *Taqwīm al-Ṣiḥḥah* into Latin seems to have been made at that time, quite probably in the second half of the century, the date of the earliest extant manuscript (and there are a large number of them).⁹⁸ Finally, another indication that Ibn Buṭlān's works were still widely read is the fact that the earliest Mamluk painting to have survived is a miniature from a manuscript of his *Da'wat al-Aṭibbā'* (*The Doctors' Dinner Party*) which dates to 1273.⁹⁹ Thus, we know for a fact that Ibn Buṭlān's name was still on people's lips; his works were widely known and read in the second half of the thirteenth century. Most well-educated Muslims would have been familiar with Ibn Buṭlān's works and most probably would have understood the allusions found in the *taqlīd*. The problem for us is one of interpretation. As we have seen there are many levels to the original dispute between Ibn Buṭlān and Ibn Riḍwān and we are not even certain whether the reference in the *taqlīd* aims to recall some aspect of that dispute or whether it refers to the *Taqwīm* itself. What then exactly did the scribe intend by exhorting Ibn Abī ḤulayqaḤ to "negate" by his *taqwīm* (or his rectification, reform, correction) what Ibn Buṭlān had written?

One thought that comes to mind is that this rather hostile reference to Ibn Buṭlān may have been inspired by his Christianity. Ibn Abī ḤulayqaḤ, it should be remembered, was a recent convert. The reference might have been the scribe's

⁹⁶Ibn Buṭlān, *Le Taqwīm*, 37-38.

⁹⁷Ibid., 14.

⁹⁸Ibid., 43.

⁹⁹Richard Ettinghausen, *Arab Painting* (Cleveland, 1962), 143-44.



way of reminding Ibn Abī Ḥulayqah of his place. But Ibn Buṭlān had lived in a more liberal age when discussions between Christians and Muslims, especially at the Fatimid court in Egypt, were nothing out of the ordinary and when, in fact, there even seems to have been something of a Christian revival in Egypt.¹⁰⁰ Ibn Buṭlān, though a Christian, was well versed in the Islamic sciences and Ibn Riḍwān counted Jews among his closest colleagues. Thus, it seems unlikely that Ibn Riḍwān's acrimonious attacks against others, including Ibn Buṭlān, were religiously motivated and that the dispute was remembered in that way.¹⁰¹ By the thirteenth century, however, the atmosphere had changed and the pressures on the Dār al-Islām had resulted in an intensification of the religious environment. During Qalāwūn's reign two centuries later, I have argued elsewhere that, even in the face of the Crusades and the Mongol invasions, there was no large-scale persecution of Christians; whatever anti-Christian measures were taken during his reign were directed against Christian employees in the financial diwans.¹⁰² It was precisely in this regard that Ghāzī ibn al-Wāsiṭī, himself a bureaucrat and contemporary of Qalāwūn, wrote his tract against the employment of Christians and Jews in the bureaucracy.¹⁰³ The *waqfiyah* for the hospital does include an explicit injunction against the employment of Christians and Jews as well as against their treatment there.¹⁰⁴ The fact that Muhadhdhib al-Dīn belonged to a family of recent converts to Islam could, therefore, have occasioned the reference to Ibn Buṭlān. Muhadhdhib al-Dīn had converted to Islam during the reign of Baybars;¹⁰⁵ 'Alam al-Dīn, his younger brother, converted just before his appointment;¹⁰⁶ the third brother, Muwaffaq al-Dīn Aḥmad, had apparently converted to Islam only in 683/1283-84, a timely conversion in light of the fact that soon after, he too was appointed jointly with his brothers to the *riyāsat al-ṭibb*. He converted in the sultan's presence whereupon the sultan bestowed upon him a robe of honor.¹⁰⁷ To accept the

¹⁰⁰Gary Leiser, "The *Madrasa* and the Islamization of the Middle East: The Case of Egypt," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 22 (1985): 29-35.

¹⁰¹Schacht and Meyerhof, *Medico-Philosophical Controversy*, 14.

¹⁰²Linda S. Northrup, "Muslim-Christian Relations during the Reign of the Mamluk Sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn, A.D. 1278-1290," in *Conversion and Continuity: Indigenous Christian Communities in Islamic Lands Eighth to Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Michael Gervers and Ramzi Jibran Bikhazi (Toronto, 1986), 259.

¹⁰³R. J. H. Gottheil, "An Answer to the Dhimmis," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 41 (1921): 383-457. See also Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan*, 200, 224, 229 for further references to Ghāzī al-Wāsiṭī.

¹⁰⁴Ibn Ḥabīb, *Tadhkirah*, 1, appendix, 367, lines 295-97.

¹⁰⁵Ibn Abī Uṣaybi'ah, '*Uyūn al-Anbā'*', 598.

¹⁰⁶Ibn al-Ṣuqā'ī, *Tālī*, 60, n. 69.

¹⁰⁷Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:3:722.



appointment, even as a junior member of the family triumvirate, he had to be Muslim. While hostility to Ibn Buṭlān in the original incident does not seem to have been based on religion, it is possible that, given the recent conversion of the Ibn Abī Ḥulayqah family to Islam and the prohibition in the *waqfiyah* of the employment or treatment of *dhimmi*s at the hospital, this derogatory reference to Ibn Buṭlān in the *taqlīd* may have been intended to remind them of their place, especially as in the *riyāṣah* they had some authority over other doctors, including Muslims.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps there was sensitivity to the fact that the work of Ibn Buṭlān, a Christian, had gained such popularity and that the new appointee to the professorship at the hospital was but a recent convert and perhaps not a very sincere one at that. The Christian biographer, Ibn al-Ṣuqā'ī, seems to want to reassure this readers in this regard when he reports that although one of the brothers, 'Alam al-Dīn Ibn Abī Ḥulayqah, had been offered the patriarchate (before his conversion to Islam), he had declined it.¹⁰⁹

Ibn Buṭlān was also criticized for his willingness to stray from the Galenic straight path.¹¹⁰ When he realized through observation the necessity of correcting an axiom of Galenic medicine, he had no difficulty in doing so. Ibn Riḍwān had been much more rigid in his adherence to Galen. Like Ibn Buṭlān, Ibn al-Nafīs in thirteenth century Egypt, though as well-grounded in Galen as his predecessors, was critical of the master and in fact, on the basis of his observation, refuted Galen in his discovery of the lesser circulation of the blood. Ibn al-Nafīs, however, was not admonished for his empiricist tendencies. In fact, he was revered, as is demonstrated by the fact that the ruling elite and physicians sought his company. Thus, one's position toward Galenism also does not seem to have inspired the reference.

I tend to think that the rather adversarial innuendo behind this play on words has to do with the nature of the *Taqwīm al-Ṣiḥḥah* itself. As we have seen, Ibn Buṭlān's great contribution was to have pioneered a method to systematize data in the form of tables. Elkhadem argues that Ibn Buṭlān had a social as well as a practical goal: to make hygiene and health information more accessible and understandable to the general public.¹¹¹ At the same time, however, this form of presenting data might be seen as a perfect illustration of Ibn Riḍwān's contention that standards in medical education were slipping. Ibn Riḍwān had been critical of the growing tendency to write summaries and to study medicine from compendiums

¹⁰⁸ According to the *taqlīd* (Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 8:244), Muhadhhib al-Dīn was made preeminent among the three brothers and in this position had important responsibilities (see above).

¹⁰⁹ Ibn al-Ṣuqā'ī, *Tālī*, 60, n. 69.

¹¹⁰ Schacht and Meyerhof, *Medico-Philosophical Controversy*, 78.

¹¹¹ Ibn Buṭlān, *Le Taqwīm*, 14-21, 28 for a discussion of the organization and contents of the work.



rather than from the original works; students no longer studied original texts but only the abridgements or summaries. Ibn Buṭlān's *Taqwīm* would seem to illustrate the point.¹¹² Despite Ibn Buṭlān's attack on medical charlatanism and slipping standards of medical education, his own *Taqwīm* was perhaps viewed as the very kind of work that was leading to the decline in the medical sciences. The diploma, as we have seen, suggests that the teaching of medicine was in Qalāwūn's day neglected, almost unheard of. The reference to the *Taqwīm al-Ṣiḥḥah* may, thus, have been intended to exhort Muhadhdhib al-Dīn in his new teaching position to restore the status of the science of medicine to its former high level by promoting (like Ibn Riḍwān and contrary to Ibn Buṭlān) the study of the medical sciences from the original texts. Whatever the case may be, the reference to the dispute seems to establish Ibn Riḍwān as a role model for Ibn Abī Ḥulayqah.

CONCLUSION

Qalāwūn's deliberate decision to patronize the medical rather than the religious sciences was certainly motivated by a complex of religious, political, social, and personal considerations. These considerations included piety, charity, the preeminent status of Cairo in the Islamic world of the late thirteenth century, legitimation, relations between the religious (and especially the conservative) elite and the Mamluk ruling class, and possibly the personal benefits accruing to the donor of a *waqf*. Beyond these important, though quite mundane goals, however, the sources hint that Qalāwūn may have aimed at something more: the fostering of medical learning. At the least, it appears that he wished to restore the balance between the spiritual and medical branches of learning. More ambitiously, he may have wished to restore the medical sciences to their former glory. Our inquiry into his patronage has produced some tantalizing fragments of information regarding the intellectual environment which informed his decision, but no conclusive evidence that enables us to decipher with any certainty the nature of his own personal vision. His hospital, planted among the madrasahs of his predecessors, was intended to make a statement, but it is difficult to translate that statement in full. Whereas Qalāwūn's monuments constituted a dramatic visual affirmation of his sponsorship of the medical sciences and of his aspirations in their regard, aspirations that are reiterated in a literary way in the diplomas, his appointment of Muhadhdhib al-Dīn Ibn Abī Ḥulayqah to the *riyāsat al-ṭibb* and the *tadrīs al-bimāristān* is more puzzling. The sources are silent regarding Muhadhdhib al-Dīn's accomplishments, suggesting that he may have failed to fulfill expectations. Yet it would be unfair to judge Qalāwūn's patronage of the medical sciences on the basis of this one appointment. If, moreover, the intent of the reference in the

¹¹²Schacht and Meyerhof, *Medico-Philosophical Controversy*, 22.



diploma was to intimate sultanic support for the approach to the restoration of the science and study of medicine favored by Ibn Riḏwān (i.e., a return to the study of original texts), then the opportunity to pursue new knowledge through the empirical method favored by al-Rāzī, Ibn Buṭlān, Ibn al-Nafīs, and others may have been lost, not for lack of intellectual vitality but simply because of the path chosen. Before arriving at such a conclusion, however, the impact of Qalāwūn's patronage on the medical sciences must be further explored through a study of the hospital, its charitable and educational roles, the fortunes and management of its endowment, and the careers of Muhadhdhib al-Dīn's successors in the years following Qalāwūn's reign. This path will be followed in another study now in progress.



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The Sultan, The Tyrant, and The Hero: Changing Medieval Perceptions of al-Zāhir Baybars*

As the true founder of the Mamluk state, al-Zāhir Baybars is one of the most important sultans of Egypt and Syria. This has prompted many medieval writers and historians to write about his reign. Their perceptions obviously differed and their reconstructions of his reign draw different and often conflicting images.

In this article I propose to examine and compare the various perceptions that different writers had of Baybars's life and character. Each of these writers had his own personal biases and his own purposes for writing about Baybars. The backgrounds against which they each lived and worked deeply influenced their writings. This led them to emphasize different aspects of his personality and legacy and to ignore others. Comparing these perceptions will demonstrate how the historiography of Baybars was used to make different political arguments concerning the sultan, the Mamluk regime, and rulership in general. I have used different representative examples of thirteenth- to fifteenth-century histories, chronicles, and biographical dictionaries in compiling this material. I have also compared these scholarly writings to the popular folk epic *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*.

In his main official biography, written by Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, Baybars is presented as an ideal sultan. By contrast, works written after the sultan's day show more ambivalent attitudes towards him. Some fourteenth-century writers, like Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, Baybars al-Manṣūrī, and al-Nuwayrī, who were influenced by the regime of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, tend to place more emphasis on his despotic actions. Other late Mamluk historians, like al-Maqrīzī, al-'Aynī, and Ibn Taghrībirdī, demonstrate a more balanced approach towards the sultan, and present him as a great ruler while still acknowledging his shortcomings and excesses. In the popular epic *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, he is a Muslim hero. Comparing these three main perceptions of Baybars—as idealized sultan, harsh despot, or Muslim hero—shows that certain qualities such as just rule and commitment to Islam were to be emphasized when constructing the ideal image of the ruler, while others

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such as cruelty and despotism were to be ignored or downplayed. It also allows us to see through the seemingly straightforward veneer of narrative that these sources employ and to glimpse the undercurrents beneath.

Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir (1223-92), Baybars’s loyal employee, wrote the sultan’s official biography.¹ The writer was chief clerk in Baybars’s chancery and drafted many state documents himself.² Thus he was witness to many of the events he described.³ Baybars was very much involved in the writing of this work. The writer often read out drafts to the sultan, who duly rewarded him.⁴ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir gives Baybars a voice in several passages of the book that begin with phrases like “the sultan told me” or “I was informed by the sultan,” which indicates that his source for this version of an event was the sultan himself.⁵ This work was clearly intended as a panegyric of Baybars and sought to promote the Mamluk regime.

Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir presented Baybars as an ideal ruler and an excellent soldier, ignoring events that could have tarnished Baybars’s image or else relating them in ways that worked in the sultan’s favor. He considered him the true hero of the famous battle of ‘Ayn Jālūt and attributed the larger part of the victory to his military efforts rather than those of the actual leader of the armies, Quṭuz.⁶ Furthermore, instead of arguing that Baybars had no role in the murder of Quṭuz, Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir insisted that Baybars alone was responsible for killing him and was not a member of a larger conspiracy.⁷ This was to legitimize Baybars’s rule

¹The other biography of Baybars is *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir* by ‘Izz al-Dīn ibn Shaddād. Unfortunately it does not survive in full. The extant part, dealing with the years 1272-78, has been edited and published by Aḥmad Hutayt: ‘Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, Bibliotheca Islamica, 31 (Wiesbaden, 1983). These two works are the main primary sources used by later medieval historians writing on the reign of Baybars.

²P. M. Holt, “Three Biographies of al-Zahir Baybars,” in *Medieval Historical Writing in the Christian and Islamic Worlds*, ed. David O. Morgan (London, 1982), 20; Abdul-Aziz Khowaiter [‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Khuwayṭir], *Baibars the First: His Endeavours and Achievements* (London, 1978), 145.

³Khowaiter, *Baibars*, 158.

⁴Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī ibn ‘Abbās, *Husn al-Manāqib al-Sirrīyah al-Muntaza‘ah min al-Sīrah al-Zāhirīyah*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Khuwayṭir (Riyadh, 1989), 339; Holt, “Three Biographies,” 20; idem, “The Virtuous Ruler in Thirteenth-Century Mamluk Royal Biographies,” *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 24 (1980): 28; Khowaiter, *Baibars*, 162.

⁵For example: Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Khuwayṭir (Riyadh, 1976), 51. See Khowaiter, *Baibars*, 154.

⁶Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 64; Holt, “Three Biographies,” 23.

⁷Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 68; Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate 1250-1382* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Ill., 1986), 37; Holt, “Three Biographies,” 21-22; Khowaiter, *Baibars*, 159.



according to what Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir claimed to have been a law of the *yasa*, namely that a regicide should succeed to the throne.⁸ Because of the semi-official nature of the book, we may consider Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s account to be the one promoted by Baybars himself.⁹

Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s account of Baybars’s life focused on the sultan’s military endeavors and achievements. He also emphasized the sultan’s piety and his services to Islam; for example, he restored the Abbasid caliphate in Cairo. This of course further legitimized his rule. It also gave him leverage in his confrontation with the Mongols.¹⁰ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir also gave many examples of Baybars’s pious acts, especially his pilgrimage to the holy sites in Mecca and Medina, his ban on the consumption of wine¹¹ and hashish,¹² and his campaigns against prostitution.¹³ The writer’s description of Baybars’s pilgrimage is rather elaborate. The sultan’s trip to the Hijaz, like many of his endeavors, was arranged in semi-secrecy.¹⁴ This habit of making a mystery of his whereabouts and travels contributed to Baybars’s development into a romantic character.¹⁵

Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir sought to impress upon his readers that Baybars performed the rites of pilgrimage perfectly. He humbled himself before God:

He remained like an ordinary person not shielded by anyone and protected only by God. He was alone in praying and performing the rites of pilgrimage. He then went over to the Ka‘bah—God bless it—and washed it with his hands. He carried the water in a waterskin over his shoulders and washed the blessed house and remained among the common people. . . . He held people’s hands—may God help him—and assisted them to the Ka‘bah; one commoner clung to him and could not keep hold of his hand because of the crowds and so clung to the sultan’s clothes and tore them and almost threw him on the ground.¹⁶

⁸Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 69; Irwin, *Middle East in Middle Ages*, 37.

⁹Peter Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century*, trans. P. M. Holt (London, 1992), 81.

¹⁰Khowaiter, *Baibars*, 35.

¹¹Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 228, 258, 307, 390.

¹²*Ibid.*, 266.

¹³*Ibid.*, 176, 350.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 354, 357, 359-60; P. M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades: The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (London and New York, 1986), 96.

¹⁵Thorau, *Lion of Egypt*, 197.

¹⁶Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 355.



He also instructed his close employees to distribute money and clothing discreetly to the people of the Ḥaram. Baybars obviously wanted to perform the pilgrimage correctly and to carry out all the rites to perfection, so much so that he had the Hanafī *qāḍī al-quḍāh* accompany him throughout the trip and instruct him in matters of religion.¹⁷ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir concluded the account of the pilgrimage by declaring that: “the sultan performed the duty of pilgrimage as it should be.”¹⁸

Baybars the ideal sultan was also necessarily a just ruler. Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir dealt extensively with Baybars’s administration of justice. He described how Baybars restored the Dār al-‘Adl and often presided over the court himself.¹⁹ He related various cases to prove to his readers that Baybars was extremely firm and stern about justice. For example, a man was in dispute with the sultan over the ownership of a well which Baybars had started digging and which the man had completed. Baybars insisted that he and his opponent be treated equally before the *shar‘* and stepped down from his position of judge at the Dār al-‘Adl so that the *qāḍī al-quḍāh* could decide the case. The qadi ruled that the sultan had the right to the well but must pay the building expenses of his opponent.²⁰ Baybars is thus shown as setting an example to demonstrate that the *shar‘* and rule of law must be observed by all, even the sultan. He is portrayed as a strong sultan who is not afraid of being made equal with his subjects.

Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s presentation of Baybars’s death was in line with his approach throughout the rest of the work. In dealing with this he was very formal and discreet: he merely stated that Baybars fell sick and died.²¹ He did not mention any of the unseemly circumstances of his illness, which according to other reports was due to poison or drinking too much *qumz*, a favorite Mamluk alcoholic drink made from mares’ milk.²²

By contrast, in later works written during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, a more ambivalent attitude towards Baybars emerged. This led the writers of these works to include less glamorous and less flattering accounts of the sultan alongside accounts of his military achievements and the glories of his reign. Some of these

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 356.

¹⁹Ibid., 77, 84, 176; Holt, “Virtuous Ruler,” 32-33.

²⁰Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 84.

²¹Ibid., 472-73.

²²For example: Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma‘rifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá Ziyādah (Cairo, 1957), 1:635; Mufaḍḍal ibn Abī al-Faḍā’il, *Histoire des sultans mamlouks: texte arabe publié et traduit en française par E. Blochet* (Paris, 1919), 276-77; Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥīm ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt*, ed. Quṣṭanṭīn Zurayk (Beirut, 1942), 7:85.



historians, such as Baybars al-Manṣūrī (d. 1325), Shāfi' ibn 'Alī (d. 1330), Ibn al-Dawādārī (d. 1336), and al-Nuwayrī (d. 1332), may have wished to diminish the importance of Baybars's legacy in order to enhance the achievements of the regime of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. This is particularly evident in Shāfi' ibn 'Alī's *Ḥusn al-Manāqib al-Sirrīyah al-Muntaza'ah min al-Sīrah al-Zāhirīyah*, his *mukhtaṣar* of Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir's *Rawḍ*. P. M. Holt argued that this work might have appeared as a sort of companion to Shāfi' 's biography of Qalāwūn, *Al-Faḍl al-Ma' thūr min Sīrat al-Sulṭān al-Malik al-Manṣūr* during the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.²³ This later work was intended as praise of Qalāwūn and served to legitimize his regime and by extension, those of his sons.²⁴ Shāfi' had the task of justifying Qalāwūn's usurpation of the throne from the sons of Baybars, his *khushdash* and former sovereign to whom he owed allegiance. This prompted Shāfi' to slight Baybars's reputation while simultaneously praising Qalāwūn. Yet even in these works, Baybars's legacy and importance could neither be ignored nor completely obliterated. Historians writing in the later Mamluk period, such as Ibn al-Furāt (d. 1404), al-Maqrīzī (d. 1441), al-'Aynī (d. 1451), and Ibn Taghrībirdī (d. 1469), even expressed a sense of nostalgia for "the good old days" which prompted al-Maqrīzī to describe Baybars as "one of the greatest rulers of Islam."²⁵

In these later works, Baybars's role in the murder of Quṭuz was no longer the main one, nor was it necessarily to be celebrated.²⁶ The murder of Quṭuz was presented as a conspiracy involving several amirs, among whom was Baybars.²⁷ In some versions he was not even the one to deal either the first blow or the death blow.²⁸ They further emphasized the abhorrent nature of the act by portraying

²³P. M. Holt, "The Presentation of Qalāwūn by Shāfi' ibn 'Alī," in *The Islamic World From Classical to Modern Times: Essays in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, ed. C. E. Bosworth, Charles Issawi, et al. (Princeton, 1989), 143.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 148.

²⁵Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:641.

²⁶Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, *Ḥusn al-Manāqib*, 66; Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Mukhtār al-Akḥbār: Tārīkh al-Dawlah al-Ayyūbiyah wa-Dawlat al-Mamālik al-Baḥrīyah ḥattā Sanat 702 A.H.*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ṣāliḥ Ḥimdān (Cairo, 1993), 11; *idem*, *Kitāb al-Tuḥfah al-Mulūkīyah fī al-Dawlah al-Turkīyah: Tārīkh Dawlat al-Mamālik al-Baḥrīyah fī al-Fatraḥ min 648-711 A.H.*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Ṣāliḥ Ḥimdān (Cairo, 1987), 45; Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Waḥḥāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab* (Cairo, 1964-), 29:477-78; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:435; Jamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Maḥāsīn Yūsuf ibn Taghrībirdī al-Atābikī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Cairo, 1963), 7:83; Irwin, *Middle East in Middle Ages*, 37.

²⁷Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl Abū al-Fidā, *Al-Mukhtaṣar fī Tārīkh al-Bashar* (Beirut, 1968), 3:207.

²⁸For example: Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Mukhtār*, 11; *idem*, *Tuḥfah*, 45; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:435; Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, *Ḥusn al-Manāqib*, 66-67; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 29:477-78; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 7:83. See Holt, "Three Biographies," 26; *idem*, "Some Observations on Shāfi' ibn 'Alī's Biography of Baybars," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 29 (Spring 1984): 125.



Quṭuz in positive terms as a good and pious Muslim, suggesting he did not deserve to be killed and that his murder was therefore unjust.²⁹ Quṭuz in these writings was a good, pious sultan who was betrayed by his men. This was emphasized by reports that Quṭuz was originally "Maḥmūd", the Muslim-born son of the Khwarizm-shahs, who was sold into slavery after the Mongol defeat of his dynasty and who was later the hero of the battle of 'Ayn Jālūt, where the Muslims achieved victory over the Mongols.³⁰ In contrast to Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir's version, which left no room for contenders to the throne, Shāfi' ibn 'Alī wrote that the top Mamluk amirs had chosen Sayf al-Dīn Balban al-Rashīdī, "the most prominent amongst them," to be their next sultan.³¹ The idea that Baybars was not among the prominent Mamluk amirs is echoed in Ibn Kathīr's version, which complements Shāfi's. Ibn Kathīr wrote:

It is said that when he [Quṭuz] died the amirs were confused amongst themselves over whom to make sultan. They each feared the consequences and that what befell others could quickly befall them [i.e., that they could be murdered by fellow Mamluks like Quṭuz, his predecessor Aybak, and the Ayyubid Tūrañshāh before them], so they agreed on Baybars al-Bunduqdārī, though he was not among the most prominent *muqaddamīn*; they wanted to try it out on him.³²

These writings presented the harsh and despotic side of Baybars's rule. Baybars was known for his strictness and severe punishments.³³ These writers reported that he spied on and imprisoned several top Mamluk amirs, often on the grounds that they were conspiring against the sultan.³⁴ These accounts tended to present unfavorable images of Baybars as a paranoid, insecure dictator rather than a strong ruler trying to control a huge empire. Baybars's imprisonment of Shams

²⁹Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 29:484; Abū Bakr ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Aybak ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmi' al-Ghurar*, ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Cairo, 1971), 8:41.

³⁰For example: Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 8:39-40; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 29:479-80; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 7:85-86; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:435; Quṭb al-Dīn Abū al-Faṭḥ Mūsā ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Quṭb al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī al-Ba'labakī al-Ḥanbalī, *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān* (Hyderabad, 1954), 1:368.

³¹Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, *Ḥusn al-Manāqib*, 67.

³²Abū al-Fidā al-Ḥāfiẓ Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Biḍāyah wa-al-Nihāyah* (Beirut and Riyadh, 1966,) 13:223.

³³Khowaiter, *Baibars*, 37-38.

³⁴Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, *Ḥusn al-Manāqib*, 129; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:84-87, 111, 123, 180; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 8:96; Ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il, *Histoire des sultans mamlouks*, 79; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:493-95.



al-Dīn Sunqur al-Rūmī, for instance, could have been presented as an example of the sultan reigning in his top generals, which was always a challenge for the Mamluk regime. Instead, Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī and al-Nuwayrī cast shadows on Baybars’s character in their accounts of the incident. According to Shāfi‘, the sultan imprisoned Sunqur al-Rūmī, who had tortured one of his mamluks to death despite the sultan’s intercession. Shāfi‘ explains that Sunqur had discovered that the mamluk was a spy for Baybars.³⁵ Al-Nuwayrī’s version, on the other hand, suggests that the sultan might have been attracted to the mamluk, who was “good looking,” and it was this which prompted Sunqur al-Rūmī to punish him.³⁶ Both explanations for the imprisonment of this amir thus portray Baybars in a negative light.

Other writers, like al-Maqrīzī, did not criticize this toughness that Baybars demonstrated in dealing with the Mamluks. So, for example, in dealing with the imprisonment of a top general, Sayf al-Dīn Balban al-Rashīdī, al-Maqrīzī mentioned his several transgressions and Baybars’s patience and tolerance until he was informed—through spies, of course—of this amir’s conspiracy with an Ayyubid ruler against Baybars, which the sultan could not allow to go unpunished.³⁷ Here Baybars hardly seemed despotic in seeking to control the Mamluk generals and preempting a coup d’état.

Nevertheless, even these later writings, which were not intended to idealize Baybars, acknowledged his active role in the administration of justice and the implementation of shari‘ah.³⁸ Unlike Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, who suspiciously ignored Baybars’s decision to appoint four chief judges from the four schools, later sources dealt with the decision but differed in its evaluation. Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī, in his *mukhtaṣar* of Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s work, explained that the reason behind the decision was the strictness of the Shafi‘i qadi, Ibn Bint al-A‘azz, which led to a state of stagnation in the administration of justice.³⁹ Ibn Kathīr explained that Ibn Bint al-A‘azz held up rulings that went against the Shafi‘i *madhhab* but were allowed by other *madhāhib*.⁴⁰ This was also the explanation given by al-‘Aynī later in the fifteenth century.⁴¹ The qadi’s adherence to the letter of the law rather than its spirit appeared almost unjust and obstructive. Thus Baybars’s decision was presented as an

³⁵ Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī, *Husn al-Manāqib*, 210.

³⁶ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:123.

³⁷ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:493.

³⁸ Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Mukhtār*, 13; Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī, *Husn al-Manāqib*, 135, 143, 157; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:501, 503, 508, 536-37.

³⁹ Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī, *Husn al-Manāqib*, 210-11.

⁴⁰ Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah*, 13:245.

⁴¹ Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-‘Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo, 1988), 1:408.



innovative solution to the everyday problems which people faced in the qadi's court. It could be interpreted as an act of religious tolerance that simultaneously enhanced the power of the sultan.⁴²

For writers like al-Nuwayrī, Ibn Bint al-A'azz was a respectable, firm judge who followed shari'ah strictly even when it was in contradiction to the interests of the ruling authorities, the Mamluks. In this version of the incident, the qadi had issued a ruling which harmed the interests of one of the top amirs, and it was this amir who suggested that Baybars appoint four chief judges.⁴³ Al-Nuwayrī's probable disapproval of the decision is hinted at by his account of the Syrian judges' resistance to this decision. They first refused their appointments and then tried to resign, but the sultan would hear none of that.⁴⁴ That there would be resistance to such a decision after traditional Shafi'i control is perhaps understandable.

Al-Maqrīzī's account, on the other hand, included an anecdote that reveals how unpopular the decision was. Somebody saw al-Zāhir Baybars in a dream after his death and asked him how God had judged him. Baybars responded that he received the most punishment for appointing four judges since this had disunited Muslims.⁴⁵ This then was his most unjust decision according to al-Maqrīzī.

The ambivalence of later Mamluk sources towards Baybars's harshness and injustice is further demonstrated in their accounts of the fires in Fustat and the taxation of Damascus. Both cases were ignored by Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, who sought to promote an ideal image of the sultan.

The fires that plagued Fustat in 1264 were obviously dangerous and threatened to lead to disorder. They occurred during a time when Crusaders were among the main enemies of Islam and when toughness with Franks and Christians in general was welcomed by many Muslims. Copts were blamed for the spread of the fires, supposedly as revenge for Baybars's attacks on and destruction of churches in Syria after his defeat of various Frankish enemies.⁴⁶ Baybars reacted by ordering that all Copts and Jews, including the elders of both communities, be burned. They responded by offering to ransom themselves. Some sources report that the elders of the community paid the ransom.⁴⁷ While none of the writers consulted outwardly criticized Baybars's actions, some of their accounts seem to suggest they thought the punishment was too severe. Thus Mufaḍḍal ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il (a Copt himself) along with al-Nuwayrī wrote that a pious Coptic monk who was

⁴²Thorau, *Lion of Egypt*, 165-66.

⁴³Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:117.

⁴⁴Ibid., 122.

⁴⁵Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:640.

⁴⁶Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, *Husn al-Manāqib*, 198; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:114.

⁴⁷Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, *Husn al-Manāqib*, 198.



known for helping people in need regardless of their religion paid the requested amount.⁴⁸ This man was tortured to death on the basis of a *fatwá* given by the *fuqahā'* citing "fear of *fitnah*."⁴⁹ The positive terms in which that man is described suggest that by helping pay the fine he was doing a good deed, which in itself implies that these people were treated unjustly.

While all sources appreciated Baybars's war efforts and his victories against the Mongol and Frankish enemies of Islam, later sources also acknowledged that this glory came at a high price. Building and sustaining large armies cost a lot of money. This overburdened some members of the population more than others. Baybars raised the taxes on Damascus and its environs, arguing that this was land reconquered from the Mongols and therefore as technically '*anwah* land it could be taxed at a higher rate.⁵⁰ The sultan's earlier decision to appoint four chief qadis came to his service. He secured *fatwás* from Hanafī jurists legitimizing his argument and his decision.⁵¹ Yet this decision was listed among Baybars's injustices in several later sources. The understandable unpopularity of this maneuver was still clear a century later in Ibn Kathīr's *Al-Bidāyah* where he wrote:

This issue is famous and there are two opinions on the matter; the correct one is that of the majority, which is that [Muslim property reconquered from infidels] should be returned to its original owners.⁵²

This decision was listed among Baybars's injustices in several later sources. Ibn al-Furāt and al-Nuwayrī reported that the people of Damascus suffered so much that they prayed Baybars's rule would end.⁵³ Al-Nuwayrī wrote that various ulama of Damascus had pleaded with Baybars to decrease the heavy taxes, and though the sultan promised them to end all taxes once he defeated the enemy, he broke his promise.⁵⁴ After much pleading and with the intercession of al-Şāhib Fakhr al-Dīn (son of the vizier Ibn Ḥannā), who had studied Shafī'i jurisprudence, Baybars agreed to allow Damascenes to keep their property in return for a million dirhams paid in installments.⁵⁵ When he died, Damascenes had paid only half of the amount due.

⁴⁸Ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il, *Histoire des sultans mamlouks*, 135-36.

⁴⁹Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:151-52.

⁵⁰Ibid., 152-53.

⁵¹Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2:386-87; al-'Aynī, *'Iqd al-Jumān*, 2:30.

⁵²Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah*, 13:252.

⁵³Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 85.

⁵⁴Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:362-63.

⁵⁵Al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 2:387; al-'Aynī, *'Iqd al-Jumān*, 2:30; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah*, 13:252.



Historians of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries cast doubts over the manner of Baybars's death which further tarnish his image. In several versions, the sultan had planned to poison another man but the cups were mixed up and Baybars drank the poison by mistake.⁵⁶ The insinuations in these stories cannot be ignored. First they imply that Baybars was in the habit of killing and poisoning other men for no legitimate reason. In this case, the man for whom the poison was intended was an Ayyubid who had performed outstandingly in a battle and received high praise, which is said to have made the sultan jealous. But more importantly, these reports imply that Baybars deserved to die such a death, which in itself betrays the authors' true judgment of his rule. Most versions suggest that Baybars died of poison, although they differ in their rendition of the details. This air of conspiracy and mystery adds to the legend of the sultan.

While historians were busy writing their interpretations of the Mamluk regime and the reign of Baybars, other histories, unofficial and unscholarly, were also being constructed. The events of Baybars's life and reign provided a source for popular entertainment. The first major work of a popular nature to take Baybars as its protagonist was *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*.

The dating of *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars* is a fundamental problem facing researchers who wish to use it as a source for cultural and social history. We know that some form of the *Sīrah* had come into being by the fifteenth century, because it was mentioned by Ibn Iyās.⁵⁷ His comments were very brief and do not indicate to what degree it had developed by then. The earliest extant manuscript of the *Sīrah* is found in the Vatican collection and dates back to the sixteenth century.⁵⁸

The fact that the *Sīrah* was primarily a work for oral performance meant that it was a fluid, changing text, rather than a static and defined one. The storyteller and the audience reconstructed the already fluid text at every recitation. This work, which began as an *oral* folk epic, was eventually put into writing, though most surviving manuscripts of the *Sīrah* date back only to the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries.⁵⁹ Even so it continued to be a living oral tradition; E. W. Lane gave an account of the reciters of "*Seeret Ez-Zahir*" in the nineteenth century, and Ṭāhā

⁵⁶Thorau, *Lion of Egypt*, 242; Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 208-10; Ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il, *Histoire des sultans mamlouks*, 276-77; Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh*, 86; Abū al-Fidā, *Al-Mukhtaṣar*, 4:10; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:635-36; al-'Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān*, 2:179-80.

⁵⁷R. Paret, "Sīrat Baybars," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 1:1127; Boaz Shoshan, "On Popular Literature in Medieval Cairo," *Poetics Today* 14 (1993): 354.

⁵⁸Bridgette Connelly, *Arab Folk Epic and Identity* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 1986), 8; Paret, "Sīrat Baybars," 1127.

⁵⁹Connelly, *Arab Folk Epic*, 8.



Ḥusayn mentioned public recitations and the sale of printed editions of it in the early twentieth century.⁶⁰

The printed versions of the *Sīrah* that are now available are not carefully prepared editions of specifically identified manuscripts, nor are they faithful to the richness and language of the manuscripts.⁶¹ The only serious academic work carried out so far on *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars* is the still incomplete translation into French—without an accompanying edited Arabic text—by Georges Bohas and Jean-Patrick Guillaume.⁶² This translation is based on a nineteenth-century manuscript from Aleppo.⁶³ For this article I have used the printed edition currently available in the bookstores of Cairo. This is a five-volume edition published in 1996 by al-Hay'ah al-Miṣriyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb.⁶⁴ The title page of each part (of which there are fifty in the five volumes) includes the title *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars, Tārīkh al-Malik al-'Ādil Ṣāhib al-Futūḥāt al-Manṣūrah* and announces that it is a second edition of a version first published in 1341/1923.

The importance of *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars* in studying the historiography of Baybars himself has not received sufficient consideration. It is as if scholars of the *Sīrah* were trying to divorce its protagonist from his historic counterpart. It is important for the scholar to realize and to emphasize that Baybars the sultan, Baybars of the historical scholarly sources, and Baybars of the *Sīrah* are not identical. Yet it is equally important to realize that this distinction was probably lost on most reciters, listeners, and readers of *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*. Thus the reconstructions of Baybars's life through the *Sīrah*—just as those in traditional primary sources—were meant to comment on Baybars the sultan and consequently on rulership in general even while they entertained the public.

The *Sīrah* relates the exploits of "Maḥmūd" Baybars, the legendary Muslim hero who triumphs over wicked *kuffār*. It is important to note that in the epic it is Baybars, not Quṭuz, who is born into a noble Muslim family.⁶⁵ This fabricated royal lineage might have been necessary to legitimize Baybars's—and by extension, the Mamluk regime's—rule. Just as in official discourse Baybars needed the legitimation provided by a caliph's seal, so in popular discourse this legend served

⁶⁰E. W. Lane, *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (The Hague, London, and Cairo, 1978), 395; Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Al-Ayyām* (Cairo, 1992), 82.

⁶¹Georges Bohas, "L'autobiographie de Baïbars," *La Museon* 104 (1991): 125.

⁶²Georges Bohas and Jean-Patrick Guillaume, *Roman de Baïbars/Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1985-).

⁶³Robert Irwin, "Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars," *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London, 1998).

⁶⁴*Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, 5 vols. (Cairo, 1996).

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 128, 277, 469, 471-77, 704.



to affirm the right of slave troops who were born non-Muslims to rule over most of the central Islamic lands.

Most medieval scholarly sources did not dwell on Baybars's pre-Mamluk life. He entered official narrative as a mamluk of Aydakin Bunduqdār, after which he rose through the military bureaucracy and became one of the top mamluks of al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb.⁶⁶ *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars* offered a domesticated image of this military slave. It did not portray Baybars in any barracks. Instead, "Maḥmūd" was adopted by a rich Damascene lady, Fāṭimah al-Aqwasīyah. She is the one who named him "Baybars," after her deceased son.⁶⁷ Thus the *Sīrah* domesticated its hero and presented him in terms to which the audience could relate. The motif of Baybars's adoption is repeated with al-Şāliḥ Ayyūb and Shajar al-Durr, who also adopt Baybars as their son and name him as al-Şāliḥ's heir. The emphasis on Baybars's origin as "Maḥmūd," as well as his adoption by prestigious Muslim families, appears to be a response to the charge that Mamluks did not know their families and their parents. For a culture that highly esteems the family as a social unit it would have been important to present the hero as a man from a "good family."

All medieval scholarly reports, both those in Baybars's favor and those against him, claimed that he had played a part in the regicide of his predecessor, Quṭuz. Contrary to that stance, however, *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars* attempted to clear its hero from any such charge. The relationship between the two men was portrayed as amiable and strong; Quṭuz treated Baybars very generously and appointed him his heir to the throne.⁶⁸ Baybars in turn "commended Quṭuz's doings and rulings and praised him."⁶⁹ Quṭuz was mysteriously killed and a note beside the corpse accused Baybars of the regicide.⁷⁰ It turned out that Baybars's Frankish enemy, Juwān, was behind both the murder and the accusation, and subsequently Baybars was cleared.⁷¹

Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars is rather nuanced in its interpretation and representation of Baybars's legend. It presents him as a hero, a good pious Muslim ruler. Yet unlike the ideal sultan which Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir makes Baybars out to be, *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars* humanizes rather than valorizes its protagonist. This Baybars is not a larger than life hero; he does not perform miraculous feats himself and is often caught in troublesome situations and needs assistance. It is the secondary

⁶⁶G. Wiet, "Baybars I, al-Malik al-Zāhir Rukn al-Dīn al-Şāliḥī," *EI*², 1:1124.

⁶⁷*Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, 164.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 1076-77.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, 1078.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 1079.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 1080-81.



"helper" characters of 'Uthmān and Jamāl al-Dīn Shīḥah (an Isma'ili chief) who perform miracles and are often considered to be divinely guided.⁷² Baybars himself is neither almighty nor invincible. This almost subversive portrayal of a ruler's power is best exemplified in the way the *Sīrah* deals with Baybars's relations with the Isma'ilis.

In the official narrative Baybars crushed and subjugated the Isma'ilis of Syria.⁷³ A great deal of emphasis is placed on how they were forced to pay tribute to the Mamluks rather than to the Franks.⁷⁴ In the *Sīrah*, however, the Isma'ilis are presented as one of Baybars's main support groups who came to his rescue when he was in danger and performed miracles to save him.⁷⁵ Their leaders saved Baybars from deadly situations when Christian enemies tried to kill him.⁷⁶ It is as if he owed to them his sultanate and the maintenance of his power. Yet even in the *Sīrah* Baybars appointed their leader for them, choosing an outsider for the job; an act of extreme subjugation for such a group.⁷⁷

Baybars's piety and loyalty to Islam was stressed throughout the *Sīrah* primarily in terms of popular religious beliefs and practices.⁷⁸ He was looked after by several saints who saved him by miracles from life-threatening dangers.⁷⁹ He was also depicted as performing orthodox religious rituals strictly.⁸⁰ Sayyidah Zaynab is the patroness of many of the characters of the *Sīrah*, ensuring their victory and helping them out of trouble.⁸¹ Sayyidah Nafisah is the one who unites Baybars with his aide and companion 'Uthmān ibn al-Ḥublā.⁸²

Baybars's loyalty to Islam was also expressed in terms of strong religious prejudice against Franks as well as Christians in general. The Franks were the main enemies of Islam in the *Sīrah*, along with fire-worshipping Mongols. Baybars's principal enemy and the personification of evil in the *Sīrah* was Juwān, a Christian monk who disguised himself in several personae, including that of chief qadi, in

⁷²For example: *ibid.*, 571, 636.

⁷³Jean-Patrick Guillaume, "Les Ismaéliens dans le *Roman de Baybars*: genèse d'un type littéraire," *Studia Islamica* 84 (November 1996): 145.

⁷⁴For example: Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, *Ḥusn al-Manāqib*, 224-25, 241-42; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab*, 30:247-52; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:587; Khowaiter, *Baibars*, 123-26

⁷⁵*Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, for example: 203, 206, 565, 705, 1038, 1051, 1055, 1106, 1171, 1173, 1175, 1186, 1322.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 1175.

⁷⁷Guillaume, "Les Ismaéliens," 145.

⁷⁸*Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, 290, 323, 570, 573, 592.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 676, 718.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 145, 257, 325, 328, 332, 621, 720.

⁸¹Fārūq Khūrshīd, *Aḍwā' 'alā al-Siyar al-Sha'bīyah* (Cairo, 1964), 101.

⁸²*Ibid.*



order to kill Baybars and defeat the Muslims. This motif of the Christian villain in Muslim disguise is echoed throughout the *Sīrah*. Several minor villains also turn out to be Christians in disguise.⁸³ Baybars defeats them all, with the help of ‘Uthmān or the Isma‘ilis. Tough and despotic measures taken by Baybars and Shīḥah against Christians, such as destroying churches or turning them into mosques, are related with pride.⁸⁴

As in the more scholarly sources, in constructing a heroic image of Baybars, a great deal of emphasis is placed on his justice. Baybars himself laid down forty conditions which had to be met before he would accept the sultanate. Most of these conditions have to do with government and the administration of justice. Similar to the image of Baybars in some of the later medieval sources, despotic suspicion seems behind some of these conditions. Thus any two amirs consulting over a decision of the sultan’s would be killed, amirs were not to convene except in the sultanic *dīwān*, and only the ulama had the right to voice opposition to any of his decrees.⁸⁵ In contrast, Jamāl al-Dīn Shīḥah set only one condition for Baybars to be sultan: “Abide by justice and fairness. For I have made you ruler over Egypt, Syria, and other Muslim lands as long as you obey God. If you steer away from the course of Truth you will be dismissed and we would not owe you any obedience.”⁸⁶

The despotic side of Baybars which was apparent in many of the medieval sources is, as one might expect, almost absent in the *Sīrah*. Yet the *Sīrah* does deal with the taxation of Damascus, which was considered one of Baybars’s most unjust decrees. In the *Sīrah*, Baybars tries to levy taxes on Damascus in order to fight the Mongol enemy Hulāwūn, but the Damascenes refuse to pay, arguing “you are a king and kings meet one another and fight for their positions; . . . we serve whoever sits on the throne.”⁸⁷ The pious shaykh al-Nūrī tells Baybars that these taxes are unjust. When Baybars asks how he is then to defend his land from unbelievers, the shaykh curses him and accuses him of insulting the men of virtue and the doctors of the law.⁸⁸ The *Sīrah* reverses the traditional balance of power between ruler and subjects. Baybars appears helpless in the face of strong opposition from the people and the ulama. This must have brought a sort of sweet imaginary revenge to audiences accustomed to heavy taxation throughout the centuries.

⁸³*Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, 800, 804, 807, 812, 927, 990, 1039-40, 1103, 1174.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 946, 982, 1202, 1238, 1242, 1245.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 1084.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 1084-85.

⁸⁷M. C. Lyons, *The Arabian Epic: Heroic and Oral Story-Telling* (Cambridge, 1995), 1:33.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*



While in the scholarly sources most justice was carried out within the boundaries of formal judicial and legal procedures, the *Sīrah* celebrates a more crude street style of justice, where Baybars always defeats the “bad guys.”⁸⁹ His use of questionable means is justifiable, because it leads to the triumph of good over evil. Thus one of the recurring motifs of the work is Baybars killing off an evil character apparently without due cause. In court, the truth is made clear and it becomes obvious that Baybars’s action had been just. His taking the law into his own hands is not condemned.

This practical attitude towards justice and the law demonstrated in the *Sīrah* was paralleled by a distrust of qadis and the court system. Thus Baybars’s main opponent and the personification of evil in the *Sīrah*, the Christian spy Juwān, spent the first half of the work disguised as chief qadi in the Ayyubid court. In his position as qadi he repeatedly tried to prosecute Baybars for the various murders, but Baybars always came out justified. The *Sīrah* also made fun of the schools of law. To save himself from a long wait for their case to be heard by a qadi, ‘Uthmān, Baybars’s friend and aide, proposed that he would be a Hanafi while Baybars could be a Shafi’i “for today.”⁹⁰ This further confirms the pragmatic stance that the *Sīrah*, and by extension its Cairene audience, took with regard to the law, a stance that one could argue is still part of Egyptian urban culture to this day.

Baybars’s reputation, from the earliest scenes of the *Sīrah*, is based on his justice. In his pre-sultanate days, Baybars rose quickly through the government bureaucracy and at each new post fought corruption and injustice against the common people. This—rather than some miraculous power—seems to have been both his greatest credential and his greatest achievement. Baybars’s main attraction as a hero in this *Sīrah* was his ability to defeat wrongdoers and dispense justice. This fight to establish internal justice and order preceded external battles against enemy troops.

It is Baybars’s local reputation as a man of honor and courage, a man capable of fighting corruption, which qualified him to lead armies into battle and earn his troops’ loyalties.⁹¹ The *Sīrah* is full of anecdotes about Baybars’s military capabilities and stories of his courage in battle.⁹² In many instances, however, Muslim victories were due more to trickery and intelligence than simply to military and physical power.

⁸⁹*Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, 147, 151, 226, 278, 285, 363, 369, 373, 378, 426, 556, 563.

⁹⁰Lyons, *The Arabian Epic*, 1:34.

⁹¹Khūrshīd, *Aḍwā’*, 105-6.

⁹²*Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, 981-82, 989, 996, 1163.



Fourteenth-century Egyptian scholars writing under Qalawunid influence and patronage tended to throw unfavorable light on Baybars's image and present his legacy in a negative manner. The text of the *Sīrah* appears to be conscious of those subtle tensions. In *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, Baybars the protagonist is poisoned to death by none other than Qalāwūn!⁹³

Thus historians of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries and the creators of *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars* presented very different perceptions of al-Zāhir Baybars. These varying and often contradictory accounts show that they used the historiography of this sultan to make various political arguments. For example, Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir glorified Baybars in an attempt to legitimize his rule and promote the then newly-established Mamluk regime. This he accomplished by presenting its founder as an ideal sultan and ruler. Historians of successive generations demonstrated more ambivalent attitudes towards Baybars. Some, like Baybars al-Manṣūrī, Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, and al-Nuwayrī, might have been interested in de-emphasizing Baybars's achievements in order to enhance those of the regime of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad. This might not seem strange in light of the changes that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was introducing to the institutional foundations set by the founders of the Mamluk state, including his own father, Qalāwūn. His experience being ousted from the sultanate twice left him determined to turn his third reign into a new beginning for Mamluk rule and to make a name for himself as a great ruler.⁹⁴ To justify and rationalize his innovations it followed that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and his court intellectuals would attempt to slight the founders and originators of the very traditions they sought to overturn. It is revealing that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad chose to destroy and rebuild at a lower height Baybars' famous Bridge of the Lions, the lions adorning the bridge being Baybars's emblem.⁹⁵ This might have prompted fourteenth-century Egyptian historians to include negative aspects of Baybars's rule and character. That they were not writing under his control, as Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir was, also allowed them more freedom in expressing their views—a point which Shāfi' ibn 'Alī explicitly makes.

In contrast to the Egyptian authors, most Syrian historians of the fourteenth century, like al-Yūnīnī and Ibn Kathīr, were religious scholars and teachers.⁹⁶

⁹³Ibid., 3078.

⁹⁴Amalia Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn (1310-1341)* (Leiden, 1995), 31, 197.

⁹⁵Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawā'iz wa-al-I'tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār* (Cairo, 1996), 3:238.

⁹⁶Donald P. Little, *An Introduction to Mamluk Historiography: An Analysis of Arabic Annalistic and Biographical Sources for the Reign of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn*, Freiburger Islamstudien, vol. 2 (Wiesbaden, 1970), 69. For a review of literature discussing the existence of a "Syrian school" of Mamluk historiography see Li Guo, "Mamluk Historiographic Studies: The State of the Art," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 1 (1997): 29, 37-41.



Their distance from the court and the fact that they did not hold official positions meant that they were less likely to be influenced by the attempts to slight and defame the legacy of Baybars for the benefit of the Qalawunid dynasty. The third Syrian historian of this period referred to in this article is Abū al-Fidá, the Ayyubid prince of Ḥamāh.⁹⁷ Though Abū al-Fidá was part of the ruling regime he was more concerned in his work with provincial affairs. Being an Ayyubid himself, he did not need to legitimize the Qalawunid dynasty and consequently he, too, was not overly prejudiced against Baybars. Thus the attitudes expressed by fourteenth-century Syrian historians towards Baybars paralleled those of later Egyptian historians of the fifteenth century.

Yet obviously the legacy of Baybars was so strong that even rival regimes could not afford to ignore his achievements. His military victories and conquests and his establishment of a strong, centralized, extensive empire were not ignored by any of the Mamluk writers I consulted. Needless to say, a severe attack on the founder of the Mamluk state would have undermined the legitimacy of the regime under which they all lived and worked. Furthermore, the ambivalence that these writers demonstrated towards Baybars suggests that while they appreciated his contributions to state building and his establishment of order and military conquests, they also realized that these came at a heavy price. Maintaining large armies that were strong enough to expand Mamluk rule into Nubia, Libya, and Armenia, to keep such a huge empire together, and to fight off enemies, east and west, such as the Mongols and the Crusaders, also entailed a high degree of discipline and order and were—necessarily—funded by heavy taxation. However, by the fifteenth century writers were removed from the events of Baybars's reign and the heavy burdens caused by his achievements had been somewhat forgotten. His reign came to represent an age of glory, perhaps because these writers perceived their own time as one of decline and decadence. In popular memory Baybars lived on through *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*, which presents him as a humanized Muslim hero who fought the internal as well as external enemies of Islam and who carried out justice for all. During the nineteenth century, an age of European occupation and Egyptian defeat, these memories of past glory were so popular that E. W. Lane reported that there were thirty reciters, in Cairo alone, who specialized exclusively in *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars*.⁹⁸

⁹⁷Little, *Introduction*, 46.

⁹⁸Lane, *Manners and Customs*, 395.



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Arabic Studies of Mamluk Jerusalem: A Review Article

The study of Islamic Jerusalem by Arab scholars over the last century has been less important than the work of non-Arab scholars, but the situation is now changing. Arab scholarly studies of Islamic Jerusalem have blossomed since the early 1980s and publications by Arab authors now predominate in terms of number, and increasingly also in terms of quality. This is especially the case since the mid-1990s with the M.A. theses of the students at the Institute of Islamic Archaeology, al-Quds University, and other institutions. Arab scholarship has reached the point where it is scarcely possible to do thorough research about Mamluk Jerusalem without an awareness of Arabic publications. This article has the objective of presenting what recent Arabic scholarship has to offer for the study of Mamluk Jerusalem. It does not attempt to survey the work of Western or Israeli scholars, whose publications are better known and more easily accessible than Arabic ones.¹

Arabic publishing activity about Mamluk Jerusalem began as early as 1866, when Muĵir al-Dīn's fundamentally important history about Jerusalem and Hebron was first edited.² But the first significant scholarly work had to wait until after the First World War with Kurd 'Alī in the 1920s,³ and Mukhliṣ in the 1920s and 1930s,⁴ and more substantially until after the Second World War with al-'Ārif, starting in 1947⁵ and culminating in his *Mufaṣṣal* of 1961,⁶ and al-Dabbāgh in the

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¹This article borrows heavily from my forthcoming publication, *The Sites and Monuments of Islamic Jerusalem* (Beirut, 2000), which is intended to provide encyclopedic coverage and comprehensive bibliography for all the Islamic sites and monuments.

²Muĵir al-Dīn, *Al-Uns al-Jalīl bi-Tārīkh al-Quds wa-al-Khalīl* (Cairo, 1866). His history in manuscript form remained well-known throughout the Ottoman period to Jerusalemites and travellers/pilgrims, such as the late seventeenth-century sufi author 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī.

³Muḥammad Kurd 'Alī, *Khīṭaṭ al-Shām* (Damascus, 1925-28).

⁴See his collected articles reprinted in Kāmil al-'Asalī, ed., *Turāth Filasṭīn fī Kitābāt 'Abd Allāh Mukhliṣ ma'a Dirāsah Mufaṣṣalah 'an Ḥayātihi wa-Shakhṣiyatihi al-'Ilmīyah* (Amman, 1986).

⁵See especially 'Ārif al-'Ārif, *Tārīkh al-Ḥaram al-Qudsī* (Jerusalem, 1947); idem, *Tārīkh al-Quds* (Cairo, 1951); and idem, *Tārīkh Qubbat al-Ṣakhrah al-Musharrafah wa-al-Maṣjid al-Aqṣá al-Mubārak wa-Lamḥah 'an Tārīkh al-Quds* (Jerusalem, 1958).

⁶'Ārif al-'Ārif, *Al-Mufaṣṣal fī Tārīkh al-Quds* (Jerusalem, 1961). It does not completely supersede his earlier books.



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1970s.⁷ Those studies covered the fuller history of Jerusalem, of which the Mamluk period is only a part. The first lengthy studies focused on the Mamluk period were by al-Imām in 1976,⁸ and Ḥamūdah in 1979,⁹ but those studies were largely reworkings of the information that Mujīr al-Dīn had provided. Only al-‘Ārif’s studies included much additional documentation, such as the texts of building inscriptions.

But it was in the 1980s that the shelf of Arabic publications about Jerusalem in the Islamic periods, and specifically in the Mamluk period, began to fill up, in particular with the publications of Kāmil al-‘Asalī.¹⁰ While not attempting to cite every Arabic publication, this article will present the most important publications, arranged by topic.

TEXT EDITIONS

Many Arabic manuscripts have been edited over the years, but a sizable number still await editing. The single most important text for the history of Mamluk Jerusalem, Mujīr al-Dīn’s *Uns al-Jalīl bi-Tārīkh al-Quds wa-al-Khalīl*, written in 900–902/1495–96, was first edited in the nineteenth century, while the most commonly cited version, which contains editing mistakes and misprints, was published in 1973.¹¹ An index was produced in 1988.¹² A careful new critical edition was published in 1999,¹³ but because it does not have an index, it does not fully obviate the need for the 1973 edition.¹⁴ A second major text for the later

⁷Muṣṭafā Murād al-Dabbāgh, *Bilādunā Filasṭīn*, pt. 2, vols. 9 and 10, *Fī Bayt al-Maqdis 1–2* (Amman, 1975 and 1976, with numerous other editions and printings).

⁸Rashād al-Imām (Rached Limam), *Madīnat al-Quds fī al-‘Aṣr al-Wasīṭ (1253-1516)* (Tunis, 1976).

⁹Abd al-Raḥmān Sa‘īd Ḥamūdah, “Bayt al-Maqdis fī ‘Ahd al-Mamālīk” (M.A. thesis, al-Azhār University, 1979).

¹⁰There are two festschrifts for Kāmil al-‘Asalī: *Kāmil al-‘Asalī, al-‘Alāmah al-Maqdisī wa-Qaḍīyat al-Quds* (Jerusalem, 1996) and Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥamārnah, ed., *Dhākhīrat al-Quds: Buḥūth wa-Dirāsāt Muḥdāh li-Dhīkrā Kāmil Jamīl al-‘Asalī* (Amman, 1996), and a biography: Muḥammad Ghūshah, *Al-Quds fī Turāth Kāmil al-‘Asalī* (Jerusalem, 1998). A full bibliography of Kāmil al-‘Asalī can be found in my *Sites and Monuments of Islamic Jerusalem*.

¹¹Mujīr al-Dīn, *Al-Uns al-Jalīl bi-Tārīkh al-Quds wa-al-Khalīl* (Amman, 1973).

¹²Ishāq Mūsā al-Ḥusaynī and Ḥasan al-Silwādī, *Fahāris Kitāb al-Uns al-Jalīl bi-Tārīkh al-Quds wa-al-Khalīl li-Mujīr al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī* (Jerusalem, 1988).

¹³Mujīr al-Dīn, *Al-Uns al-Jalīl bi-Tārīkh al-Quds wa-al-Khalīl*, volume 1 edited by ‘Adnān Yūnis ‘Abd al-Majīd Abū Tabbānah and volume 2 edited by Maḥmūd ‘Awdah al-Ka‘ābnah (Amman, 1999). This is the published version of their M.A. theses of 1999 and 1997 respectively for Jāmi‘at al-Najāḥ al-Waṭanīyah, Nablus.

¹⁴One should note the following studies about Mujīr al-Dīn: Kāmil al-‘Asalī, “Mujīr al-Dīn al-‘Ulaymī al-Ḥanbalī: Mu‘arrīkh al-Quds: Naṣṣ Jadīd ‘an Ḥayātihi wa-Naṣṣ Dhayl Kitābihi *al-Uns*



Mamluk period by Mujīr al-Dīn, his general history entitled *Al-Tārīkh al-Mu‘tabar fī Anbā’ Man ‘Abara fī al-Tārīkh*, remains unedited.¹⁵ The other text of fundamental importance for Mamluk Jerusalem, especially for the buildings on the Ḥaram al-Sharīf, *Masālik al-Abṣār fī Mamālik al-Amṣār*, which al-‘Umarī wrote around 745/1345, was first edited in 1924.¹⁶

A recently edited text is by Ibn Nubātah, a native of Cairo and a poet who was the superintendent of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and Christian pilgrimage in the 1330s under Amīn al-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh, the governor of Damascus. While normally resident in Damascus, Ibn Nubātah made frequent trips to Jerusalem, especially around Easter. In 733/1333 or 735/1335–36 Amīn al-Dīn ‘Abd Allāh traveled to Jerusalem to inspect his newly constructed al-Madrasah al-Amīnīyah and its endowments. Ibn Nubātah accompanied him on that trip and wrote an account that is most interesting for the description of al-Madrasah al-Amīnīyah.¹⁷

The genre with the largest number of texts is the “Islamic Merits of Jerusalem” literature, surveyed by al-‘Asalī and Ibrāhīm in the 1980s.¹⁸ Three recently edited “Merits of Jerusalem” texts from the Mamluk period are Ibn ‘Asākir’s *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*,¹⁹ al-Maqdisī’s *Muthīr al-Gharām*,²⁰ and al-Suyūṭī’s *Ithāf al-Akhiṣṣā’ bi-Faḍā’il al-Masjid al-Aqṣá*.²¹ There are many additional unedited manuscripts, but their value as independent works is lessened because the authors

al-Jalīl,” *Dirāsāt* (University of Jordan) 12, no. 8 (1985): 115-35; Fahmī al-Anṣārī, *Mu‘arrīkh al-Quds wa-al-Khalīl Mujīr al-Dīn Abū al-Yumn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-‘Umarī al-‘Ulaymī al-Ḥanbalī: Ḥayātuhu wa-Mawḍa‘ Qabruhu* (Jerusalem, 1986). Mujīr al-Dīn is the subject of a Ph.D. thesis in progress by Muḥammad As‘ad at Jāmi‘at al-Qadīs Yūsuf, Beirut.

¹⁵Photocopied manuscript in the possession of Fahmī al-Anṣārī, Jerusalem.

¹⁶Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umarī, *Masālik al-Abṣār fī Mamālik al-Amṣār*, ed. Aḥmad Zakī Pāshā (Cairo, 1924).

¹⁷Ḥamd Aḥmad ‘Abd Allāh Yūsuf, ed., *Riḥlat Ḥazīrat al-Uns ilá Ḥaḍrat al-Quds li-Ibn Nubātah 733 H./1332 M.* (Jerusalem, 1994) (reprinted in 1995 with the same pagination of edited text, but different supplementary editorial pages). Yūsuf cites his name as Ibn Nubālah.

¹⁸Kāmil al-‘Asalī, *Makhtūṭāt Faḍā’il Bayt al-Maqdis: Dirāsah wa-Bibliyūghrafīyah* (Amman, 1981); Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm, *Faḍā’il Bayt al-Maqdis fī Makhtūṭāt ‘Arabīyah Qadīmah: Dirāsah Taḥlīlīyah wa-Nuṣūṣ Mukhtārāh Muḥaqqaqah* (Kuwait, 1985). See also Ḥasan ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Silwādī, “Adab Faḍā’il al-Quds: Ahammīyatuhu wa-Ifādat al-‘Asalī minhu fī Tārīkhihi lil-Quds al-Sharīf” in *Kāmil al-‘Asalī*, 113-73.

¹⁹Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, ed. ‘Umar ibn Gharāmah al-‘Umarawī (Beirut, 1995), especially volume one.

²⁰Shihāb al-Dīn ibn Maḥmūd ibn Tamīm al-Maqdisī, *Muthīr al-Gharām ilá Ziyārat al-Quds wa-al-Shām*, ed. Aḥmad al-Khaṭīmī (Beirut, 1994). This is the published version of al-Khaṭīmī’s 1985 Ph.D. thesis.

²¹Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad Shams al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Ithāf al-Akhiṣṣā’ bi-Faḍā’il al-Masjid al-Aqṣá*, ed. Aḥmad Ramaḍān Aḥmad (Cairo, 1982-84).



frequently reworked earlier texts. That makes the study of the “Merits of Jerusalem” literature relatively unfruitful.

One should also note the three publications by al-Dabbāgh, al-‘Asalī, and al-Tāzī with excerpts of travellers and pilgrims from all periods writing in Arabic about Jerusalem,²² such as for the Mamluk period Muḥammad Abū Muḥammad al-‘Abdarī, a native of North Africa, who went on pilgrimage to Mecca and spent five days in Jerusalem in 690/1291—the brief information about Jerusalem in his *al-Riḥlah al-Maghribīyah* focused on the Ḥaram—and Khālīd ibn ‘Īsā al-Balawī, a qadi and native of Spain, who went on pilgrimage to Mecca and spent two months in Jerusalem in 737/1337. His account of his travels, *Tāj al-Mafraq fī Taḥliyat ‘Ulamā’ al-Mashriq*, concentrated on the Ḥaram and the religious scholars in the city.

PRIMARY DOCUMENTS

There are a number of collections of documents covering both the Mamluk and Ottoman periods, such as Darrāj’s collection of documents connected with the Franciscan monastery on Mount Zion,²³ al-‘Alamī’s publication of *waqf* documents related to the Maghribi Quarter (the area of the Western Wall plaza today),²⁴ and al-‘Azīzī’s presentation of some documents related to the Christians.²⁵ The 800-odd documents found in the Islamic Museum in the mid-1970s, known as the Ḥaram Documents, studied in most detail by Donald Little, have attracted only limited attention from scholars writing in Arabic. While al-‘Asalī²⁶ and al-Ṣāliḥīyah²⁷ published the texts of some of the documents, information derived from the documents rarely appears in Arabic studies of Mamluk Jerusalem. Abū Ḥāmid’s

²²Al-Dabbāgh, *Bilādunā Filasṭīn*, pt. 2, vol. 10 (1976), 420-509; Kāmil al-‘Asalī, *Bayt al-Maqdis fī Kutub al-Riḥlāt ‘inda al-‘Arab wa-al-Muslimīn* (Amman, 1992); ‘Abd al-Ḥādī al-Tāzī, *Al-Quds wa-al-Khalīl fī al-Riḥlāt al-Maghribīyah: Riḥlāt Ibn ‘Uthmān Numūdhajan* (Rabat, 1997). See also Yusrā Aḥmad ‘Abd Allāh, “Al-Quds fī Kitābāt Raḥḥālah wa-Jughrāfī al-Qarn al-Sābi’ wa-al-Thāmin al-Hijriyayn,” *Al-Mu’arrikh al-Miṣrī* 21 (1999): 337-84.

²³Aḥmad Darrāj, *Wathā’iq Dayr Ṣahyūn bi al-Quds al-Sharīf* (Cairo, 1968).

²⁴Aḥmad al-‘Alamī, *Waqfiyāt al-Maghāribah* (Jerusalem, 1981). The text is error-filled.

²⁵Rūksī ibn Zā’id al-‘Azīzī, “Min Tawṣiyāt wa-Mawāthiq al-Mamālīk lil-Ruhbān fī al-Quds wa-Ḍawāḥihā,” *al-Dārah* 7, no. 2 (1981): 208-32.

²⁶Kāmil al-‘Asalī, *Wathā’iq Maqdisīyah Tārīkhīyah* 1 (Amman, 1983); idem, *Wathā’iq Maqdisīyah Tārīkhīyah* 2 (Amman, 1985); idem, *Wathā’iq Maqdisīyah Tārīkhīyah* 3 (Amman, 1989).

²⁷Muḥammad ‘Īsā al-Ṣāliḥīyah, “Min Wathā’iq al-Ḥaram al-Qudsī al-Sharīf al-Mamlūkīyah,” *Ḥawliyat Kulliyat al-Ādāb, Jāmi‘at al-Kuwayt* 26 (1985).



M.A. thesis about the Islamic law court judges in the Mamluk period is one notable exception.²⁸

But by far the most important documentary source for Mamluk Jerusalem is the Ottoman *sijills*, the records of the Islamic law court in Jerusalem during the Ottoman period. Most of the annual volumes survive, including some from the first years of the Ottoman period, each containing summaries of hundreds of court cases written in Arabic.²⁹ A thorough examination of the documents in the *sijills* is a mammoth task that remains to be undertaken, but would reveal hundreds of court cases related to such topics as property ownership and endowments that shed light on the Mamluk period. For example, many Ayyubid and Mamluk period endowment documents, lost in the original, are preserved because they were copied into the *sijills*. Al-‘Asalī throughout his numerous books and articles,³⁰ along with ‘Abd al-Mahdī,³¹ largely pioneered the practise of using the *sijills* extensively for documenting the history of the Islamic institutions in Jerusalem, and most other scholars have subsequently included *sijill* citations in their publications. But citations of the *sijill* documents must be used with caution because they are prone to errors, and regrettably some authors deliberately cite erroneous or incomplete *sijill* references as a way to prevent rivals from finding the specific documents. The Ottoman Islamic law court *sijills* represent a vast source of as yet untapped information about Jerusalem and they are far and away the most potentially fruitful topic for research into Mamluk Jerusalem.

As an example of what remains to be learned about Mamluk Jerusalem from the Ottoman *sijills*, Ghūshah has come across a number of citations that refer to the location of the various city gates both before and after the rebuilding of the city wall by the Ottomans in the 1530s. Those *sijill* references, such as the ones to both an old and new Bāb al-Khalīl (Jaffa Gate), seem to demonstrate that the Ottomans did not always build their city wall on top of the derelict Ayyubid-Mamluk walls, but rather in the west and south the Ottomans expanded the area enclosed

²⁸Muḥammad Ḥusayn ‘Alī Abū Ḥāmid, “Quḍāt al-Quds fī al-‘Aṣr al-Mamlūkī” (M.A. thesis, Jāmi‘at al-Qadīs Yūsuf, 1998).

²⁹For the best presentation of what the *sijills* have to offer, see the chapter by Khaḍr Salāmah in Robert Hillenbrand and Sylvia Auld, eds., *Ottoman Jerusalem: The Living City* (London, forthcoming 2000). The most easily accessible microfilm copy of the *sijills* is at the University of Jordan.

³⁰He published numerous documents in his *Wathā’iq Maqdisīyah Tārīkhīyah* volumes. See Fahmī al-Anṣārī, “Sijillāt al-Maḥkamah al-Shar‘īyah wa-Wathā’iqhā wa-Dawr Kāmil al-‘Asalī,” in *Kāmil al-‘Asalī*, 245-54. (Response by Khaḍr Salāmah, pp. 255-73).

³¹‘Abd al-Jalīl ‘Abd al-Mahdī, *Al-Madāris fī Bayt al-Maqdis fī al-‘Aṣrayn al-Ayyūbī wa-al-Mamlūkī: Dawruhā fī al-Ḥarakah al-Fikrīyah* (Amman, 1981).



by their city wall to include some neighborhoods that had built up over the previous centuries outside the earlier derelict walls.³²

INSCRIPTIONS

The bulk of the Arabic inscriptions from the Mamluk period were published by Max van Berchem in the 1920s. Only a handful of new inscriptions have been identified since then, notably by Maṣṣūr, who included in his M.A. thesis several previously unpublished Mamluk inscriptions in the Islamic Museum on the Ḥaram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem.³³ A complete catalogue of the Arabic inscriptions in the Islamic Museum, including a number of previously unknown Mamluk period inscriptions, is in preparation by Khaḍr Salāmah and Robert Schick.

ARCHITECTURE

Little architectural study was done prior to Michael Burgoyne's *Mamluk Jerusalem*,³⁴ the fundamentally important work, but one should note the dissertations by Nāṣir,³⁵ the general corpus of Islamic monuments in Jerusalem prepared by Najm and others,³⁶ and studies of the Madrasah al-Ṭashtamariyah, al-Turbah al-Kilāniyah, and the Sabīl of Qāyṭbāy.³⁷ Al-'Asalī's publications are less studies of architecture than they are documentary histories based on the Ottoman *sijills*.³⁸

As recent additions to the architectural study of the city, one should note Hawari's study of the Ayyubid architecture of Jerusalem,³⁹ and Natsheh's study of

³²Part of Muḥammad Ghūshah's Ph.D. dissertation research in progress on sixteenth-century Jerusalem, presented at the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, Jerusalem, Fall 1999.

³³Ḥamdān 'Abd al-Rāziq Ḥusayn Maṣṣūr, "Dirāsah lil-Nuqūsh al-'Arabīyah fī al-Mathaf al-Islāmī bi-al-Quds" (M.A. thesis, University of Jordan, 1995).

³⁴Michael Burgoyne, *Mamluk Jerusalem: An Architectural Study* (with additional historical research by D. S. Richards) (London, 1987). An Arabic translation has been prepared by Aḥmad al-'Alamī, but awaits publication.

³⁵Jalāl As'ad Nāṣir (Quzūh), "'Amā'ir al-Sulṭān Qāyṭbāy fī Bayt al-Maqdis" (M.A. thesis, Cairo University, 1974); idem, "Al-'Amārah al-Mamlūkīyah al-Jarkasīyah fī Bayt al-Maqdis, 784 H.-922 H./1382 M.-1517 M." (Ph.D. diss., Cairo University, 1983). See also idem, "Al-Madrasah al-Ṭashtamariyah fī Bayt al-Maqdis 784 A.H.-1382 A.D." in *Al-Mu'tamar al-Dawlī al-Thālith li-Tārīkh Bilād al-Shām: Filasṭīn*, vol. 1, *Al-Quds* (Amman, 1983), 52-79.

³⁶Rā'if Najm, et al., *Kunūz al-Quds* (Amman, 1983). It contains many mistakes.

³⁷Idārat al-Awqāf al-Islāmīyah, *Al-Madrasah al-Ṭashtamariyah: Dirāsah Raqm (1) Ṭarīq Bāb al-Silsilah* (Jerusalem, 1977); Yūsuf Natshah, *Al-Turbah al-Kilāniyah, 753 A.H./1342 A.D.* (Jerusalem, 1979); Muṣṭafá Najīb, *Dirāsah Jadidah 'alá Sabīl al-Sulṭān Īnāl al-Mundathar wa-al-Sabīl al-Ḥālī lil-Sulṭān Qāyṭbāy bi-al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf bi-al-Quds* (Cairo, 1984).

³⁸Especially Kāmil al-'Asalī, *Min Āthārinā fī Bayt al-Maqdis* (Amman, 1982).

³⁹Mahmoud Hawari, "Ayyubid Jerusalem: An Architectural and Archaeological Study" (Ph.D.



sixteenth-century Ottoman public architecture in the city.⁴⁰ Al-Anṣārī's studies of some secondary mosques in the Old City from the Mamluk period concentrate more on their recent history.⁴¹ Rizq has compared the monuments in Jerusalem with those that the same patrons built in Cairo.⁴²

There are numerous Mamluk buildings in the Old City that are not included in Burgoyne's study, while the historical documentation provided by Richards from the Ottoman *sijills* is far from exhaustive. But only a few more Mamluk buildings have been added to the documented corpus of buildings. Al-Dajjānī's study of the Tomb of David on Mount Zion and Ṭaha's study of the Golden Gate in part covered the Mamluk period.⁴³ But more significantly, Abū Rayyā's study of the Islamic monuments on the Mount of Olives covered much new ground.⁴⁴ Abū Rayyā was remarkably successful in combining attestations from Western Christian pilgrims and Arabic sources; that enabled him to determine that the Church of the Ascension on the Mount of Olives was converted from an open structure into an enclosed mosque just prior to 737/1337. He also documented for the first time the Maqām al-Arba'īn, located in the middle of the Muslim cemetery near the Mazār Salmān on the east side of the Mount of Olives. It may be the same monument as the mausoleum of al-Sittah Zahrah, the wife of the amir Tughān al-'Uthmānī, the inspector of the two Ḥarams and the governor of Jerusalem in the 840s/1430-1440s.

Another addition to the corpus of Islamic buildings in the city is Ghūshah's study of the Sa'dī Quarter, the area between Damascus Gate and Herod's Gate north of the Via Dolorosa.⁴⁵ Ghūshah's book is the first comprehensive study of

diss., University of London, 1998).

⁴⁰Yusuf Natsheh, "Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Public Buildings in Jerusalem: A study based on the standing monuments and the evidence of the Jerusalem sijill" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1997); forthcoming in Hillenbrand and Auld, *Ottoman Jerusalem*.

⁴¹Fahmī al-Anṣārī, *Masjid al-Sultān Barqūq* (Jerusalem, 1994); idem, *Masjid al-Shaykh Rīhān, Masjid Qalāwūn, Masjid al-Qaymarī* (Jerusalem, 1995).

⁴²Āṣim Muḥammad Rizq, "Ba'ḍ Madāris Rijāl al-Dawlah al-Miṣrīyah fī Bayt al-Maqdis Khilāl al-'Aṣrayn al-Ayyūbī wa-al-Mamlūkī (671-923 H./1171-1517 M.) wa-Dirāsāt Takmilīyah min Madārisihim bi-al-Qāhirah," *Dirāsāt Āthārīyah Islāmīyah* 5 (1995): 103-45.

⁴³Amāl al-Dajjānī, "Masjid al-Nabī Dā'ūd 'alayhi al-Salām wa-Maqāmuḥu, Bayt al-Maqdis: Dirāsah Tārīkhīyah Atharīyah Mi'mārīyah" (M.A. thesis, Institute of Islamic Archaeology, al-Quds University, 1996); Aḥmad Ṭaha, *Al-Bāb al-Dhahabī fī al-Fatraḥ al-Islāmīyah: Dirāsah Atharīyah Tārīkhīyah* (Jerusalem, 1999) (the published version of his 1996 M.A. thesis for the Institute of Islamic Archaeology, al-Quds University).

⁴⁴Rafa' Abū Rayyā, "Al-Mawāqī' al-Islāmīyah 'alá Jabal al-Zaytūn/Ṭūr Zaytā: Dirāsah Mi'mārīyah, Atharīyah, Tārīkhīyah" (M.A. thesis, Institute of Islamic Archaeology, al-Quds University, 1999).

⁴⁵Muḥammad Ghūshah, *Ḥārāt al-Sa'dīyah fī al-Quds al-'Uthmānī* (Jerusalem, 1999) (a greatly expanded version of his M.A. thesis for the Institute of Islamic Archaeology, al-Quds University, 1998).



one of the residential neighborhoods in the Old City, in which he provides historical and architectural documentation for some forty buildings, most previously unstudied. While most of those buildings date to the Ottoman period, he presented architectural documentation or information derived from the Ottoman *sijills* about the Bāb al-Dā'īyah gate, removed when the Ottomans rebuilt the walls, the Zāwīyah al-Lu'lu'īyah, endowed in 775/1373, the *dār* of the amir Ṭūghān, founded in 864/1459, and the oven and mill of Dā'ūd ibn al-Asyad, endowed in 879/1474.

There is little architectural documentation left to be done for the buildings on the Ḥaram al-Sharīf and the other major public monuments in the Old City, but much remains to be documented elsewhere, such as the little-known northeast area of the Old City, east of Herod's Gate and north of the Via Dolorosa. A number of Mamluk madrasahs and other buildings attested in historical sources such as Mujīr al-Dīn's history have yet to be identified on the ground, while there are numerous extant buildings with architectural features suggesting a date in the Mamluk period that have not been identified or documented. A thorough examination of the Ottoman *sijills* should provide information to help resolve the numerous outstanding questions of identification.

ART

Little about Islamic art of Mamluk Jerusalem has been written, despite the riches of the Islamic Museum on the Ḥaram al-Sharīf, which houses a large collection of Quran manuscripts, lamps, incense burners, and other objects that were endowed to the al-Aqsa Mosque, Dome of the Rock, or other Islamic institutions over the centuries. Beyond Abū Khalaf's thin study that includes photographs of a mosque lamp from the time of the governor Tankiz, there is little to note.⁴⁶ A catalogue of some, but by no means all, of the exquisite Quran manuscripts in the Museum, including a number of Mamluk period ones, is currently in press.⁴⁷

GENERAL HISTORY

Several authors, notably Ghawānmah and 'Alī, have produced general studies of the Mamluk period.⁴⁸ There are also numerous recent general multi-period histories of Jerusalem that include the Mamluk period; al-'Asalī's work on medicine is of

⁴⁶Marwan Abu Khalaf, *Islamic Art Through the Ages: Masterpieces of the Islamic Museum of al-Haram al-Sharif (al-Aqsa Mosque) Jerusalem* (Jerusalem, 1998).

⁴⁷Khaḍr Salāmah, *The Qur'ān Manuscripts in the Islamic Museum, al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf, Jerusalem* (Paris, forthcoming).

⁴⁸Yūsuf Ghawānmah, *Tārīkh Niyābat Bayt al-Maqdis fī al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī* (Amman, 1982); al-Sayyid 'Alī 'Alī, *Al-Quds fī al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī* (Cairo, 1986); Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr, "Ba'd Aḍwā' 'alā Madīnat al-Quds fī 'Aṣr Salaṭīn al-Mamālīk" in *Al-Mu'tamar al-Dawī*, 80-127.



especial interest.⁴⁹ Many others are not worth listing here. Evidence for the first years of Ottoman rule sheds much light on the preceding late Mamluk period; the best study of sixteenth-century Ottoman Jerusalem is the one by Ya‘qūb.⁵⁰

EDUCATION

Islamic education has been the topic of several studies.⁵¹ The histories of the numerous madrasahs in the Mamluk and Ottoman periods, focusing on information derived from the Ottoman *sijills* about their administrators and teachers, have generated numerous studies.⁵² The information that Mujīr al-Dīn provided about the madrasahs in Jerusalem has been rehashed more times than is worth citing here, most recently in al-‘Alamī’s thin study.⁵³

PEOPLE BURIED IN JERUSALEM

Studies of famous Muslims buried in Jerusalem is a sub-field of its own, with information for the Mamluk period largely derived from Mujīr al-Dīn. Kāmil al-‘Asalī wrote about each of Jerusalem’s cemeteries and mausolea,⁵⁴ while al-Anṣārī studied the Māmīllā Cemetery, and collected the names of the people known to be buried there.⁵⁵

VARIOUS

A number of other studies on specific topics are also worth noting, such as Yaḥyá’s study of libraries,⁵⁶ and Tasan’s study of administration.⁵⁷ Jerusalem in

⁴⁹Kāmil al-‘Asalī, *Muqaddimah fī Tārīkh al-Ṭibb fī al-Quds mundhu Aqdam al-Azminah ḥattā Sanat 1918 A.D.* (Amman, 1994).

⁵⁰Muḥammad Aḥmad Salīm Ya‘qūb, *Nāḥiyat al-Quds al-Sharīf fī al-Qarn al-‘Āshir al-Hijrī/al-Sādis ‘Ashar al-Mīlādī* (Amman, 1999).

⁵¹‘Abd al-Jalīl ‘Abd al-Mahdī, *Al-Ḥarakah al-Fikrīyah fī Zill al-Masjid al-Aqṣá fī al-‘Aṣrayn al-Ayyūbī wa-al-Mamlūkī* (Amman, 1980); idem, “Al-‘Ulūm al-Dīnīyah wa-al-Lisānīyah fī Zill al-Masjid al-Aqṣá fī al-‘Aṣrayn al-Ayyūbī wa-al-Mamlūkī” in *Al-Mu’tamar al-Dawlī*, 141-203; Kāmil al-‘Asalī, “Al-Madāris wa-Ma‘āhid al-‘Ilm wa-al-‘Ulamā’ fī Filasṭīn (al-Qarn al-Khāmis—al-Thānī ‘Ashar lil-Hijrah/al-Qarn al-Ḥādī ‘Ashar—al-Thāmin ‘Ashar lil-Mīlād,” in Hādīyah al-Dajjānī-Shakīl and Burhān al-Dajjānī, eds., *Al-Ṣirā’ al-Islāmī al-Faranjī ‘alá Filasṭīn fī al-Qurūn al-Wuṣṭá* (Beirut, 1994), 494-529.

⁵²Especially Kāmil al-‘Asalī, *Ma‘āhid al-‘Ilm fī Bayt al-Maqdis* (Amman, 1981) and ‘Abd al-Jalīl ‘Abd al-Mahdī, *Al-Madāris fī Bayt al-Maqdis fī al-‘Aṣrayn al-Ayyūbī wa-al-Mamlūkī: Dawruhā fī al-Ḥarakah al-Fikrīyah* (Amman, 1981).

⁵³Aḥmad al-‘Alamī, *Al-Madāris al-Mamlūkīyah fī al-Quds* (Jerusalem, 1999).

⁵⁴Kāmil al-‘Asalī, *Ajdādunā fī Tharā Bayt al-Maqdis* (Amman, 1981).

⁵⁵Fahmī al-Anṣārī, *Tarājīm Ahl Maqbarat Māmīllā* (Jerusalem, 1986); idem, *Tārīkh Maqbarat Māmīllā* (Jerusalem, 1987).

⁵⁶Mahāh Aḥmad Yaḥyá, “Al-Maktabāt al-Islāmīyah fī Bayt al-Maqdis fī al-‘Aṣr al-Mamlūkī”



Arabic literature during the Crusades has been the subject of two books by ‘Abd al-Mahdī.⁵⁸ The biography of Kamāl al-Dīn ibn Abī Sharīf at the end of the Mamluk period has been studied in detail by Abū Sanīnah.⁵⁹

POPULAR ARTICLES

Occasional brief popular articles about Islamic Jerusalem are published in the Islamic magazines *Hadī al-Islām*, published by Wizārat al-Awqāf wa-al-Shu‘ūn wa-al-Muqaddasāt al-Islāmīyah bi-‘Ammān since 1956; *Hudā al-Islām*, published by Idārat al-Awqāf wa-al-Shu‘ūn wa-al-Muqaddasāt al-Islāmīyah bi-al-Quds since 1982; *al-Isrā’*, published by Dār al-Fatwā wa-al-Buḥūth al-Islāmīyah fī al-Quds wa-al-Diyār al-Filasṭīnīyah since 1996, and *Al-Minbar*, published by Dā’irat al-Awqāf al-Filasṭīnīyah since 1997. Those articles do not warrant separate mention here. But one should also be aware of the popular magazine *Al-Quds al-Sharīf* published between 1984 and 1994. Of particular interest are the many articles that al-‘Asalī published there. Occasional details in those articles are not found in his other publications.⁶⁰ The publications of the Yawm al-Quds conferences held annually in Amman, Jordan and at al-Najah National University in Nablus are of limited interest.

ACCESSIBILITY

While I have attempted to show the range of current Arab scholarship, tracking down the references I have given is a difficult problem, especially the various unpublished M.A. and Ph.D. dissertations. The numerous interesting publications of the Qism Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-Islāmī (Department of the Revival of Islamic Heritage) in Abū Dīs,⁶¹ regrettably are also very poorly distributed. One needs to be in Jerusalem itself to track the citations down; Fahmī al-Anṣārī’s library in East Jerusalem is the place to start.⁶²

(M.A. thesis, Institute of Islamic Archaeology, al-Quds University, 1999).

⁵⁷Muḥammad Ṣālīḥ al-Tasan, “Al-Waḏā’if al-Dīnīyah wa-al-Idārīyah bi-al-Masjid al-Aqṣā fī ‘Ahd Dawlat al-Mamālīk,” *Al-‘Uṣūr* 5, no. 2 (1990): 283-310.

⁵⁸‘Abd al-Jalīl ‘Abd al-Mahdī, *Bayt al-Maqdis fī Adab al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah 492-648 h.* (Amman, 1989); idem, *Bayt al-Maqdis fī Shi‘r al-Ḥurūb al-Ṣalībīyah 492-648 h.* (Amman, 1989).

⁵⁹Yūsuf ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Abū Sanīnah, *Shaykh Mashāyikh al-Islām Malik al-‘Ulamā’ al-Kamāl Muḥammad ibn Abī Sharīf* (Jerusalem, 1990).

⁶⁰A complete list can be found in my *Sites and Monuments of Islamic Jerusalem*.

⁶¹They are the publishers of, for example, the books by Fahmī al-Anṣārī cited earlier.

⁶²I must extend a special word of thanks and appreciation to Fahmī al-Anṣārī, for his assistance over the years from December 1994 to January 2000, when I was the Islamic Studies Fellow at the W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem.



ŞUBĤĪ ‘ABD AL-MUN‘IM MUĤAMMAD, *Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāsī: Rā‘id al-Mu‘arrikhīn al-Ĥijāzīyīn (832-775 H./1373-1429 M.)* (Cairo: al-‘Arabī lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī‘, 1997). Pp. 212.

REVIEWED BY LI GUO, University of Notre Dame

The history of Mecca, especially that of the period after the glorious years of Muḥammad’s life and activities there, has drawn increasing scholarly attention recently, after having been “strangely neglected practically,” in Franz Rosenthal’s words,¹ since the third/ninth century, the time of the renowned Meccan historians al-Azraqī (d. ca. 246/860) and al-Fākihī (d. after 272/885). Among the leading local historians (those belonging to the so-called “Hejazi school” in the long chain of development of historical writing), Taqī al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Makkī al-Ḥasanī al-Mālikī al-Fāsī (d. 832/1429) is without doubt one of the most original and outstanding, a pioneering sort of figure. The book under review is the first serious attempt to present this historian’s life and labor in a monograph.

Unfortunately, the scholarly value of the book is considerably limited. The major disappointment is the fact that only one manuscript (Ibn Farḥūn’s [d. 799/1397] *Naṣīḥat al-Mushāwir*) has been consulted in this pioneering study—if one may call it that, in view of a lack of other publications on the subject. While use is made of some well-known primary and secondary sources in Arabic, western scholarship on the subject is largely ignored, except for brief mentions of Carl Brockelmann’s *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, Franz Rosenthal’s *A History of Muslim Historiography* and Heinrich Ferdinand Wüstenfeld’s 1859 work *Die Chroniken der Stadt Mekka*. (I doubt the original German text of the latter was ever consulted inasmuch as every single German word in the title given in the bibliography is misspelled [p. 212]). There are no indexes of any sort. These shortcomings, combined with the poor quality of printing and frequent typographical errors (the most awkward is the conjunction *wāw* being repeatedly set at the end of a line), make the book look less than serious.

The book is divided into two major parts, and they are preceded by a Preface and followed by Concluding Remarks. The Preface (pp. 2-6) outlines the purpose, scope, and method of the study. The author states that what made him embark upon the task is the fact that Taqī al-Dīn al-Fāsī, a leading figure in revitalizing the Hejazi historical tradition following a long decline after the third/ninth century, and one of the most prominent scholars of the ninth/fifteenth century in Mecca, has long been hidden from the limelight. He is hardly known outside the circle of

¹“al- Fāsī,” *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 2:828-29.



a few specialists, and his achievements as well as his influence on the development of Hejazi historiography have been little studied and not fully appreciated.

Part One, "al-Fāsī's Biography" (*Sīrat al-Fāsī*), consists of four chapters: (1) "His Upbringing and Life"; (2) "His Education"; (3) "His Fellow Scholars"; and (4) "His Students" (pp. 7-66). Although the format here is typical, the content is quite insubstantial. The title of chapter 1 is rather misleading in that the chapter merely gives a list of al-Fāsī's famous family members (pp. 7-18), but nothing is said about "his upbringing and life." Given the fact that the main source for this part is al-Fāsī's own biographical work *al-'Iqd al-Thamīn*, in which he devoted considerable attention to his own autobiography, the author's failure to present a meaningful biography is regrettable.

Chapter 2 offers yet another list, this time that of al-Fāsī's teachers and his journeys in search of knowledge. Each name, and each city, is accompanied by a lengthy footnote that contains commonplace information. I do not see, for instance, the need to footnote "Mecca" (p. 19), "al-Masjid al-Ḥarām" (p. 20), "Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī" (p. 27), and many others, in this slim volume. The lengthy explanation of the meaning of "*ijāzah*" (p. 30) is redundant as well. One gets the feeling that the author is trying to expand the study into a book from the very limited original data he has collected. The name dropping is necessary only if the author demonstrates that these people's writings and teachings had significant impact on al-Fāsī's own career as an historian. But unfortunately, it is exactly at this point that the present book falls short. For instance, it is well known that the great historian Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406) was al-Fāsī's teacher and patron, and that his methods and writings profoundly influenced al-Fāsī's historical thinking and writing. Although considerable space is devoted to Ibn Khaldūn and his relationship to al-Fāsī (pp. 40-54), one finds mostly digressive passages about *Ibn Khaldūn's* biography and *his* major works. Only a few pages are left to deal with the real subject here, that is, Ibn Khaldūn's influence on al-Fāsī's writing (pp. 50-54); even this little space is filled with citations from al-Fāsī's own works where he mentioned Ibn Khaldūn as his source. There is no synthesis, let alone analysis.

The same method and style continue in chapter 3 (pp. 55-60), which deals with al-Fāsī's fellow scholars, among whom the most intriguing is Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 852/1449). The chapter turns out to be primarily a biography of *Ibn Ḥajar* and a list of *his* works. Nothing is said about his dealings with, and influence on, al-Fāsī. Chapter 4 follows suit, with more name dropping and no discussion. Oddly, only at the end of Part One is there passing mention of al-Fāsī's career as the Mālikī chief judge in Mecca, a position that provided him with a great deal of firsthand information on the city, its institutions, and its people, giving his accounts of the history of the city a certain sense of authenticity. This point, unfortunately, is not elaborated by the author. One also wonders why this



portion, which is essential to a better understanding of al-Fāsī's world view and his sources, should be given so little attention and be put here, disjointedly, at the very end of his biography.

Part Two, "al-Fāsī and His Labors in Historical Writing" (*al-Fāsī wa-Juhūduhu al-Tārīkhīyah*), is the better and more substantial and informative segment of the book (pp. 68-192). It has five chapters: (1) "al-Fāsī's works"; (2) "The Hejazi School of Historical Writing"; (3) "The Features of Historical Writing in al-Fāsī's Time and Their Impact on His Works"; (4) "al-Fāsī's Framework of Historical Inquiry" (*Iṭār al-Baḥth al-Tārīkhī*); and (5) "al-Fāsī's Influence on Later Historiography."

Chapter 1 lists al-Fāsī's major works with information on the manuscripts and publication records of these titles. Twenty titles, with several additional miscellanies, are listed; among them the two most important and original are *Shifā' al-Gharām bi-Akhbār al-Balad al-Ḥarām*, a history of Mecca, and *al-'Iqd al-Thamīn fī Tārīkh al-Balad al-Amīn*, a biographical dictionary of the people associated with Mecca, including the author's own autobiography. Of the former, only the old 1956 edition is mentioned, while the new 1996 Mecca edition (edited by Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ et al.) failed to make the list. This is the part from which the reader would naturally crave more information, since this is the first effort ever to study al-Fāsī's works in a comprehensive way, but it falls short on detail. The majority of the entries are only given as titles, without any additional information; as for the titles that do get some attention, the information is usually brief (pp. 68-72). As if to compensate for the dearth of substance in this section, the author has devoted a longer segment (pp. 73-79) to quoting citations that praise al-Fāsī's writings. However, these citations are mainly stock clichés common in medieval Muslim scholarly critique, and they are all quoted from al-Fāsī's own *al-'Iqd al-Thamīn*.

Chapter 2 deals with an interesting topic, that is, the Hejazi school of historical writing. Leaning heavily on Brockelmann, Rosenthal, and Shākir Muṣṭafá, the author first gives a detailed overview of the development of historical thinking and writing in Mecca and Medina in the early Islamic era. The main thesis is that the awareness of Muslim historical writing started as early as the beginning of Islam, when Mecca was the center of Muslim learning. While early authors focused on broader themes concerning *maghāzī*, or early Muslim conquests, and *ḥadīth* transmission, it was not until the third/ninth century, when the Hejaz was less in the spotlight in the Islamic political arena, that we see historians like al-Azraqī and al-Fākihī engage in recording *akhbār* about the holy city Mecca *itself* as well as giving descriptions of its topography. The motive for such pursuits seems to have stemmed from the desire among the local 'ulamā' to bring back to the Muslims' collective consciousness the importance of the holy places, to remind Muslims of their duties of pilgrimage to these places, and to provide guides for



such visits. Later authors of the "Hejazi school" did not exceed this scope until the ninth/fifteenth century, when al-Fāsī emerged as an "historian" in the real sense, whose writings combined clearly executed chronicles with in-depth historical analysis, not only bringing the "Hejazi school" back on the map of Muslim historiography, but also influencing later historians in the Hejaz and elsewhere.

Chapter 3, which deals with the specifics of the historical writings of al-Fāsī's time and their influence on al-Fāsī, is a natural continuation of the previous chapter. It is also of special interest for Mamluk scholars in that this chapter touches upon some important issues in Mamluk historiography as a whole. According to the author, the historical writing in al-Fāsī's time, i.e., the ninth/fifteenth century, can be characterized by five phenomena regarding themes, methodology, approach, etc., and they are: (1) quoting (*al-naql*) from other sources; (2) writing epitomes of existing works (*al-talkhīṣ wa-al-ikhtīṣār*); (3) writing continuations (*al-tadhīl*) of existing works; (4) autobiography; and (5) local history. Each of these categories is treated in detail, placing al-Fāsī's writing, which reflects in various ways all these facets, within the context of mainstream historiography in Egypt and Syria, whose leading figures include al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Ḥajar (al-Fāsī's friend), al-'Aynī, Ibn al-Ṣayrafī, al-Sakhāwī, al-Suyūṭī, Ibn Taghrībirdī, and Ibn Iyās, among others.

More discussion of al-Fāsī's own historical writings continues in chapter 4, where several issues pertaining to al-Fāsī's historical methodology, his major achievements, and the continuity and discontinuity of his own works as well as those of the "Hejazi school"—as opposed to those "common features" nourished through the labors of the Egyptian and Syrian masters mentioned above—are addressed. Among many issues dealt with here, students of Mamluk history may be particularly interested in learning more about al-Fāsī's two masterpieces, which represent, respectively, the two major genres of historical writing of his time: his biographical dictionary of the learned persons of Mecca (*al-'Iqd al-Thamīn*) and his local history of Mecca (*Shifā'*). Fortunately, nearly half of the book (pp. 115-80) is devoted to these two works. In discussing *al-'Iqd*, the author first presents a layout of the structure and main contents of the work; some textual aspects such as the alphabetical order of arranging the 3,500 plus entries (p. 117) as well as other principles that guided the organization of this bulky work (pp. 118 f.) are given special attention. The author points out that this alphabetical order is also found in Ibn Ḥajar's biographical work *al-Iṣābah fī Tamīz al-Ṣaḥābah*, which follows a model set by Ibn al-Athīr (d. 733/1332) and other earlier authors such as Abū 'Abd Allāh ibn Mundah (d. 395/1005), Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (d. 462/1070), and others. As regards the content of the work, the author calls attention to the fact that the biographical section proper is preceded by an introduction of the *faḍā'il* genre, or praise for the virtues of a city, which is itself a summary of



al-Fāsī's history of Mecca, the *Shifā'*. Furthermore, this introduction is sometimes considered as an independent work by the title of *al-Zuhūr al-Muqtaṭafah min Tārīkh Makkah al-Musharrafah* (p. 127). The author then moves on to a detailed discussion of the composition of a typical biographical entry in the work (pp. 129-37). The significance of studying such entries is highlighted, as "these biographies have preserved for us a picture of the intellectual and cultural life of the era" by showing vividly the network that ties the '*ulamā'* with their teachers, students, and most importantly, their peers, depicting these people's friendship, fellowship, rivalry, and competition "in a way that is no less revealing and nuanced than that of political histories" (p. 129). For those familiar with Michael Chamberlain's work on Damascene '*ulamā'*', al-Fāsī's biographical dictionary seems to offer an analogy, or a mirror, of the same kind of struggle, or civil *fitnah*, but this time in a Hejazi context.

Source criticism is another issue that is noteworthy (pp. 138-45). In addition to conventional literary sources, al-Fāsī, we are told, also utilized material evidence, such as that of ruins, inscriptions, etc., as well as documents, such as official communiqués, letters, speeches, etc., in his work. This method was advocated by his mentor Ibn Khaldūn, whose influence on the younger al-Fāsī manifested itself in many ways in the latter's work. This last point is addressed in some detail in the following section on the "historical critique" (*al-naqd al-tārīkhī*) in *al-'Iqd* (pp. 147-52). The main conclusion is that al-Fāsī practiced what his teacher Ibn Khaldūn preached in that his critical spirit as a true historian is seen not only in his method of establishing sound chains of transmitting historical data, his careful treatment of sources, and his cautious handling of conflicting accounts and stories, but also his speaking his mind in the practice of the methodology of *al-jarḥ wa-al-ta'dīl*, i.e., critique, verifying reliable accounts and disputing false statements.

The discussion of al-Fāsī's history of Mecca, the *Shifā'*, follows the same style and format (pp. 153-80). A description of the structure and composition of the work (pp. 154-56) is followed by a lengthy source "criticism" (pp. 156-75), which turns out to be a long, and unnecessary, list of the literary sources mentioned by al-Fāsī, with a brief description of the documents utilized in the work and citations of poems found in the book. Like many of the previous segments, there is very little analysis but rather merely digressive listing and citations. Several issues are in order here. First, regarding the development of the writing of Meccan local history, the author is of the commonly-held opinion that al-Fāsī followed the pattern established by al-Azraqī and al-Fākihī, that is, a work that combines topography, legends of pre-Islamic Mecca, and history per se. It is noted that al-Fāsī did not employ the conventional annalistic form in writing his chronicles; in other words, his "history" is thematically arranged, a form that is not widely represented in Mamluk historiography. Of special interest for students of the



Mamluks will be the author's discussion of the Mamluk documents preserved in local archives that are not found in other sources, such as personal letters exchanged between the *'ulamā'* concerning the riots led by Egyptian pilgrims in Mecca in 730/1329 (pp. 172-73), and the official decrees dealing with personnel changes at the office of the governor (*wilāyah*) in Mecca.

Speaking of the poetry in al-Fāsī's historical work, the author has rightly observed that many of the poems found in al-Fāsī's history are *not* related to the events of the narrative line (p. 175). This is by no means something unique to al-Fāsī's work. As I have discussed elsewhere, by the time of the so-called "Syrian school of historical writing," i.e., that of the seventh-eighth/thirteenth-fourteenth century Syrian authors al-Birzālī, al-Yūnīnī, and al-Dhahabī (from whom al-Fāsī evidently quoted heavily), the notion that a *tārīkh* is not only a record of factual events, but a register of Muslim religious learning and a selective anthology of Arabic cultural and literary heritage appears to have gained a considerable following.² It is assumed that the poems found in a historical work need *not* necessarily be relevant to the narrative line. Al-Fāsī's case provides another piece of evidence that this notion was widely accepted, and practiced, by later Mamluk historians, including those who were as far away as the Hejaz.

The book concludes with a chapter on al-Fāsī's influence on the development of the "Hejazi school" of historical writing. According to the author, al-Fāsī's importance as a role model for later Meccan historians manifests itself in several aspects: his methodology (*manhajīyah*), his style (*uslūb*), and his approach (*ṭarīqah*), that is, his way of classifying major themes, laying out the contents, setting the goal of each work by an explicit introduction, and presenting historical events in a thematic rather than annalistic form. Special emphasis is placed on al-Fāsī's attentiveness to field work in his effort to verify facts from various sources, and his critique of conflicting accounts. In this connection, the chapter leaves much to be desired. A discussion, for instance, of the common elements and differences between this "Hejazi school" as compared to other "schools" in the Mamluk period, such as those of Syria and Egypt, would be most welcome. Regarding the genre of autobiography, a genre that did not advance itself very much in the Mamluk period, it is well known that al-Fāsī wrote his autobiography in the third person as part of his biographical dictionary *al-'Iqd*, but what can one say about it as compared to other contemporary autobiographies, if there were any? What was its influence on later similar attempts (such as the famous one by al-Suyūṭī [d. 911/1505], who credited al-Fāsī as the inspiration for his effort) in terms of format, structure and method?

²*Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography* (Leiden, 1998), 1:96.



Overall, the book is useful for those who are interested in general Mamluk historiography and the local history of Mecca, especially that of the Mamluk period. But great effort is needed to extract information and insight from this book, which is long on citation, often unnecessary, and short on synthesis and analysis.

IBN QĀDĪ SHUHBĀH, *Tārīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah*, Volume Four, Edited by Adnan Darwich (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1997). Pp. 767.

REVIEWED BY DAVID C. REISMAN, Yale University

Twenty years after the publication of the first volume of the critical edition of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's abridgement (*mukhtaṣar*) of his "Dhayl," Darwich has finally brought to a conclusion his superlative endeavor with the publication of volume four. Darwich entitled the work *Tārīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah*, but this is somewhat misleading. The work edited by Darwich is actually an abridgement of a larger history entitled "Dhayl," an historical record originally begun by Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's master Ibn Ḥijjī, but later expanded by Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah. A holograph manuscript (Chester Beatty 5527) of the "Dhayl" was discovered three years ago in Dublin, Ireland, and was subjected to a detailed analysis in the pages of this journal by the present reviewer.¹ The publication of volume four of the "Tārīkh" (hereafter referred to as the "abridgement") by Darwich provides the opportunity to make some additional comments about Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's historical production as well as observations on Darwich's editorial techniques.

This final volume covers the years 801-8. By far the most important of these years was 803, in which Timur entered Syria from Anatolia and laid siege to Aleppo and Damascus among other cities. The significance of this campaign for the population of Syria and consequently for the historians Ibn Ḥijjī and Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah is reflected in the lion's share of space Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah allots to that year in his abridgement. Of the eight years recorded in volume four, 803 receives some one hundred pages of the printed edition. The other years are dispatched in some fifty pages each. The year 808, the last year for which there are extant manuscripts of the abridgement, is summarily and incompletely treated in a mere seven pages. It is unlikely that Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah would have divided a year across volumes; this fact suggests that the holograph manuscript of the abridgement

¹"A Holograph MS of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's 'Dhayl,'" *Mamlūk Studies Review* 2 (1998): 19-49.



that Darwich used is incomplete. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's student's copy (the other manuscript used for volume four of the edition) ends abruptly even earlier: in the midst of the biographies for the year 806 (p. 390 n. 1).

The various elements of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's technique as an historian are conveyed in a most direct way in his retelling of the events of 803. A broad typology of sources can be discerned. And while no attempt is made to weave the various sources into a narrative whole, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's frank commentary on those sources proves to be more than adequate recompense for that lack. His information for events in Egypt is still drawn from the as yet unidentified Egyptian history that he shares with al-Maqrīzī.² His sources for the invasion of Syria by Timur, and especially Timur's entrance into Damascus and the events that followed, include Ibn Ḥijjī's original rough notes and an unnamed eyewitness account. In this regard, the publication of the final volume of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's abridgement brings to light a hitherto unnoted fact: neither Ibn Ḥijjī nor Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah was present in Damascus during Timur's occupation. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah tells us that Ibn Ḥijjī left Damascus for Zura' on 23 Rabī' II 803 and consequently he "wrote very little on this *fitnah*" (p. 161-62); he then states that his additional material comes from the written source of "a trustworthy friend" (p. 162). This last statement, along with the absence of any first person accounts from Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, clearly indicates that he had himself left the city prior to Timur's arrival.

Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's confidence in this trustworthy eyewitness occasionally wanes. He concludes a brief account of the destruction wrought by Timur's troops by noting that "the period of time was too short for precise reports, but general accounts by both the elite and the commoner, those present and those absent, are in accord" (p. 169). His eyewitness's report of the fall of the citadel in Damascus he deems too simple; he says "it was more complicated than that" (p. 175). He makes up for the occasional deficiencies in this source by including a wealth of other material, including synopses of Timur's various proclamations (pp. 148, 167, 179). A marginal note in the "Dhayl" (Chester Beatty 5527) indicates that he drew on Ibn 'Arabshāh's biography of Timur³ for his announcement of the latter's death in 807 (p. 425). However, he was not aware of Ibn Khaldūn's *Autobiography*; neither of the reports about the meeting between Timur and Damascene scholars accords Ibn Khaldūn the central and singular role Ibn Khaldūn accorded himself

²Both Ibn Duqmāq and Ibn al-Furāt have been tentatively suggested as that common source; see Reisman, *ibid.*, 39, 42. It is worth noting that this source appears hostile to Ibn Khaldūn; a certain malicious glee can be detected in the explanation of why Ibn Khaldūn was divested of his judgeship (p. 143), an explanation absent from Maqrīzī's account (*Sulūk*, ed. Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāh 'Āshūr [Cairo, 1972], vol. 3, pt. 3, 1027).

³Ibn 'Arabshāh, *'Ajā'ib al-Maqdūr fī Akhbār Tīmūr*, ed. Jacobus Golius (Leiden, 1636).



in his *Autobiography*.⁴ For Timur's sack of Baghdad in Dhū al-Qa'dah 803, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah drew on "a native of Damascus taken captive who knew Turkish" (p. 191). Finally, it is now clear that Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah drew on Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī for a number of biographies of these later years;⁵ in one of his biographies for the year 806, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah states that "[this] biography comes from the death notices that Ibn Ḥajar wrote for me" (p. 392).

This brief source analysis suggests that Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's abridgement will prove important to the study of Timur's campaign in Syria. And while there is much unmined material that remains in the larger "Dhayl" (Chester Beatty 5527) for the years that overlap between the "Dhayl" and its abridgement, Darwich has done such a superlative job in editing the abridgement that immediate attention should now be directed to an edition of those years not covered in the abridgement but found in the "Dhayl": 809-10.

Darwich made use of every manuscript of the abridgement at his disposal for his complete edition. The remaining years (801-8) of the abridgement to survive are to be found in two manuscripts: the author's holograph (Asad Efendi 2345), completed according to Darwich sometime before 840; and a copy made by Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's student Khaṭṭāb ibn 'Umar al-Ajlūnī (Paris 1098-9) made from "fascicles" (*karārīs*) around 840.⁶ A comparison of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's holograph of the larger "Dhayl" with the holograph abridgement indicates that Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah made additions to the latter from the former sometime after his student had made his copy. Interestingly, Darwich's critical apparatus indicates that certain of these additions were made by Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah both in his holograph and in his student's copy (see pp. 7, 8, 172, 192, 196, 293, 301, 309, 340, 343, 346, 347), and that other additions were made by him in his student's copy but not in his own holograph (see pp. 353, 358, 360, 365, 372, 373, 376). The first set of marginal additions, in both MSS, can be accounted for if Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah made corrections to his student's copy after the latter had completed it. The implication of the

⁴In fact, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah received his information on the meeting from Shams al-Dīn Ibn al-'Izz (d. 837/1433) who was himself present. And while Ibn al-'Izz provides a parallel account of some of the conversation that Ibn Khaldūn recorded in his *Autobiography*, it is clear that Ibn Khaldūn was not alone with Timur for the conversation and so contradicts Ibn Khaldūn (see pp. 167, 182). There is an English translation of the relevant part of Ibn Khaldūn's *Autobiography* by Walter J. Fischel entitled *Ibn Khaldūn and Tamerlane* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1952).

⁵In MSR 2, 44, the present reviewer noted that Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī cited Ibn Ḥijjī's "Dhayl" for biographical information (in the former's *Al-Durar al-Kāminah*), and Li Guo (MSR 1, 19) signalled the existence of a manuscript of Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī's continuation of his own *Durar* that has marginal notes in Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's hand. The relationship of borrowing amongst these three scholars should be investigated more fully.

⁶For Darwich's hypothesis concerning composition and copy dates for these manuscripts, see vol. 2, pp. 57ff., and vol. 4, notes to pages 172, 192, 196, 211, 213, 291, 368.



second set of marginal notes, found only in his student's copy, will require further analysis; perhaps Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah wanted to work with a clear copy of the abridgement in his process of revision? Further, these additions are not limited to material from the "Dhayl". One surprising observation that can now be made with the edited text of the abridgement at hand is that after 840 Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah seems to have concentrated his efforts on providing a version of the abridgement that would supersede the larger history known as the "Dhayl." This is evident from the fact that some of the marginal material found in the abridgement is not to be found in the "Dhayl" (see for instance a biography, pp. 251 ff., and additional lines, p. 59, lines 13-14).

These observations about the interrelationship of the two copies of the abridgement and the holograph manuscript of the "Dhayl" can only be made from the very detailed notes in Darwich's critical apparatus. Indeed, his comments about the student's copy (Paris 1098-9) extend beyond a record of textual variants to include observations of a broader importance, for instance, the fact that al-Ajlūnī did not accord Ibn Ḥijjī the rank of "*ḥāfiẓ*," for in each instance that Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah had so distinguished his master, al-Ajlūnī revised that title to "*al-shaykh*" (e.g. p. 216, n. 3), and that al-Ajlūnī often took it upon himself to revise Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's Middle Arabic (pp. 21, n. 2, and 166, n. 2). The benefits to be had from such a detailed record of the two manuscripts thus supersede the rule regarding the elimination of secondary exemplars in the art of textual criticism. However, at least part of that rule still applies: Darwich need not have expended such energy in recording the minor errors of reading al-Ajlūnī committed, and thereby could have reduced some of the clutter of his critical apparatus.

Other material extraneous to the critical apparatus includes the citation of sources Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah used for his history, and observations of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's editorial methodology in using those sources. A future modification would be to separate comments on the text and comments on the sources into two apparatuses. Finally, the fact that line numbers were employed for Darwich's edition should have eliminated the need for superscript footnote references; this elimination would have greatly reduced the clutter of the text. The significance of these suggestions is far outweighed by the admiration that must be accorded Darwich as an historian of the Mamluk period. His profound grasp of the language and literature of the period is evident on every page of his edition, from his references to other sources (not limited to published texts) in the footnotes to the extensive vowelling of the text (the vocalizations of Turkish names are almost always correct).⁷ On the rare occasions in which Darwich has made additions to

⁷Such detailed vocalization is rarely seen in editions of historical texts; typographical errors, while present, are minimal (e.g. read "*al-fitnatu*" for "*al-fitnati*," 187:ult.).



the text, his surmises are independently corroborated by the Chester Beatty manuscript of the "Dhayl" (which was not known to him).⁸

As with the other volumes of his edition, Darwich has included in volume four an analytical section that briefly recounts major events of each year, divided into political, legal, intellectual, economic, social, and natural phenomena sections. Readers of Darwich have also come to expect the detailed indices found in each volume; these include people (those subject to death notices and those not), geographical and topographical names, technical terms, peoples and groups, and an index of works mentioned by the author. The usefulness of the people index extends beyond the reading of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's history, thanks to Darwich's inclusion of basic biographical data under each name, often with a citation of another external source in addition to references to Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's work. Minor errors and omissions have occasionally crept into these indices; for instance, references to Burhān al-Dīn Ibn Muflīḥ are also found on pp. 167 and 171; the reference to page "9" under Taymūr (Timur) should read "19;" and page 63 under the same entry is incorrect. In his introduction to volume two of his edition, Darwich promised a "glossary" for the whole of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's work which has yet to materialize.

Students and scholars of Mamluk history have reason to celebrate the conclusion of Darwich's edition of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's abridged history. In the second volume of his edition (French Avant-propos, p. 8), Darwich noted that the critical editing [of medieval Arabic texts] is a difficult undertaking and one which requires a clear vision of the whole civilization of a given epoch. With this final volume of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's history, Darwich has admirably demonstrated just what can be accomplished with such a vision.

CORRECTIONS AND ADDITIONS TO THE ARABIC TEXT

Some of the lacunae in the abridgement and some of the passages that Darwich found difficult to read in his two exemplars can be filled and read through recourse to the Chester Beatty MS 5527 of the "Dhayl." Page, line and footnote numbers refer to Darwich's volume four.

174.19. بَيْتِي read Darwich: undotted in MSS Asad Efendi, Paris, and Chester Beatty : تَبْنِي read Reisman.

235.3. انتهى ووالده توفى في رجب سبع وخمسين add. Chester Beatty 5527.

402.8. أقمشة add. Chester Beatty 5527.

402.13. . . . خمس Darwich : خمسمائة نفس من Chester Beatty 5527.

⁸For instance, his addition of "[al-nās]," p. 183, is corroborated by Chester Beatty MS 5527.



419. note 1. No lacuna.

419. 5. بَكْتَمِر الركني add. Chester Beatty 5527.

419. note 2. No lacuna.

425.7. يعنى read Darwich : معمى Chester Beatty 5527.

425.15. على صبايئهم إنهم معك : . . . أنعم فقبل read Darwich : Chester Beatty 5527.

444.10. صالح الاشنهي add. Chester Beatty 5527.

453.14. الشهبي add. Chester Beatty 5527.

453.16. المحط الرحالي تارة add. Chester Beatty 5527.

453.18. شرفه add. Chester Beatty 5527.

457.3. المنال الجاير add. Chester Beatty 5527.

‘ADNĀN Muḥammad Fāyiz al-Ḥārithī, *‘Imārat al-Madrasah fī Miṣr wa-al-Ḥijāz fī al-Qarn 9 H./15 M.: Dirāsah Muqāranah* (Mecca: al-Mamlakah al-‘Arabīyah al-Sa‘ūdīyah, Wizārat al-Ta‘līm al-‘Ālī, Jāmi‘at Umm al-Qurā, Ma‘had al-Buḥūth al-‘Ilmīyah wa-Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1997). Two volumes.

REVIEWED BY DORIS BEHRENS-ABOUSEIF, University of Munich

This work consists of two volumes, the second of which is entirely dedicated to the illustrations, plans, and photographs. The subject defined by the author in his title is a comparison of madrasah architecture in Egypt and the Ḥijāz during the Mamluk period.

The study is divided into three parts. In the first part of his investigation al-Ḥārithī describes three madrasahs in Cairo: the madrasah-*khānqāh* of Faraj Ibn Barqūq, the madrasah of al-Ashraf Barsbāy in Cairo’s center, and that of Qāyṭbāy in the cemetery. The subject of the second part is the madrasahs of the Ḥijāz: the Bāsiṭīyah at Mecca and the Bāsiṭīyah at Medina, both built in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, and the madrasah of Qāyṭbāy in Mecca. The third part includes an analysis of and comparison between the Egyptian and the Ḥijāzī madrasah plans followed by a description of architectural and decorative elements of Mamluk (Cairene) madrasah architecture.

The study begins with a short discussion of the theories dealing with the origins of madrasah architecture (K. A. C. Creswell, G. Makdisi, O. Aslanapa, ‘A.



Ḥilmī, Ḥ. al-Bāshā, M. al-Kaḥlāwī), upon which the author comments that even though each of them has a certain validity, they do not take into consideration the variety of plans involved in madrasah architecture. It should be added that this variety of plans is even more pronounced in the period on which this study concentrates, which is the fifteenth century, when the Mamluk madrasah had already lost many of its earlier features in form as well as in function. In fact, none of the three Egyptian cases discussed was a madrasah in the classical sense, but rather a combination of *khānqāh* and madrasah; that of Qāyṭbāy was not a madrasah at all, but a Friday mosque with Sufi functions. The author does note the fluidity in the Mamluk terminological definition of these institutions as well as the flexibility of their function in the late period, but his interest is focused on the variety of plans used in late Mamluk religious architecture rather than on the architecture or the evolution of the madrasah as such, or on the relationship between form and function. It should be noted, however, that some functions, such as whether the madrasah was also a *jāmi'* (the presence, especially outside of Cairo, of a minaret is sometimes the decisive clue) and whether it also included a Sufi community (as did the madrasah of Barqūq), might be of relevance to the architectural layout of the complex. It is the author's opinion that if the function (madrasah, *khānqāh* or *jāmi'*) of an institution is defined by its inscriptions differently from the *waqf* deed, the inscription should be trusted (pp. 284f.). This view can by no means be supported, since the *waqf* deed not only names the type of foundation involved, but also describes its curriculum as well as the functions of the personnel attached to it; these are specific criteria for the definition of the institution which cannot be disregarded.

The architectural survey of all six buildings, which I will not discuss here, proceeds on the basis of an element-by-element formal description, as given in *waqf* documents, with the difference that the author indicates measurements. Al-Ḥārithī tells us that the two Bāsiṭiyah madrasahs of Mecca and Medina which are still extant have undergone only minor alterations. It is regrettable, however, that he does not seem to have visited them himself, as he bases his descriptions of their present state on oral communications by other scholars, using in addition literary and visual material. His reference to other Ḥijāzī monuments is mostly indirect, relying on other studies without the support of illustrations.

Information about Qāyṭbāy's madrasah in Mecca, which did not survive and for which no *waqf* deed is known, is provided from literary sources as well as from historic views and photographs in addition to an Egyptian survey map predating the Saudi destruction of the building. On the basis of this material the author



presents a reconstruction of the plan and elevation of this madrasah. No *waqf* document seems to exist for any of the Ḥijāzī foundations discussed by the author.¹

In the third part of the book, which deals with analysis and comparison, al-Ḥārithī comes to the conclusion that the madrasahs of the Ḥijāz, while influenced by Egyptian architecture, developed their own local patterns based on the *hujrah*, which is a simple room used for the gatherings related to the institution's functions, instead of the *īwān* or the arcaded hall. This *hujrah* is represented in the two madrasahs built by Qādī 'Abd al-Basīṭ in Mecca and Medina, an observation that is also applicable to Mamluk Syrian architecture. It should be noted here that a characteristic function of the foundations attached to the mosques of Mecca and Medina, like Qāyṭbāy's madrasah in Medina, was that of a hospice for pilgrims.

The final chapter deals with the architectural and decorative elements of the Mamluk madrasah with some interesting information on libraries and the location of the living units.

In spite of its comparative outlook this study focuses heavily on Cairene architecture, which the author seems to know better than the Mamluk architecture of Mecca or Medina of which, moreover, little has survived. Although the Mamluks' patronage in the provinces, especially the Holy Cities, was substantial, their buildings outside Cairo did not belong to the same architectural school as those of the capital. In spite of undeniable mutual influences between Cairo and Syria, Cairene Mamluk architecture was not really duplicated elsewhere in the empire (not even in the Egyptian provinces themselves), with the exception of Qāyṭbāy's buildings in Jerusalem and the Ḥijāz, which were erected by Cairene teams of master-builders and masons. One would have expected the author to recognize that the madrasah of Qāyṭbāy in Mecca was closer to Cairene tradition than other buildings because exceptionally, and like that of Medina, it was built by an Egyptian master-builder and Egyptian craftsmen. It would be interesting to investigate whether Ḥijāzī Mamluk architecture was related to that of the Syrian provinces.

Another aspect which should have been considered in a discussion of plans is the role of the urban setting which, as is well known, played a role in the design of Mamluk urban architecture, where the founder's mausoleum—mostly absent in provincial architecture—occupied a prominent place. In the cases of Mecca and Medina, where the founders had an obvious preference for close proximity to the sanctuary (thus limiting the choices of available plots), adjustments to the plans must have been inevitable, as is evident in the Mamluk buildings around the Ḥaram of Jerusalem.

¹The *waqf* deed of Qāyṭbāy's madrasah in Medina has been discussed by me in *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999).



The illustrations in the second volume are of rather poor quality, and they deal essentially with Cairene architecture. The five historic photographs of Mecca and Medina from the collection of Sultan ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd and Muḥammad Ṣādiq Pasha are interesting.

The author, who used for his study an important number of literary sources, *waqf* documents, and many recent Arabic studies including unpublished M.A. and Ph.D. theses from Cairo is, on the other hand, poorly informed about research done in European languages, except for his short mention of Creswell’s ideas on the origins of the madrasah; not even the *Corpus Inscriptionum* has been consulted in the context of epigraphy. His very short bibliography of Western literature (which does include, however, references on Persian and Sassanian architecture) contains mistakes to the extent of being unintelligible. In this regrettable shortcoming al-Ḥārithī is not alone; rather, he represents a large part of scholarship on Islamic art history written in Arabic. Of course it is also true that Western scholars in this field have entirely disregarded recent art historical studies in Arabic, which despite their provincial character and, as a result, methodological weaknesses, can be useful to the Western reader. Islamic art history is a very young discipline in Arabic scholarship; unless it interacts with Western scholarship it will remain deficient.

Any information dealing with Mamluk architecture in the Holy Cities is of interest, since these buildings are not accessible to the non-Muslim scholar. Although this book is focused on Cairene Mamluk architecture, al-Ḥārithī does draw attention to the Mamluk buildings in Mecca and Medina. One should look forward to more material and more research on religious patronage and medieval architecture in the Ḥijāz.

FĀDĪ ILYĀS TAWWĀ, *Al-Manākh wa-al-As‘ār wa-al-Amrāḍ fī Bilād al-Shām fī ‘Ahd al-Mamālīk (642-922 H./1250-1516 M.)* (Beirut: n.p., 1998). Pp. 590.

REVIEWED BY WILLIAM TUCKER, University of Arkansas at Fayetteville¹

The present volume constitutes both a valuable addition to the historiography of the Syrian lands in the Mamluk period generally and a major contribution to the ecological and demographic history of the Mamluk realm in particular. Consisting

¹I wish to thank my student, Farid al-Salim, for his assistance in sifting through the wealth of material presented in this volume.



of a brief introduction and three large chapters, as well as numerous charts and graphs, Tawwā's study focuses upon the climate, agrarian commodity prices, and disease patterns in greater Syria between 1250 and 1517. As his introduction indicates, the author's methodology reflects the theories of *Annales* historians such as E. Le Roy Ladurie, Fernand Braudel and, in Ottoman history, Daniel Panzac. Beginning with brief examinations of geographical features (e.g., relief, crops, forests, etc.), climate, and population, the introductory section continues with a survey of the techniques of climatic history, such as dendrochronology, phenology, and glaciology. The author concludes the first part of the initial chapter with remarks about climatic data as well as a set of tables of yearly weather data by seasons, climatic zones, and an outline of such weather phenomena as droughts, cold waves, floods, hail and snow.

The second part of Chapter 1 incorporates a detailed investigation of drought, especially three major waves (1292-98, 1304-20, 1359-89), and the effects of these water shortages upon agricultural production and livestock resources. Tawwā then examines episodes of cold and snow, torrential rains and floods, heat waves, and winds both hot and cold. Crop damage, human and animal mortality, infrastructural damage, and epidemic diseases are all noted as major by-products of these weather events. Chapter 1 concludes with a schematization of climatic fluctuations in the region during the Mamluk period (e.g., 1280-1320, warm winters; 1370-1440, warm winters) and the deduction that these fluctuations were consistent with what was happening elsewhere in the world at the time.

The second chapter of the book is devoted to an examination of grain and bread prices in Mamluk *Bilād al-Shām*. The author shows how weather conditions, wars, insect infestations, and the political elite's manipulations of supplies and storage all affected the prices of wheat and bread. Important data in the text and tables demonstrate price fluctuations and their causes; for instance, plague and drought caused bread prices to soar between 1370 and 1400. In 1466 prices tripled because of harsh climatic conditions and an invasion of mice. Similar information is forthcoming about barley prices, but, interestingly enough, Tawwā points to the added factor that the demand for barley increased during times of war, when it was used for animal feed. Spiraling prices of wheat and barley are also shown to have stimulated price escalation of other commodities, such as meat, vegetables, fruits, etc. The section ends with a treatment of famines stimulated by rising prices and shortages and the linkage in such cases with malnutrition, disease, and the incidence of epidemics.

In the concluding chapter of his study, Tawwā examines the diseases and epidemics which attacked Mamluk Syrian territory. He devotes a good deal of attention to the various plague epidemics, which he divides into periods of one century each. Although he writes at length about the pandemic of 1347-49, he



also scrutinizes carefully the other major plague events, i.e., those of 1361-64, 1369, 1372, 1374, 1393, and 1459. The discussion continues with a consideration of factors leading to the development and proliferation of diseases such as plague and other maladies, including smallpox, malaria, and even epizootic (animal) diseases. Hygienic and personal habits had a significant role, according to the author. Limited cleanliness, wearing clothes of the deceased victims of contagious diseases, and crowding at prayers are all noted as factors in the spread of sickness.

The second part of the last chapter centers upon the demographic effects of the fifty-eight waves of plague which hit Syria during the Mamluk era. Tawwā concludes that *Bilād al-Shām* lost between 250,000 and a million people to plague during the relevant period. Peasants and middle-class urban dwellers were especially hard hit, and those whose professions brought them into contact with these groups (bakers, merchants, water carriers) also suffered disproportionately. The author argues that notables and government officials were less affected because of their possible isolation.

Finally, Tawwā analyzes the relationship between climate and plague occurrences. Drought, heat, and humidity apparently facilitated the spread of plague, as did the movement of people related to seasonal change. Plague also resulted in famine, price increases, and rural depopulation.

Unfortunately, the discussion of plague and other diseases, while interesting and carefully conceived, suffers from a lack of attention to important English-language studies of disease and plague, such as those of Michael Dols, William McNeill, Lawrence Conrad, and J. D. F. Shrewsbury, among others.² The important, albeit brief, article on epidemics by Boaz Shoshan is also missing, and this study might have been of use as regards chronology and original sources not utilized in the present work.³

In one of the most intriguing features of his volume, Tawwā offers, between pages 419 and 477, tables and graphs illustrating the life expectancy in *Bilād al-Shām* during the Mamluk period. These statistical illustrations unfortunately, but not unexpectedly given the source materials, provide information for male notables only. The materials indicate, according to the author's analysis, that life expectancy decreased from an earlier high of 73 to 60.91 years in 1348/49 and then reached its lowest point, 59.15 years, in the late fourteenth century. Life expectancy rose in the fifteenth century but remained below 70. The author suggests,

²Michael W. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton, 1977); William McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples* (New York, 1976); Lawrence I. Conrad, "The Plague in the Early Medieval Near East" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1981); J. D. F. Shrewsbury, *A History of Bubonic Plague in the British Isles* (Cambridge, 1970).

³Boaz Shoshan, "Notes sur les epidemies de peste in Egypte," *Annales de démographie historique* (Paris, 1981): 387-404.



incidentally, that this latter figure compares favorably with the current life expectancy in Lebanon, which he puts at 66 years. Not surprisingly, the data show that notables could secure a higher level of health protection and nutrition, enjoying higher life expectancy than the lower classes. One may, of course, question the nutritional quality of consumption related to affluence, more luxurious consumption not necessarily equated with nutritional advantage, although increased quantity could also have been a factor here.

All in all, this book is extremely useful and stimulating for anyone engaged with environmental, medical, economic, or simply Mamluk history. One may argue that the lack of familiarity with numerous English-language studies deprives the work of greater theoretical or comparative perspective. For instance, one might wish to assess the relationship between caloric intake and resistance to disease and the consequent relationship between food consumption levels and epidemic disease.⁴ Also, questions arise about the absence of certain primary works, especially the history of Birzalī, which might have provided even more data and insight for the author.

In the final analysis, however, Tawwā is to be commended for the careful, painstaking, and systematic study he has produced. The illustrative tables, graphs, charts, etc., are in themselves valuable contributions, but in fact this volume offers the reader far more than that! It constitutes a major addition to the emerging field of disaster research in the Middle East.

SHAMS AL-DĪN MUḤAMMAD IBN ‘ALĪ IBN ṬŪLŪN, *Inbā’ al-Umarā’ bi-Inbā’ al-Wuzarā’*.
Ed. by Muhanná Ḥamad al-Muhanná (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā’ir al-Islāmīyah,
1998). Pp. 128.

REVIEWED BY STEPHAN CONERMANN, University of Kiel

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Ṣāliḥī al-Dimashqī al-Ḥanafī, better known as Ibn Ṭūlūn, belongs to the species of “quilldrivers.” His urge to write may have been innate but in the end, Ibn Ṭūlūn just wanted to match his adored teacher al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505), whose titles, as is well known, number more than seven hundred.

⁴For some of the issues associated with malnutrition, immunity, and epidemics, see my article, “Environmental Hazards, Natural Disasters, Economic Loss, and Mortality in Mamluk Syria,” *Mamluk Studies Review* 3 (1999), especially 119-23.



Ibn Ṭūlūn was born in 880/1473 in al-Ṣāliḥīyah, near Damascus. At the age of eleven he received a scholarship to study jurisprudence at the Madrasah al-Māridānīyah. After completing some higher studies in Cairo he went back to the former Umayyad capital. There he found a job as a teacher of grammar, *tafsīr*, and hadith at the Madrasah al-Ṣāliḥīyah. Subsequently he held several other teaching and administrative posts, but never rose to higher ranks. Ibn Ṭūlūn died, more than seventy years of age, in 953/1546.

Although his contemporaries considered him an expert in *fiqh* and Tradition, only his historical writings have attracted the attention of modern specialists. This is probably due to the fact that these writings describe in detail the important change from Mamluk rule to Ottoman domination in Syria. Thus only a small number of his many extant works (from an original total of 750 titles) have been published, and only a very few have been the subject of scholarly studies.¹ Now Muḥanná Ḥamad al-Muḥanná presents us with his edition of Ibn Ṭūlūn's *Inbā' al-Umarā' bi-Abnā' al-Wuzarā'*, which is based on the only existing manuscript, now in Berlin.²

Inspired by the Quranic verses "Appoint for me a minister (*wazīran*) from my household, Aaron, my brother. Gird by him my strength, and associate him in my affair. That we may glorify Thee often and make remembrance of Thee often. Verily Thou hast become of us observant,"³ Ibn Ṭūlūn thought it a good idea to write a small book about the lives of thirty-two viziers. This genre was not altogether unknown, as exemplified by Muḥammad al-Ṣūlī's (d. ca. 336/947) *Kitāb al-Wuzarā'*, Ibn al-Jarrāḥ's (d. 296/908) *Kitāb al-Wuzarā'*, al-Jahshiyārī's (d. 331/942) *Kitāb al-Wuzarā' wa-al-Kuttāb*, al-Tha'ālibī's (350-429/961-1038) *Kitāb al-Wuzarā'*, al-Ṣābī's (359-448/970-1056/57) *Kitāb al-Wuzarā'*, and Ibn al-Ṣayrafī's (463-542/1071-1147) *Al-Ishārah ilá Man Nāla al-Wizārah*.

In his *Inbā' al-Umarā' bi-Abnā' al-Wuzarā'* Ibn Ṭūlūn gives his readers more or less important, but above all entertaining, information about some illustrious persons. Thus, we find al-Qāsim ibn Wahb (258-291/872-904),⁴ vizier to the Abbasid caliphs al-Mu'taḍid (279-289/892-902) and al-Muktafi (289-295/902-908),

¹The most important editions are *Mufākahat al-Khillān fī Ḥawādith al-Zamān*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá (Cairo, 1962-64); *Al-Qalā' id al-Jawharīyah fī Tārīkh al-Ṣāliḥīyah*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Duhmān (Damascus, 1949-56); and his autobiography *Al-Fulk al-Mashḥūn fī Aḥwāl Muḥammad ibn Ṭūlūn* (Damascus, 1929). Of his *I'lām al-Warā' bi-Man Waliya Nā' iban min al-Atrāk bi-Dimashq al-Shām al-Kubrā* we have a French translation by Henri Laoust, *Les gouverneurs de Damas sous les mamlouks et les premiers Ottomans* (Damascus, 1952).

²Wilhelm Ahlwardt, *Verzeichniss der arabischen Handschriften*, vol. 9, Die Handschriften-Verzeichnisse der Königlischen Bibliothek zu Berlin (Berlin, 1897), no. 9880.

³Surah 20, verses 29-35 (Bell's translation).

⁴No. 2, pp. 25-29.



and the three famous ministers of the Barmakid family during the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd (170-193/786-809): Yaḥyá ibn Khālid (d. 190/805),⁵ who remained in office for seventeen years (170-187/786-803), and his two sons al-Faḍl (d. 193/808)⁶ and Ja‘far (d. 187/803),⁷ who frequently presided with Yaḥyá and also appear to have been styled *wazīr*. The end of this triad is all too well known: in January 187/803 the caliph suddenly decided to put an end to “the reign of the Barmakids” (*sulṭān Āl Barmak*). He had Ja‘far executed; al-Faḍl and Yaḥyá were brought to al-Raqqah, where they both died in prison.

Also included in this work are, for example, al-Muḥallabī (291-352/903-963), the prominent vizier to the Buyid amir of Iraq Mu‘izz al-Dawlah (334-356/945-967) from 339/950 until his death in 352/963, and Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd Allāh al-Gharnābī Lisān al-Dīn (713-776/1313-1375),⁸ better known as Ibn al-Khaṭīb. During the reigns of Abū al-Ḥajjāj Yūsuf ibn Ismā‘īl (733-755/1333-1354) and Muḥammad V al-Ghanī billāh (first reign 755-760/1354-1359; second reign 763-793/1362-1392), Ibn al-Khaṭīb not only held the office of chief administrator but also assumed the honorary title of *Dhū al-Wizāratayn*.

We furthermore encounter such celebrities as al-Ṭūsī (597-672/1201-1274)⁹ and Ibn Sīnā (370-428/980-1037).¹⁰ Al-Ṭūsī was in the service of the Mongol Khan Hülāgū (654-663/1256-1265) during the sack of Baghdad in 1258 and later retained his office in the reign of Abaqa (663-681/1265-1282), while Ibn Sīnā was appointed vizier several times by various local rulers. The famous scholar, physician, and philosopher spent his last fourteen years at the court of ‘Alā’ al-Dawlah Muḥammad (d. 433/1041) in Isfahan.

Muhanná Ḥamad al-Muhanná gives the reader of Ibn Ṭūlūn’s *adab* work a short introduction and adds some useful notes to the text. In sum, this is a good work, but considering the numerous writings of Ibn Ṭūlūn still awaiting publication one might say about this edition: nice to have, but nothing more and nothing less.

⁵No. 3, p. 30.

⁶No. 4, pp. 31-32.

⁷No. 5, pp. 33-35.

⁸No. 21, pp. 78-83.

⁹No. 26, pp. 97-101.

¹⁰No. 32, pp. 124-126.



NAJM AL-DĪN ‘UMAR IBN FAHD, *Ithāf al-Warā bi-Akhhār Umm al-Qurā*, vols. 1-3 edited by Fahīm Muḥammad Shaltūt, vol. 4 edited by ‘Abd al-Karīm ‘Alī al-Bāz, vol. 5 (Indexes) prepared by Muḥammad Ismā‘īl al-Sayyid Aḥmad and Ṣādiq al-Bīlī Abū Shādī (Mecca: al-Mamlakah al-‘Arabīyah al-Sa‘ūdīyah, Jāmi‘at Umm al-Qurā, Ma‘had al-Buḥūth al-‘Ilmīyah wa-Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, Markaz Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1983-1990).

REVIEWED BY LI GUO, University of Notre Dame

Najm al-Dīn ‘Umar, known also as Muḥammad Ibn Fahd (812/1409-885/1480), was a member of the prominent Ibn Fahd family in Mecca and the author of a history of the city entitled *Ithāf al-Warā bi-Akhhār Umm al-Qurā*. The current complete edition of the work is a welcome addition to the expanding library of the key texts on the history of the Holy City of Islam in the aftermath of its glorious earlier days.

Unlike many medieval Arabic “universal histories,” which usually begin with the Creation, Ibn Fahd’s History of Mecca begins with the birth of the Prophet Muḥammad and runs to 885/1480, the year of the author’s death. The main value of the work, which is a continuation of al-Fāsī’s earlier history of Mecca and the basis of a later history of Mecca by the author’s son ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, rests on the author’s account of the period of his own lifetime, which is covered in vol. 3 (601/1204-830/1426) and vol. 4 (831/1427-885/1480) of the present edition (vol. 4 was in fact a dissertation submitted to the University of Umm al-Qurā in Mecca). The edition, based on manuscripts from libraries in Cairo, Mecca, and Medina, is skillfully executed. The indexes (vol. 5), including the Quran, hadith, poetry, men’s and women’s names, place names, and bibliographical references, are very serviceable. However, the reader will find the edition less than user-friendly insofar as the pages are not marked by headers (e.g., the year in question), although each volume concludes with a detailed table of contents.

Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature, edited by Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey (London and New York: Routledge, 1998). Two volumes.

REVIEWED BY TH. EMIL HOMERIN, University of Rochester

Begun in 1990, the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* aims to catalog writers and trends of Arabic literature from its beginnings until the late twentieth century.



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Over one hundred individuals contributed entries to this work and its target audience of “students and academics working in Arabic language and literature and, more generally, in the fields of Middle Eastern culture, history and philosophy . . . , other Middle Eastern literatures . . . , comparative literature, non-western literatures and world literature.”¹ The editors note further that they have sought “to emphasize the state of the art of current scholarship on Arabic literature, relying on recent research and less on received traditional opinion.”² A fine product of these goals is Julie Scott Meisami’s detailed entry for Abū Tammām, which cites five critical editions of his work and thirteen secondary sources in Arabic, French, German, and English. Unfortunately, not all entries meet this high standard including, surprisingly, Meisami’s own entry for Ibn al-Fāriḍ, which lacks reference to any of more than a dozen scholarly books and articles on the poet and his verse published since 1980. There are other serious omissions: in T. Bauer’s entry “al-Mu‘allaqāt” one finds a citation to A. J. Arberry’s uninspiring translations in *The Seven Odes*,³ but not to Michael Sells’ exquisite versions in his *Desert Tracings*,⁴ while Renate Jacobi in her article on the *qasīdah* fails to cite even one of Jaroslav Stetkevych’s essential writings on the subject.

Perhaps oversights are to be expected in such an ambitious encyclopedic project though, fortunately, they are few in the nearly one hundred entries on writers living during the Mamluk period. These subjects are “writers” broadly defined by the editors for the medieval period, where “the scope of ‘literature’ has not been restricted to belles lettres but has been extended to other types of writing—history, biography, geography, philosophy and so on—as medieval writers and readers did not make the same distinctions between various types of ‘literature’ as do modern ones.”⁵ This definition allows for a wide range of authors, from religious figures including ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī, Ibn Taymīyah, and al-Nawawī, to historians and secretaries such as Abū al-Fidā, al-Maqrīzī, and al-Qalqashandī. Many of these entries (nearly 30%) have been competently compiled by C. E. Bosworth, R. Irwin, A. Knysh, and D. S. Richards, and the vast majority of entries will be appreciated for their citation of recent text editions and studies of their respective subjects. Still, when one sifts through these entries of individuals, one finds too few poets and writers of belles lettres, in all about a dozen, including authors from the Maghrib and Andalusia. Among these, al-Būṣīrī and Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Hillī are the most frequently mentioned in the *Encyclopedia*, with the individual

¹P. x.

²Ibid.

³(London, 1957).

⁴(Middletown, CT, 1989).

⁵P. xi.



entry for each being written by C. E. Bosworth. Bosworth's short entry for al-Būṣīrī focuses exclusively on the poet's celebrated ode in praise of Muḥammad, the *Qasīdat al-Burdah*; there is no mention of other verse by al-Būṣīrī, such as his scathing poems against the Copts and corrupt officials, or even a citation to a text edition of his *Dīwān*. Bosworth does direct his reader to relevant entries in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, and to J. W. Redhouse's 1881 English translation of the poem, though not to Stefan Sperl's more recent translation and insightful comments on the ode.⁶ Bosworth's entry for Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī is longer and more thorough, and he points out al-Ḥillī's importance to the study of popular Arabic poetic forms and colloquial poetry in the thirteenth-fourteenth centuries. However, here again, Bosworth does not cite any published edition of the poet's *Dīwān* or Arabic studies of the poet, including those by 'Allūsh, al-Ayyūbī, and M. Rizq Salīm.⁷ Nevertheless, readers should find both entries thoughtful and useful, particularly in comparison to D. J. Wasserstein's paragraph "Ibn al-'Afīf al-Tilimsānī." Wasserstein cropped his brief entry from J. Rikabi's more extensive article in *EI*², which Wasserstein cites while omitting Rikabi's concise description of the poet's elegant style, which avoided the mannerism of the time, as well as his popular nickname of "al-Shābb al-Zarīf" (imagine an article on Samuel Clemens without "Mark Twain"). Further, Wasserstein does not provide a bibliography, which should have included, minimally, Shākir Hādī Shukr's edition of al-Shābb al-Zarīf's *Dīwān*⁸ and, perhaps, also 'Umar Mūsá Bāshā's chapter on the poet in his *Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī: al-'Asr al-Mamlūkī*.⁹ A glance at this latter source also reveals several noted poets of the Mamluk period who deserve a place in any comprehensive work on Arabic literature, namely al-Ashraf al-Anṣārī, al-Talla'farī, Ibn Mulayk al-Ḥamawī, and 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūniyah, though they and others are absent from the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*.

Turning from entries on individuals to those on thematic subjects, one generally finds a fair representation of authors from the Mamluk period. References to relevant Mamluk examples are to be found, for instance, in entries for biography, Cairo, Damascus, didactic literature, Egypt, exegesis, geographical literature, grammar, historical literature, Syria, and travel literature. This is also the case for more specifically belles lettres subjects including *adab*, '*ajā'ib* literature, allusion and intertextuality, *badī'*, *badī'iyāt*, *khamrīyah*, literary criticism, love theory,

⁶Stefan Sperl and Christopher Shackle, eds., *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa* (Leiden, 1996), 2:388-411; 470-76.

⁷Jawād Aḥmad 'Allūsh, *Shi'r Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī* (Baghdad, ca. 1959); Yāsīn al-Ayyūbī, *Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī* (Beirut, 1971); Maḥmūd Rizq Salīm, *Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī* (reprint, Cairo, 1980).

⁸(Beirut, 1985).

⁹(Beirut, 1989), 241-74.



lughz, *maqāmah*, *mu‘āraḍah*, *muzdawijah*, *naẓm*, and *zajal*. Further, exceptional coverage is given to the popular literature of the period, especially in the contributions of Shmuel Moreh, who pays particular attention to issues of medieval drama and acting. Moreh provides detailed entries and bibliographies on subjects including “acting and actors, medieval,” “khayāl,” “shadow-play,” and “theatre and drama,” and to this should be added his entry on the actor Ibn Mawlāhum al-Khayālī, and Everett Rowson’s entries on the playwrights Ibn Sūdūn and Ibn Dāniyāl.

Surprisingly, the Mamluks and their writers are not mentioned in entries for the crusades, *futūḥ*, or patronage, nor do they figure in entries on the important poetic genres of *fakhr*, *ghazal*, *madīḥ*, *qasīdah*, or *ritha’*; these latter entries effectively end around the year 1000 C.E. though, of course, Arabic poetry did not. Overall, the contributions to Arabic poetry and belle lettres made by the elite of the Mamluk domains are underrepresented in the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, though Robert Irwin’s excellent entry “Mamlūks” goes far to correct this shortcoming. Irwin cites Arabic poetic activity and patronage by specific Mamluk sultans and amirs, as well as several entertaining anthologies composed during this period on life’s pleasures, whether permissible or forbidden. Irwin mentions some of the historians and encyclopedists for which the Mamluk era is best known, but he also takes care to note the panegyric and devotional verse popular at the time, along with poetic treatises on law, grammar, love, and other subjects. Naturally, he discusses Ibn Dāniyāl and the shadow play, together with popular romances, such as ‘Antar. Irwin then draws attention to al-Subkī’s *Kitāb Mu‘īd al-Ni‘am* and the *al-Madkhal* of Ibn al-Hājj as important sources for probing Mamluk life and times. He concludes with reference to several occult works composed during this period, while offering the opinion that the Mamluk era was “not a great age for Sūfī literature,”¹⁰ which strikes me as a rather premature conclusion given that most such literature—including *dīwāns* by several students of Ibn al-Fāriḍ, as well as commentaries on his work and that of Ibn al-‘Arabī—lies unedited and, for the most part, unread in manuscript. Irwin provides a useful bibliography citing pertinent studies in both English and Arabic, thus rounding out his concise and balanced entry on the literature and culture of the Mamluk age for the *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*.

¹⁰Vol. 2, p. 503.



‘IṢĀM MUḤAMMAD SHIBĀRŪ, *Al-Salāṭīn fī al-Mashriq al-‘Arabī: Ma‘ālim Dawrihim al-Siyāsī wa-al-Ḥaḍārī: Al-Mamālīk (648-923 H./1250-1517 M.)*. (Beirut: Dār al-Nahḍah al-‘Arabīyah, 1995). Pp. 264.

REVIEWED BY STEFAN WINTER, The University of Chicago

Al-Mamālīk follows *Al-Salājiqah/al-Ayyūbiyūn* (Beirut, 1994) in Shibārū’s two-part study in the political history of medieval Egypt and Syria. The volume is a handsomely produced paperback, and includes six maps; detailed analytical indices; tables of reigning Mamluk sultans, Khwarazm-Shahs, and Ilkhans; and an appendix of eleven samples (from previously published sources) of Mamluk diplomatic correspondence with Mongols, Byzantines and Crusaders.

The author introduces each sultanic regime with a chronological account of its rise and salient military ventures, followed by a chapter on the distinguishing features of its administrative system. This format seems to work better in the first volume, where it helps the reader sort out the muddle of Fatimid, Saljuq, Burid, Zangid, Crusader and Ayyubid potentates who controlled different parts of Egypt and Syria to varying degrees between 1055 and 1250. In the volume devoted entirely to the Mamluks, Shibārū takes six chapters to evoke one sultan after the other; each one apparently of interest only in so far as he did battle with the Mongols, Crusaders, Cypriots, or Ottomans.

Among the more interesting sections is Shibārū’s detailed account of the rise of the Mongols (chapter two). Emphasizing (perhaps excessively so) the importance of the *yasa* law code, he is at pains to explain the Mongols’ success in terms of their superior organization, not their barbaric savagery. Through this sympathetic look at the Mongols, the achievement of the Mamluks at ‘Ayn Jālūt appears all the greater; the author treats neither the question of Mongol influence in the Mamluk system nor David Ayalon’s criticism regarding the *yasa*’s abiding importance. Also novel is Shibārū’s assertion (pp. 78-79) that the destruction of Baghdad in 1258, far from visiting disaster on Muslim civilization, actually facilitated the revival of culture and learning in the new, more dynamic capital of Cairo.

The book’s bibliography basically consists of the standard “Top 40” of published narrative sources. Shibārū sprinkles footnote references to these liberally throughout those sections dealing directly with the Mamluks. But given the broad sweep of his presentation, it is unfortunate that he does not discuss the secondary literature or any diverging interpretations, particularly in the well-written chapters on the Mongols and on the Ottomans. (Much of the former seems to be more directly inspired by Grousset’s *L’empire des steppes* than the odd footnote reference allows.) As is evident also in the first volume, the author is less sure-footed in European



history, apparently confusing several terms for the same Crusading order (pp. 28-9) and wrongly thinking that the 1311 council of Vienne was convened for the sake of planning a new attack on Egypt, but failed because Europe was "moving toward laicisation and secularisation" and had no more use for holy war (p. 89). But these are minor objections; the author's overall command of the history not only of the central Islamic core-lands, but also of the Turco-Mongol and Frankish invaders, is laudable.

Shibārū's analysis of the Mamluks' major foreign wars is highly nuanced and intelligent, bringing out the diplomatic intrigues that broke the Mongol-Crusader-Armenian alliance in 1260, probing the Mamluks' reticence in using firearms on the battlefield in 1516 though they had preceded the Ottomans in the adoption of siege artillery, and so on. It is thus regrettable that the author does not put his talents toward elucidating more of the inter-factional conflicts that so characterized the Mamluk system. In the ninth and final chapter, he does provide a competent overview of the Mamluk civil and military administration, covering the composition of the sultanic and provincial armies, the significance of *furūsīyah*, the institutionalization of four *madhhabs*, etc. By way of diachronic historical interpretation, however, Shibārū suggests only that the discipline of the Mamluk barracks began to deteriorate with the advent of the Burji regime, leading ultimately to the fall of the sultanate at the hands of the Ottomans.

The more specialised reader may regret further omissions, individual errors of detail, or the occasional inaccuracy of *hijrī* to *milādī* conversion. The primary appeal of this work is its broad perspective which, because it encompasses the rule of sultans in the Near East from the Saljuqs onward, transcends a simple panegyric to, or denunciation of, the Mamluk regime. In the first volume, Shibārū shows skillfully how neither racial nor religious affinities inevitably determined diplomacy and politics among the sultans, Crusaders, and Mongols, but concludes that the divide between Turkish and Kurdish rulers and the Arab populace facilitated the deposition of both the Abbasid and Fatimid caliphates. What is it then that links together the sultans from the Saljuqs to the Mamluks, but excludes the Ottomans? The author's underlying ideological position becomes clear only in the unexpectedly bizarre and disappointing conclusion: citing Quranic verses and *hadith* to demonstrate that only Arabs qualify to be caliph, Shibārū commends the foreign-blooded sultans for their service to Islam in protecting the Arab caliphs before Ottoman Turks usurped and falsified that office in the sixteenth century. If one can disregard this dissatisfying conclusion, then the two volumes of Shibārū's thoughtful, ambitious and eminently readable work together should make for a good introduction to the political history of medieval Syria and Egypt, of interest primarily to the Arabophone student and general reader, and perhaps also to the specialist concerned with contemporary Mamlukist historiography.



Sylloge Numorum Arabicorum Tübingen. Ḥamāh IV c Bilād aš-Šām III (Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth Verlag Tübingen, 1998). Edited by Lorenz Korn. Forward by Lutz Ilisch. Pp. 58.

REVIEWED BY WARREN C. SCHULTZ, DePaul University

Specialists in the field of Mamluk numismatics know that the basic reference work in the field, *The Coinage of the Mamluk Sultans of Egypt and Syria*, by Paul Balog (New York: American Numismatic Society, 1964; commonly referred to by the siglum MSES), has a distinct Egyptian bias in terms of the mints of origins for the coins described therein. This bias is both in number and in type, and is especially so for the copper *fulūs*. In his unpublished contribution to the Balog Memorial Symposium held in Israel in 1988, Lutz Ilisch, the director of the Forschungsstelle für islamische Numismatik, Tübingen (henceforth FINT), described this bias, and mentioned how Syrian Mamluk coins had become increasingly available on the coin market in the years since the publication of the MSES. Until the appearance of the volume under review, however, these Syrian coins remained relatively inaccessible for study. For this reason and others, its publication is thus a most welcome and important development.

By definition, a sylloge provides both illustrations and descriptions of each coin specimen preserved in a specific collection. This book is the fourth volume of a planned multi-volume series devoted to the massive and important holdings of pre-modern Islamic coins preserved at the FINT. It is the first FINT volume to address a mint city of the Mamluk Sultanate; previous volumes covered the mints of Palestine, Eastern Khorasan, and Northern and Eastern Central Asia. The work contains 21 plates illustrating both sides of 708 coins, 552 of which are Mamluk. (As Lorenz Korn points out in his brief and lucid introduction, Ḥamāh was an active mint from the late sixth to mid-ninth Muslim centuries. The volume thus describes 147 Ayyubid and 9 Mongol coins minted there as well.)

The basic arrangement of this sylloge is chronological, following standard numismatic conventions for coins that are anonymous, feature incomplete dates, or have no date at all. Since it is restricted to the FINT coins, it should be noted that this volume does not contain a complete mint series for this city. Thus, as is pointed out on p. 32, Mamluk gold coins from Ḥamāh are extremely rare, and none are found in this collection. This observation in no way detracts from the usefulness of this work, however, for as the noted Islamic numismatist Stephen Album has pointed out, the volume does present "virtually a complete catalogue" of everything known to have been minted at Ḥamāh.

The beauty of this work lies in its plates. The photography is uniformly excellent. The photographs are on a 1:1 scale, with clear and precise reproduction.



The value of the sylloge to the researcher is that the poor- as well as the well-struck coin is illustrated. And since the former seem to predominate in Mamluk coinage, a newcomer to the field of Mamluk monetary history would benefit from a perusal of the plates alone. Thus, for example, until the appearance of the FINT volumes for the mints of Aleppo, Tripoli, Cairo, and Alexandria, this volume will be the sole easily accessible resource for the as yet not fully understood "*fals khafīf*" series from the reigns of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and before. Similarly, by including many "overstrikes," in which an existing coin has been struck again with another set of dies (c.f. the many examples on plate 19), this volume sheds some light on an important subfield of Mamluk numismatics: these overstrikes have been used to solve some thorny chronological problems of sequence for the copper coins in particular.

This work is more than pictures, however. A succinct yet thorough description of each coin is provided. The abbreviations used in these descriptions are easily mastered. Every coin has been weighed and measured. Die linkages between coins are pointed out. A list of basic legends is included. Omissions or gaps in legends and dates are noted and a provenance has also been given for each coin. In short, the information necessary to make sense of the coin illustrations has been provided. All reflect the cumulative expertise of those who have worked to make this collection available to a wider audience.

There remains one terminological quibble. Several silver coins in this sylloge are described as "half-*dirhams*." (See nos. 159, 165, 217, 218, 252, 256, 324, 335, 345, 356, 360, 433, 435, 471, 558, and 570.) In the wider context of Mamluk coinage, I find this term problematic, primarily for metrological reasons. Until the silver of Barsbāy and the later Circassian sultans, the many surviving specimens suggest strongly that Mamluk silver coins were prepared with only the most general and imprecise attention to a weight-standard. The coins in question here all share the fact that they weigh less than two grams. Yet this sample itself varies in weight from around 1.20 to 1.70 grams. When doubled, such "half-*dirhams*" yield quite different "full" *dirham* weights and values. Similarly, there are other coins in the sylloge that are less than two grams, yet are not labeled as "half-*dirhams*." (See nos. 221, 272, 343, 411, 419, 536, 537, 620, 684-6.) Such lightweight coins are clearly fractional *dirhams*, but to label them "half-*dirhams*" suggest a denominational precision not found for most of the Mamluk era. (Actual denominational terms like half, or quarter [*dirham*] do not appear on Mamluk coins until the mid-ninth/fifteenth century.) Something more than light weight is needed to justify the label. Otherwise the term becomes so imprecise as to be meaningless. There do exist, for example, small silver coins from the reigns of Baybars and his sons, struck with smaller dies featuring a design and legend different from the larger, "full" *dirhams*. While no denominational notation is



found in those die legends, the consistently smaller and lighter qualities of these coins combined with their special dies would seem to deserve the label. All the coins mentioned above, however, are struck with the same dies as the heavier coins which surround them. Little utility is gained from labels such as “half-*dirham*” in this context.

This observation does not detract from the overall importance of this book. It is a fundamental research tool for Mamluk monetary history, and a copy should be in every research library.

ḤAYĀT NĀṢIR AL-ḤAJJĪ. *Al-Sulṭah wa-al-Mujtama‘ fī Salṭanat al-Mamālīk: Fatrat Ḥukm al-Salāṭīn al-Mamālīk al-Bahrīyah min Sanat 661 H./1262 M. ilá Sanat 784 H./1382 M.* (Kuwait: Jāmi‘at al-Kuwayt, Lajnat al-Ta’līf wa-al-Ta’rīb wa-al-Nashr, 1997). Pp. 220.

REVIEWED BY ANNE FALBY BROADBRIDGE, University of Chicago.

From the title of Ḥayyāt Nāṣir al-Ḥajjī’s latest work, the reader might expect a towering essay addressing sweeping themes and grand ideas. A first glance at the text, however, reveals a book explaining why Mamluk society fell into disarray during the *later* Bahri period. Upon further inspection it becomes clear that al-Ḥajjī is actually condemning the moral corruption of the military elite while investigating Mamluk financial troubles throughout the fourteenth century, especially the various ways the ruling elite tried to cope with problems of cash flow and revenue. Al-Ḥajjī does go on to discuss social, economic, and moral changes in Mamluk society, but her overwhelming focus is on high-level fiscal disorder and ethical decay as the catalysts for all other societal problems.

To begin, al-Ḥajjī suggests that by the Mamluk period Islamic society had lost its adherence to religious notions of proper government. By these al-Ḥajjī specifies the concepts of taking counsel (*shūrā*) and [dispensing] justice (*‘adl*). Al-Ḥajjī also addresses the ruler’s obligation to guarantee the populace its rights to protection (*amān*) and freedom (*ḥurrīyah*). Although a grandly conceived investigation of the moral basis for societal decline, al-Ḥajjī’s theory falls a bit short in places—she neglects to define her understanding of the idea of freedom, for example, the use of which smacks of anachronism. Her essay also hints at an attempt to discuss history as it should have been (in moral terms) rather than as it perhaps was, for al-Ḥajjī posits a kind of Ideal Age of Islamic rule—corresponding approximately to that of the earliest caliphs—which did not last.



Al-Ḥajjī goes on to suggest that Mamluk society entered its period of deterioration after 740/1341 precisely because al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's heirs neglected these basic Islamic principles of government. Specifically, power struggles among the amirs and within the house of Qalāwūn itself led to faulty, un-Islamic and short-sighted policies, which in turn led to oppression, financial ruin and moral disarray throughout society. Unfortunately al-Ḥajjī does not seem to be familiar with the work of Amalia Levanoni, who located the roots of decline in al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's own day.¹ One wonders what al-Ḥajjī might have made of Levanoni's argument and conclusions had she encountered them.

After establishing her theory of disintegrating ethics, al-Ḥajjī devotes the rest of the book to an analysis of the specific financial ways in which things fell apart. (It should be noted, however, that her treatment of fiscal and societal issues covers the entire Bahri period, even though by her own argument decline did not really set in until the 740s/1340s.) In this section al-Ḥajjī focuses overwhelmingly on the policy of the *muṣādarah*, or governmental seizure of an individual's property and assets. Al-Ḥajjī illustrates her detailed discussion of kinds of *muṣādarāt* with a wealth of examples; this is the strongest section of the book. She focuses on the types of people likely to be targeted (amirs, administrative officials, prosperous individuals) and the reasons prompting the seizure of assets (genuine wrongdoing, political machinations, sultanic or amiral grudges, a need for ready cash). Finally she investigates the way this process changed over time throughout the century, which is really quite absorbing. After this lengthy discussion of the *muṣādarah* itself, al-Ḥajjī devotes the rest of the work to a follow-up examination of the economic, administrative, social, and moral repercussions of this type of fiscal reordering. Although parts of these later sections are interesting, they are not up to the level of her work on the *muṣādarah*. Consequently these chapters suffer from a certain repetition of both material and points, as well as an uneven application of supporting evidence from the sources.

Nevertheless, although al-Ḥajjī's detailed discussion of the *muṣādarah* and its ramifications is interesting, one cannot help but wonder whether other factors might not also have contributed to economic stagnation and social and moral disarray during the second half of the fourteenth century. Al-Ḥajjī does not seem to be interested in natural disasters, for example, and thus fails to mention either the bubonic plague pandemic of 748-49/1347-48 with its accompanying devastation of society, or the thirteen secondary plague epidemics that followed it over the

¹Amalia Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn (1310-1341)* (Leiden, 1995).



course of the next 50-odd years. One doubts that al-Ḥajjī has read Michael Dols' seminal work² on the subject, since he is not mentioned in the bibliography.

Nor, despite her focus on the political elite, does al-Ḥajjī always give equal attention to all of their actions. Thus, for example, she spends little time on the brief and ultimately unsuccessful reign of al-Nāṣir Aḥmad (742/1341-42), despite the fact that he reportedly absconded to Karak with the entire extensive contents of the royal treasury, none of which was ever recovered.³ One wonders whether the disappearance of so much wealth from ruling hands might not have been a factor in the shortage of cash al-Ḥajjī claims Mamluk sultans faced in the 740s/1340s and which she attributes solely to their excessive and immoral spending on luxury goods and services. In a discussion of decay stemming from financial mismanagement, such an omission is baffling.

On a minor and more technical note: al-Ḥajjī's work seems to have lacked a good editor, as the book suffers from numerous typographical errors and an over-reliance on multiple exclamation points. The single paragraph that stretches from pages 107-10 should have been broken into several smaller units. Al-Ḥajjī's bibliography is quite lengthy, but it suffers from the above-mentioned omissions as well as some other peculiarities. At times it hints at a curiously purist tendency, since she read some of the Arabic sources in manuscript form—al-Shujā'ī, Ibn al-Suqā'ī, al-'Umarī's *Masālik al-Abṣār*—even though edited versions of those works do exist. Al-'Aynī is incorrectly identified as Muḥammad, not Maḥmūd. Also, al-Ḥajjī refers to the MS of Baybars al-Dawādārī al-Manṣūrī's *Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah*, but oddly does not seem to have read the same author's *Al-Tuḥfah al-Mulūkīyah fī al-Dawlah al-Turkīyah*.

In sum, al-Ḥajjī's work purports to be a comprehensive investigation of decline in the fourteenth century, but is really more a statement about Mamluk morality, venality, and resulting societal disarray, all supported unevenly with evidence from the sources. The work is most valuable for al-Ḥajjī's detailed investigation of the *muṣādarah* and its myriad permutations and results. Given the exclusivity of her focus on financial policy and the moral decisions of a corrupt ruling elite, however, some of her conclusions must be taken with a grain of salt. Nevertheless al-Ḥajjī does the field the service of raising numerous questions about the ways in which Mamluk society functioned, particularly fiscally. Some of these she does indeed answer; the remainder she leaves open for the reader to ponder.

²Michael W. Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton, 1977).

³Shams al-Dīn al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn al-Ṣāliḥī wa-Awlādihi*, ed. Barbara Schaëfer (Weisbaden, 1977), 216-17. Shujā'ī mentions household furnishings, 1,000,000 *dīnārs*, 2,000,000 *dirhams*, 180 chests of robes of honor, 15,000 *irdabbs* of wheat, livestock, and so on. Al-Ḥajjī mentions none of this. For an interesting treatment of the incident and its repercussions, see Levanoni, *Turning Point*, 180-81.



AYMAN FU'AD SAYYID, *Al-Taṭawwur al-'Umrānī li-Madīnat al-Qāhirah mundhu Nash' atihā wa-ḥattā al-Ān* (al-Dār al-Miṣrīyah al-Lubnānīyah, 1997). Pp. 132.

REVIEWED BY LEONOR FERNANDES, American University in Cairo

This book proposes to survey the urban evolution of Cairo from its foundation to modern times. Despite its ambitious topic, the author succeeds in providing the non-specialist with a good overview of the expansions of the city. The book is roughly divided into three main sections covering the urban developments which took place from the conquest of Egypt to the post-World-War-II period; touching briefly upon the most recent transformations of the city.

The first section, which occupies roughly one third of the book, covers the period from the foundation of al-Fuṣṭāṭ to the creation and expansion of al-Qāhirah under the Fatimids. Rather than bore the reader with detailed plans of the city and its quarters, the author chose to focus on the history of the Fatimids and their architectural legacy: mosques, palaces, mausolea, walls, and gates. Sayyid, who mentions al-Maqrīzī, Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, Abū Ṣāliḥ al-Armanī, and Ibn Jubayr, often provides quotes. However, one may question the relevance of such inclusions in a survey work written for non-specialists. Since the proper bibliographical references fail to accompany the quotes or authors' names their presence is equally of little use to the specialized scholars. The omission of the proper bibliographical information accompanying the names/quotes could perhaps be justified by the decision of the author to add at the end of each section, sometimes even at the end of each paragraph, a short bibliography on the subject discussed.

The second section of the book covers the expansion of Cairo under the Ayyubids and the Mamluks. The brief discussion of the Ayyubids' achievements centers primarily on their military architecture, mainly the Citadel that became the seat of their government. According to Sayyid, as the Ayyubids moved their residence to the Citadel, al-Qāhirah proper lost its exclusive character and became the locus of religious foundations and a center for commercial activities and artisanship (pp. 30, 33). As mentioned by the author, the shift from Shi'ism to Sunnism during the Ayyubid period motivated them to build schools—thirty-two of them—to counter the Fatimid *da'wah* (p. 30). The presence of madrasahs and commercial foundations in what was once the heart of Fatimid Cairo brought about a change in the urban structure of the capital which was now opened to the common people (p. 33).

The change in the nature of the urban network was felt more strongly in the Mamluk period, during which the capital saw its greatest expansion. The expansion of Cairo under the Mamluks receives the most attention, and in this sub-section the author makes the best use of the primary and secondary sources at his disposal.



As a result, he succeeds in providing the reader with a good historical overview of the period. The reader is also able to appreciate the Mamluks' architectural additions to the city; the latter's urban topography, the successful program of urbanization adopted by rulers like al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, and the contributions of his successors are highlighted and solidly documented. Perhaps as a tribute to the wealth of studies done on the Mamluk period, the reader is provided with a state of the art survey of the city's religious buildings, commercial constructions, and palaces. The expansion of the city outside the southern gate, its northeastern extension, and the big project of Amir Azbak are all given proper attention, and the addition of a number of plates benefits the reader.

The last section of the book covers the period from the Ottomans to modern times. Sayyid points out that during that period, urban expansion was in the direction of the south and west of the Khalīj. He links this expansion to demographic changes, which pointed to an increase in the population. Such an increase, he says, prompted the elites of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to move away from the heart of al-Qāhirah and the area around the Citadel to areas located further to the south and in particular around Birkat al-Fīl. Such a shift in urban expansion was made possible by the relocation of the tanneries, which took place at that time. In the eighteenth century, the elite settled in areas to the west of the Khalīj, more specifically around the Birkat al-Azbakīyah (p. 62).

The last ten pages of the book are dedicated to the study of the changes which took place in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The rule of Muḥammad 'Alī and his successors and their efforts to modernize Cairo are surveyed briefly. The author points out that in the first half of the nineteenth century the bulk of the urban changes took place in the following quarters: the Citadel, Birkat al-Azbakīyah, Būlāq, and Shubrā, where the pasha erected for himself a palace. Sayyid shows how Ismā'īl's dream of transforming the capital into a modern city and his use of European experts such as Haussmann, Berillet, and Grand greatly altered the topography of this Islamic capital. By the end of the nineteenth century and thanks to the tireless efforts of 'Alī Bāshā Mubārak, minister of public works, Cairo had acquired a new set of street networks, the great garden of Azbakīyah to replace the old pond, new bridges, and new palaces. Finally, the twentieth century saw the formation of new quarters such as Zamalek (1905), Garden City (1906), Heliopolis (1906), and Maadi (1907).

This survey of the urban expansion of the city of Cairo is easy to read and the presence of a number of illustrations allows the reader to get a good picture of the changes which occurred throughout the centuries. The book could equally be useful to students since it provides them with a lengthy bibliography, which includes primary as well as secondary sources. One welcomes such concise works, which give a quick survey of a city's development without encumbering the



reader with too many specific details or big theories. A number of unfortunate typographical errors could have been avoided. A careful spelling of foreign names would have helped. On the whole the book represents an interesting contribution to the field.

ILYĀS AL-QAṬṬĀR, *Niyābat Ṭarābulus fī ‘Ahd al-Mamālīk (688-922 H./1289-1516 M.)*, Manshūrāt al-Jāmi‘ah al-Lubnānīyah, Qism al-Dirāsāt al-Tārīkhīyah, 43 (Beirut: Dā’irat Manshūrāt al-Jāmi‘ah al-Lubnānīyah, 1998). Pp. 752.

REVIEWED BY JOHN L. MELOY, American University of Beirut

Ilyās al-Qaṭṭār has provided the field of Mamluk studies a great service by authoring this comprehensive study of the province or vice-regency (*niyābah*) of Tripoli during the Mamluk period, starting from its roots as a county in the Crusader period until the Ottoman conquest. The author argues that during the Mamluk period Tripoli experienced an awakening (*nahḍah*) in a variety of fields—society, economy, urban development, military, demography—due in large measure to the attention the city received from the Mamluk state. The historical significance of the province not only lies in the multi-faceted growth it underwent until the mid-fourteenth century but, he argues, also is due to the fact that Tripoli was inextricably tied to the countryside. Al-Qaṭṭār makes the point that the *niyābah*, centered in Tripoli, was established to control the religious minorities in the region so that the city provided a locus of communication between these groups. Consequently, the study brings “the countryside from the margins of Arab-Islamic history and places it in the sphere of interest of power” (pp. 701-2). Historiographically, a study of the province of Tripoli serves as a means to combine the traditional urban orientation of Mamluk history with a view of the geographical and social margins of the state.

In spite of its rapid growth early in the Mamluk period, Tripoli never became one of the main metropolitan centers of the Mamluk state. Nonetheless, al-Qaṭṭār’s study demonstrates that it should be the object of modern scholarly attention since it affords the opportunity to examine inter-community relations and urban-rural connections, thus broadening and deepening our understanding of Mamluk history. Confessional and local sources from this region, of course, provide the opportunity to investigate inter-community relations. For example, the author uses the marginalia found in the Rabbula Gospel text, which comprise a record of the endowment deeds of the See of the Maronite Patriarchate from 1154 to 1522, as well as the



more widely known Maronite and Druze chroniclers. The author recognizes the limited scope of such sources and for a broader view of Tripoli's history he relies on the standard sources used by Mamluk historians.

The division of the book, to use the author's expression, is "classical" (p. 32). He starts with a lengthy introduction discussing the geographical setting of the city and the region, which includes a considerable amount of geological detail, the relevance of which is not altogether apparent. Subsequent chapters cover the following topics: (1) politics and the military, including extensive discussions of the Mamluk campaigns against the Crusaders and Ismailis and the campaigns into the Kisrawān region of Mount Lebanon; (2) society, including discussions of the Maronite, Ismaili, and Nusayri communities; (3) administration, including highly detailed descriptions of official positions in the provincial bureaucracy; (4) urban development, including descriptions of architectural and urban units; and (5) economy, ranging from the economic setting (sections on the plague, locusts, wind storms, etc.) to industry, maritime trade, revenue assignments, and other topics. Many of these chapters contain long series of sub-sections rather monotonously describing particular items or phenomena; e.g., commodities, building types, administrative districts, etc. Of course, the drawback of this encyclopedic scheme of organization is that the tremendous amount of detailed information can overshadow the valuable arguments expressed in his concluding remarks. However, this style, which is by no means unusual, should not be allowed to detract from the author's contribution. Throughout the text, al-Qaṭṭār briefly explores a number of substantive issues, including discussions on the nature of cities in the province, the role of villages, modes of research in Islamic urbanism, and an especially interesting set of remarks on the nature of the relationship between the provincial administration and the local population. These and other discussions may be of concern to Islamic historians in general, and will certainly be of interest to scholars of the Mamluk period in particular.

Al-Qaṭṭār's bibliography is quite extensive, although two entries are incomplete. Complete bibliographic information on the Rabbula text mentioned above, as well as the epigraphic data preserved on Tripoli's buildings, would have been helpful, rather than the brief descriptions provided under the rubric of "Archives" (p. 703, and see the description of his sources on pp. 26-27). This oversight is indeed curious since the study as a whole is thoroughly documented; citations for these "archival" sources are contained, one might even say buried, in the notes of the respective chapters.

To a great extent Ilyās al-Qaṭṭār has anticipated Stephan Conermann's call, issued in the last volume of *Mamlūk Studies Review* (pp. 257-60), for studies taking on a microhistorical approach. Historians of the Mamluk Sultanate will appreciate al-Qaṭṭār's monograph on the province of Tripoli, particularly for its



wealth of information on this important but often overlooked medieval city and its hinterland.

AḤMAD IBN ‘ALĪ IBN ḤAJAR AL-‘ASQALĀNĪ, *Tarjamat Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymīyah*, edited by Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Sa‘īd Ma‘shashah (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 1419/1998). Pp. 76.

REVIEWED BY JON HOOVER, University of Birmingham

The Shafi‘i scholar Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449) is best known for his commentary on al-Bukhārī’s hadith collection, *Fath al-Bārī*. Among his numerous other writings is *Al-Durar al-Kāminah*, a biographical dictionary devoted solely to important persons of the eighth Islamic century. This dictionary allots a considerable sixteen pages to the Hanbali jurist Ibn Taymīyah (d. 728/1328). The booklet under review prints only Ibn Taymīyah’s biography as found in a manuscript isolated from the rest of *Al-Durar* and located in the Kuwaiti Markaz al-Makhṭūfāt. The editor gives the source of the manuscript as the Dār al-Kutub in Egypt, but he does not tell us more about its origin or its transmission apart from the remainder of *Al-Durar*.

This copy of Ibn Taymīyah’s biography does not appear to differ substantially from that found in the edition of *Al-Durar* printed in Hyderabad in 1348/1929-30 (vol. 1, 144-60). In his footnotes, the editor lists numerous minor discrepancies between his manuscript and a copy of *Al-Durar* printed in Egypt. I did not have access to the Egyptian edition, but it appears there are also slight differences between this and the Hyderabad edition.

The editor’s purpose in publishing this booklet is expressly apologetic. In his introduction, he notes that some unnamed elements in our time have taken it upon themselves to brand as unbelievers (*taḳfīr*) scholars like Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, and Ibn Taymīyah. Ibn Ḥajar’s biography of Ibn Taymīyah then serves as a refutation of this charge because the great Shafi‘i hadith scholar refused to call Ibn Taymīyah an unbeliever. Moreover, the biography reveals that even many of those who differed with the Hanbali jurist admired him and acknowledged his deep piety, extensive knowledge, and defense of Islam against heresy. In short, the editor sets forth a highly respected figure in Islamic religious sciences to testify on Ibn Taymīyah’s behalf against his modern detractors.

After the introduction, the editor supplies us with a short biography of Ibn Ḥajar. Brief notes on the manuscript and editorial method follow, as do pictures



of the first and last manuscript pages. Then comes the text of the biography. This is liberally supplemented with footnotes devoted to textual variants, identification of personalities appearing in the text, and correction of factual errors in Ibn Ḥajar's account.

As biographies of Ibn Taymīyah go, Ibn Ḥajar's account is highly unusual. It contains claims that come as a surprise to anyone familiar with Ibn Taymīyah's life and writings. Without explanation, Ibn Ḥajar tells us Ibn Taymīyah recanted from his doctrine of God's attributes during his trials of 705/1306 and a report was written to the effect that he had said he was an Ash'arī. At another point, we find Ibn Ḥajar has Ibn Taymīyah confessing to be a Shafi'i.

As the editor indicates, it would seem the traditionalist Ibn Ḥajar was trying to ameliorate the bad reputation Ibn Taymīyah had in some Shafi'i quarters by bringing him into conformity with the orthodoxy of the time. Yet I am not sure this interpretation is adequate because the cost entailed in Ibn Ḥajar's reworking of Ibn Taymīyah's story is so high that one begins to wonder whether it might be a form of satire. Contrary to what one might expect from someone writing an apology, Ibn Ḥajar turns Ibn Taymīyah into a groveling wimp, and the editor himself devotes considerable effort to correcting this image in his footnotes. In any case, the reasons for Ibn Ḥajar's odd portrayal of the Hanbali jurist remain unclear, and this suggests an intriguing avenue for further inquiry.

The editorial work and the printing of this biography are superb. Yet it remains only a printed edition of a single manuscript about whose provenance we know little. The primary significance of this little booklet is the reminder that some curious puzzles remain to be solved in the legacy of one of Islamic history's most controversial figures.

ḤUSNĪ MUḤAMMAD NUWAYṢIR, *Al-‘Imārah al-Islāmīyah fī Miṣr: ‘Aṣr al-Ayyūbīyīn wa-al-Mamālīk* (Cairo: Maktabat Zahra' al-Sharq, 1996). Pp. 724.

REVIEWED BY NASSER RABBAT, MIT

In its architectural heritage, Cairo is unquestionably one of the world's richest cities. Its monuments run the gamut of styles from the seventh to the twentieth century that we now call "Islamic." The most spectacular, however, date from the Mamluk period (1250-1517), which created a wealth of structures that synthesized the achievements of earlier times and symbolized the image of the city for centuries to come. The Mamluk period also produced the largest and most complete study



of a city in Islamic history, Taqī al-Dīn al-Maqrīzī's *Al-Mawā'iz wa-al-I'tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār*. Composed between 1415 and 1439-40, it records with loving care each and every street and every important structure in Cairo and, to a lesser degree, other Egyptian cities up to Maqrīzī's own time. This encyclopedic book has remained extremely influential for more than five centuries, not only because of its expansive range, but also, and perhaps more powerfully, because of its intense emotional charge as an expression of Maqrīzī's filial affinity with his city and his country.

It is not surprising, then, that most modern Egyptian architectural historians have focused on the Mamluk period and that so many among them have come under Maqrīzī's intellectual and rhetorical sway. Some even come across as his modern, visually-oriented heirs. Like him, they weave together architectural descriptions with historical sketches and anecdotes about the patrons, users, and builders (when they are known). And like him their narrative is more diachronic than synchronic.¹ Others adopt either a typological or a chronological approach, though they still depend on Maqrīzī's data, structure, and prose.² For all of them, however, Maqrīzī provides an essential pretext to a scholarly tradition that presents Cairo's architectural history as an endogenous development which unfolds over time with minimal interaction with the outside world, and which is suffused with self-conscious patriotism.

The most recent entry in this category is Ḥusnī Muḥammad Nuwayṣīr's *Al-'Imārah al-Islāmīyah fī Miṣr: 'Aṣr al-Ayyūbīyīn wa-al-Mamālīk*. Though the title mentions Egypt, the book only deals with the Islamic architecture of Cairo in the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. In three unequal sections—on the Ayyubids (114 pp.), the Bahri, or Turkish, Mamluks (110 pp.), and the Burji, or Circassian, Mamluks (494 pp.)—a selection of monuments is listed, their architecture described in varying degrees of detail, and, when available, their *waqfs* quoted to elucidate their forms and functions. This last aspect is probably the most significant and beneficial addition that this book brings to the usual survey of Cairene architecture. It also gives the book a stronger Maqrizian flavor than its predecessors since both authors, Nuwayṣīr and Maqrīzī, insert *waqf* texts into their descriptions to lend them a more authoritative tone.

The book, however, lacks a clear criterion for its selection of representative buildings; those chosen vary in relevance from one historical period to the next. The list of Ayyubid monuments is fairly complete, although there are some historical

¹Cf. Ḥasan 'Abd al-Waḥḥāb, *Tārīkh al-Masājīd al-Āthārīyah Allatī Ṣallā fihā Farīdat al-Jum'ah Ḥaḍrat Ṣāhib al-Jalālah al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ Fārūq al-Awwal* (Cairo, 1946; reprint 1994).

²Cf. Aḥmad Fikrī, *Masājīd al-Qāhirah wa-Madārisuhā*, 3 vols. (Cairo, 1962-69); Aḥmad 'Abd al-Razzāq Aḥmad, *Tārīkh wa-Āthār Miṣr al-Islāmīyah* (Cairo, 1977; reprint 1993).



problems in including the mausoleum of the Abbasid caliphs and that of the Sultana Shajar al-Durr in that category—the former because the building is most probably early Mamluk, although the first tomb under its dome dates back to the late Ayyubid period (1242); the latter because Shajar al-Durr is considered by most historians to be the first Mamluk ruler, although she was the consort of al-Šāliḥ Najm al-Dīn Ayyūb. The list of the Bahri Mamluk buildings, on the other hand, gives only 7 examples out of almost 100 structures still standing today in part or in toto, and is therefore too limited and arbitrary to allow the reader any general observations on the period's architectural characteristics or its main achievements. A somewhat better ratio obtains with the treatment of Burji (or Circassian) monuments: 28 out of a total of almost 150 still standing. Here, Nuwayšir is at his best: his descriptions are careful and detailed and supported by *waqf* information in 20 of the 28 monuments covered (especially in the last part which covers Qāyṭbāy's buildings, the subject of Nuwayšir's Ph.D. dissertation).

Given the disparity between the three sections, one is inevitably led to see the book more as an excursion into the Ayyubid and Mamluk architecture of Cairo, in a way reminiscent of the much earlier *Rambles in Cairo* (Cairo, 1931) by Mrs. Devonshire, than as a comprehensive study. This impression is further confirmed when one considers the book's structure: it has no preface and no conclusion summarizing its method and goals. Only the Ayyubid section has a brief introduction. It begins with a comment on the neglect that the architecture of the Ayyubids suffered at the hands of the "Orientalists," purportedly "because of their religious biases against Šalāḥ al-Dīn." This is patently untrue, and the point is embarrassingly belied by the fact that the author heavily depends for his text, and especially for his figures, on K. A. C. Creswell's *Muslim Architecture of Egypt* (Oxford, 1959), a dependence that is never acknowledged. Moreover, the copying appears to have been done in haste, for the author does not seem to have checked some of the Arabic names in the English transliteration, so that the name of the Abbasid envoy to the last Ayyubids, Abū Naḍlah, is rendered with a *dāl*, following the anglicized form, when the original was with a *ḍād* (pp. 100 and 104, figs. 5 and 6).

The book nonetheless provides fairly complete architectural descriptions of a number of key Cairene monuments, especially those of the late Burji period, which are not covered in Creswell's still magisterial survey (it had stopped in 1311, and we are still waiting for Christel Kessler's promised continuation). The book also fills a niche in the Arabic language market, in which inexpensive architectural surveys are otherwise unavailable. It is therefore regrettable that the numerous figures, borrowed from a medley of sources, are so badly reproduced and in such a maddening variety of scales as to be totally useless.

But what is really unfortunate, to this reviewer at least, is the persistence of the endogenous Maqrizian model, which might have been admirable in a pre-



nationalist fifteenth-century treatise, but not in this late twentieth-century survey—all the more because the last major study of Mamluk architecture, Michael Meinecke's *Die Mamlukische Architektur in Ägypten und Syrien* (Glückstadt, 1992), had already broken with the cosmocentric archetype to posit instead a framework of regional exchange. Having long suffered from an exclusivist and now largely discarded conception of Western architecture as having developed with little or no interaction with other traditions—including its own—the study of Islamic architecture, or any subcategory thereof, should embrace architectural and cultural interconnectedness as its interpretive credo.

Slave Elites in the Middle East and Africa: A Comparative Study, edited by Miura Toru and John Edward Philips (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 2000). Pp. 248

REVIEWED BY WARREN C. SCHULTZ, DePaul University

This volume contains eleven papers presented at "The Slave Elites Workshop" organized by the Islamic Area Studies project of the University of Tokyo. The workshop was organized to move beyond symposia focused only on the Mamluk Sultanate and to "elucidate the transregionality and commonality of the slave-elite system in West Africa and the Middle East by paying attention to their similarities and differences" (p. xi). The book thus aims for a wider audience than Mamlukists. Indeed, several of the contributors call for more comparative studies with slave systems outside the Islamic world. It is to be hoped that it receives this wider audience, for a recurrent theme in several of the papers is that many of the theories and theses for analyzing slavery developed by scholars concerned with the Atlantic or East Asian slavery systems are of limited (if that) applicability to the many types of slavery found in the Islamic world.

The book is organized into three parts sandwiched between an introduction and conclusion: Part One: Origins (papers 1-3); Part Two: Power and Networks (4-7); and Part Three: Transitions (8-11). The contents include: the introduction "Slave Elites in Islamic History" by Sato Tsugitaka; "The Turkish Military Elite of Samarra and the Third Century Land Tenure System" by Matthew Gordon; "Slave Elites and the *Saqāliba* in al-Andalus in the Umayyad Period" by Sato Kentaro; "The Location of the 'Manufacture' of Eunuchs" by Jan S. Hogendorf; "My Slave, My Son, My Lord: Slavery, Family and State in the Islamic Middle East" by Dror Ze'evi; "The Changing Concept of *Mamlūk* in the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt and



Syria" by Nasser Rabbat; "Waqf as an Instrument of Investment in the Mamluk Sultanate: Security vs. Profit?" by Carl F. Petry; "The Power of Knowledge and the Knowledge of Power: Kinship, Community and Royal Slavery in Pre-Colonial Kano, 1807-1903" by Sean Stilwell; "The Concept of Slavery in Ottoman and Other Muslim Societies: Dichotomy or Continuum" by EHUD R. TOLEDANO; "Mawlay Isma'il's *Jaysh al-'Abīd*: Reassessment of a Military Experience" by Fatima HARRAK; "Comrades in Arms or Captives in Bondage: Sudanese Slaves in the Turco-Egyptian Army, 1821-1865" by Ahmad Alawad Sikainga; "The Persistence of Slave Officials in the Sokoto Caliphate" by John Edward Philips; and the concluding remarks "Slave Elites in Japanese History" by Miura Toru.

Despite the comparative emphasis stressed in the preface, introduction, and conclusion, the bulk of these contributions are focused studies on specific cases in particular regions. While not specifically about the Mamluks, Hogendorn, Ze'evi, Toledano, and Philips do place their essays in wider contexts, and all refer at least in passing to the Mamluk Sultanate. Only the chapters by Rabbat and Petry are specifically devoted to matters Mamluk, with Petry raising comparative issues in the final section of his article. Given the nature of this journal and its primary audience, I will restrict my comments to these six essays, as individual readers will find the remaining chapters of value or not depending on their own interests in and needs for comparative examples.

Hogendorn's contribution is bleakly fascinating as the author sketches out the nuts and bolts of the trade and manufacture of eunuchs in the Muslim Mediterranean world. It argues that economic factors—based mainly on the high post-operative death rates—are crucial to understanding why castration centers were located so far from final markets. Wide-ranging in terms of chronology, this chapter is based primarily on sources later than the Mamluks, with a heavy emphasis on the nineteenth century. The discussion of eunuchs in the Mamluk sultanate is primarily of a historical contextual nature, and is based on the work of Ayalon.

Ze'evi's contribution is a short interpretive essay based on existing scholarship, in which he promises to look at familiar matters in a new way. He argues that in the Islamic world, it was necessary for future elite slaves to pass through a period of "social slumber" as full members of the master's household before moving on to bigger things. Its greatest value, I believe, may be to the non-Islamicist reader, for he delivers a brief yet cogent analysis of the inapplicability for Islamic contexts of several aspects of Orlando Patterson's thesis of slavery as social death. The inadequacy of Patterson's central metaphor for the many types of Ottoman slavery is eventually endorsed by Toledano as well, although the latter specifically approves the value of approaches like Patterson's which stress the "mutually conditioning effect of the owner-slave relationship" (p. 166). He ultimately favors a "continuum based model" for understanding owner-slave relationships over the simple



dichotomy of free/slave. Toledano also provides a useful overview of the wider field of slavery studies, identifying several possible reasons why to date many “comparative” studies of slavery have not included slavery in Muslim societies.

Philips’ essay is much broader than the title suggests. It is not just a case study of the Sokoto Caliphate’s eventual re-adoption of slave officials and soldiers after coming to power with an ideology condemning their use as un-Islamic, although that in itself is valuable enough. Weaving between issues of theory and evidence-based analysis, he deftly links his case study to the wider issue of the ubiquity of slave officials in the pre-modern Muslim world, reaching the conclusion that this institution was ineluctable (pp. 232-33). This frank, even iconoclastic, essay will certainly provoke thought.

The above-mentioned essays all reinforce the basic yet important point that many of our undergraduates have never realized, that not all slave systems are the same. Rabbat’s contribution illustrates for non-Mamlukist readers that not all mamluk systems are the same. Even though Rabbat reminds us that the sources available are not particularly forthcoming as to how the transition took place, the mamluk system established by Baybars and Qalāwūn and lasting into the fourteenth century was very different from the mamluk system of, say, the Abbasids or the Seljuqs. Mamluk mamluks were no longer life-long slaves, subjugated to their masters, but a “caste” of free individuals, with shared experiences and overlapping loyalties, to name but a few differences.

Petry’s essay is of a more foundational nature, exploring the convoluted details of that essential financial phenomenon, the *waqf*. After discussing the probable reasons for the popularity of *waqfs* among the Mamluk elite, Petry presents a detailed overview of the assets listed in the major *waqf* deeds of the penultimate Mamluk sultan, Qanṣūh al-Ghawrī. From the detailed lists of real estate, he teases out the conclusion that al-Ghawrī’s investments favored stability and reliability over profit and risk. He goes on to explore some potential ramifications of this observation. Petry has thus identified another important thesis against which other endowment deeds should be checked. Given that several hundred of these complex deeds survive from the Mamluk period, this would be a tedious task, but nevertheless a valuable one.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that this workshop was held in October 1998; the editors are to be commended for bringing the proceedings to publication so rapidly.



MUḤAMMAD IBN IBRĀHĪM AL-JAZARĪ, *Tārīkh Ḥawādith al-Zamān wa-Anbā' ihī wa-Wafayāt al-Akābir wa-al-A'yān min Abnā' ihī: al-Ma'rūf bi-Tārīkh Ibn al-Jazarī*. Edited with introduction by 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmurī (Sidon/Beirut: al-Maktabah al-'Aṣrīyah, 1998). Three volumes.

REVIEWED BY LI GUO, University of Notre Dame

For students of the early Mamluk era, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Jazarī (d. 739/1338) is our own al-Ṭabarī. Enough has been said about the originality and significance of this Damascene historian who is hailed as the father of early fourteenth-century Syrian as well as Egyptian (!) historical writing. His principal work *Ḥawādith al-Zamān wa-Anbā' uhu wa-Wafayāt al-Akābir wa-al-A'yān min Abnā' ihī* (*Events and News of the Time with Obituaries of Worthies and Notables*)¹ is regarded by medieval and modern scholars as one of the main sources on the reigns of Qalāwūn, al-Ashraf Khalīl, Kitbughā, Lājīn, and al-Malik al-Nāṣir. Unfortunately, the work has survived only in fragments, few of which have been published so far.² The current complete lavish edition of the extant fragments is, therefore, most welcome.³

Volume one is based on the famous Paris MS Bibliothèque Nationale arabe 6739 (wrongly given as 6379 in the Introduction), which was the basis of Sauvaget's masterly French summary (covering the years 689/1290 to 699/1299)⁴ as well as of my partial edition, supplemented with the parallel text of al-Yūnīnī's *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān* (covering the years 697/1297 to 699/1299).⁵ In his brief introduction, the editor, after comparing it to al-Jazarī's *al-Mukhtār*, an epitome of the work edited by al-Dhahabī, noted that the Paris MS is neither the *Mukhtār*, nor the original of the *Ḥawādith* per se, but rather "another epitome of the work." And this assessment prompted him to postpone his comprehensive introduction to the work until Volume 2, which is believed to be part of "the original" (pp. 5-6).

¹I use Little's translation of the title; see Donald Little, "Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Epochs," in *Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. Carl Petry (Cambridge, 1998), 428.

²For modern scholarship on al-Jazarī, see Jean Sauvaget, *La Chronique de Damas d'al-Jazarī (Années 689-698 H)* (Paris, 1949); Ulrich Haarmann, *Quellenstudien zur frühen Mamlukenzeit* (Freiburg, 1970); Donald Little, *An Introduction to Mamluk Historiography* (Montreal, 1970); idem, "Historiography," 427-30; Numan Jubran, "Studien zur Geschichte und Sozialgeographie von Damaskus im Ausgehenden 13. Jahrhundert: mit einer Teiledition der Chronik Šams ad-Dīn Muḥamad [sic] al-Ġazarīs," Ph.D. diss., Freiburg, 1987; Li Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography: al-Yūnīnī's Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān* (Leiden, 1998), especially 1:41-59.

³Another edition is being prepared by Numan Jubran, Yarmouk University, Jordan.

⁴Sauvaget, *La Chronique*.

⁵Guo, *Al-Yūnīnī*, vol. 1, translation, vol. 2, Arabic text.



This is interesting but by no means a surprise insofar as the Paris MS bears another title, *Jawāhir al-Sulūk fī al-Khulafā' wa-al-Mulūk*, and has been identified by modern scholars as representing a recension of the acclaimed *Ḥawādith al-Zamān*, or *Tārīkh al-Jazarī* (not "Ibn al-Jazarī," as Haarmann repeatedly pointed out).

To review the edition, I did a spot check of the years 697 to 699 A.H., comparing it to the Paris MS, the microfilm of which is at my disposal, as well as my own edition of this portion where al-Yūnīnī's and al-Jazarī's versions run parallel, nearly identical, to each other.⁶ It reveals that as far as the history section is concerned, Tadmurī's and my editions, based on the same manuscript, are nearly the same; but there are some different readings of poetry, the most thorny task in the editing process. One example must suffice here: on pp. 387-88 (the events of the year 697 A.H.), a panegyric poem celebrating Sultan Lājīn's recovery from an accidental injury was mistaken in Tadmurī's edition as prose.⁷ Since these two editions are likely to be the only ones available for some time to come, I therefore offer the appended list of these different readings. Comments will be made only when errors, either Tadmurī's or mine, are obvious. Otherwise I leave the judgment to the reader. In the following list, T stands for Tadmurī's edition, and G for Guo's.

| T | G |
|-----------------|---------------|
| 397:20 جوى | 14:15 حوى |
| 404:10 خيرة | 20:1 حيرة |
| 404:11 سعي سعيا | 20:2 سعيا |
| 405:12 تُسرُّ | 21:12 نسرُّ |
| 405:23 أكتم | 22:8 أ أكتم |
| 406:4 لقولي | 22:14 لقلبي |
| 406:5 عنك | 22:15 عندك |
| 406:8 لقومي | 22:18 لقوم |
| 406:11 لإسهامه | 23:2 لا سهامه |
| 406:13 ولائمة | 23:4 فلائمة |
| أتنني | انثنني |
| ظننت | ظنت |
| 406:15 العذائر | 23:6 الغدائر |

⁶Guo, *Al-Yūnīnī*, 2:1-99.

⁷Cf. Guo, *Al-Yūnīnī*, 2:4, 1:99; also Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmi' al-Ghurar*, ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Cairo, 1971), 8:371-72.



| | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 406:16 قديما | 23:7 قد نما |
| 406:17 اخضر | 23:8 أخضر |
| 406:24 جيرة | 23:15 حيرة |
| 406:27 ظبي | 23:18 طي |
| 407:2 لا مني | 23:20 لامني |
| 407:7 جسد end of 1st hemistich | 24:5 جسد beginning of 2nd hemistich |
| صدورك | صدودك |
| 407:11 أنني beginning of 2nd hemistich | 24:9 أنني end of 1st hemistich |
| 407:22 بالنفسج | 25:9 البنفسج |
| 407:25 غي | 25:12 في |
| 408:5 دلت | 26:3 ولت |
| 408:8 صيد | 26:9 صد |
| 408:9 تول (تولى) | 26:10 قول |
| 408:11 وفيك | 26:12 ونيل |
| 408:15 لنا end of 1st hemistich | 27:3 لنا beginning of 2nd hemistich |
| 408:18 الهدى (this seems to be right, given the context here) | 27:9 الهوى |
| 408:19 وكيف لا | 27:10 وكيف ولا |
| 408:20 والبركم | 27:11 بالبركم |
| 408:23 خرفا | 27:14 حرفا |
| 408:25 بالدر | 27:16 بالذر |
| 409:1 شهد | 27:17 شهداء |
| 411:15 يجمعنا | 30:13 بجمعنا |
| 411:18 رمزنا شيء | 30:16 رمر ناشيء |
| 411:19 تجرم | 31:1 الجرم |
| 411:21 مخلصا beginning of 2nd hemistich | 31:3 مخلصا end of 1st hemistich |
| 412:13 نبي | 32:2 بني |
| ذوابة | دوابه |
| 412:14 عرار | 32:3 غرار |
| 412:16 بغرير | 32:6 بعزير |
| 413:8 صبا و | 33:3 صبابة |
| 413:9 وأنزه | 33:4 أنزة |
| 413:11 أعظمته | 33:6 أعظمه |



| | | | |
|--------|--|-------|-------------------------------------|
| 414:5 | عرفت | 34:4 | غرقت |
| 414:13 | مغلق | 34:12 | متعلق |
| 414:17 | مخالطه | 34:16 | فخالطه |
| 414:21 | وليس | 35:2 | فليس |
| 414:25 | وجهة حياتي (this is obviously incorrect, because the poem is rhymed in ني) | 35:6 | وجهه حياني |
| 415:12 | الاجرع | 36:2 | الاجزع |
| 415:13 | للطب | 36:4 | للقلب |
| 415:19 | beginning of 2nd hemistich ففي | 36:10 | end of 1st hemistich ففي |
| 415:20 | كاظمة | 36:11 | وكاظمة |
| 415:21 | end of 1st hemistich بكم | 36:12 | beginning of 2nd hemistich بكم |
| 415:24 | عين | 36:15 | يمين |
| 415:25 | حبهم بكي | 36:16 | حيهم يكن |
| 416:3 | غنيت فأعد | 37:5 | عنيت وأعد |
| 416:4 | تطوي | 37:6 | يطوي |
| 416:12 | أسى | 37:17 | أمسى |
| 416:13 | تذوق | 38:1 | يذوق |
| 416:22 | قل لي (in MS قل لي) | 38:14 | قلبي |
| 416:24 | beginning of 2nd hemistich الى من | 38:16 | end of 1st hemistich الى من |
| 417:1 | شقاء | 39:1 | شفاء |
| 417:5 | فعليه | 39:5 | لعليه |
| 417:8 | كما | 39:11 | كم |
| 417:19 | رسالة مشتاق | 40:15 | رسالة |
| 418:1 | نحبي | 41:4 | بحبي |
| 418:11 | السرى in two hemistichs أنوح | 41:14 | السرى end of 1st hemistich أبوح |
| 418:12 | سيه نفتحها in two hemistichs | 41:15 | سينفتحها beginning of 2nd hemistich |
| 418:16 | الرند أيحكي in two hemistichs | 42:1 | الرندا يحكي in two hemistichs |
| 418:18 | لما | 42:4 | كما |



| | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 418:20 السير | 42:6 للسير |
| 418:25 فما end of 1st hemistich | 42:11 فما beginning of 2nd hemistich |
| 419:2 فما beginning of 2nd hemistich | 42:14 فما end of 1st hemistich |
| 419:6 أعيدك | 43:3 أعندك |
| تريح | ترنج |
| 419:7 للطاعين | 43:4 للطاعين |
| 419:15 أحبابي | 43:13 أحبائي |
| 419:16 وإن لهم beginning of 2nd hemistich | 43:14 وإن لهم end of 1st hemistich |
| 419:17 حبا | 43:15 حيا |
| 419:19 عسى beginning of 2nd hemistich | 43:17 عسى end of 1st hemistich |
| 419:23 وحدي | 44:7 وجددي |
| 419:26 حشاشتي | 44:10 حشا شتي |
| 420:2 ودلني beginning of 2nd hemistich | 44:12 ودلني end of 1st hemistich |
| 448:16 حرقتي | 81:6 خرقتي |
| 448:17 تخفي | 81:7 يخفي |
| 448:22 أميرا كمل | 81:12 أمير أكمل |
| 449:7 يكتب | 82:3 يكتب |
| 449:10 دمه end of 1st hemistich | 82:6 دمه beginning of 2nd hemistich |
| 449:16 شمрте تيها | 83:1 شمрте تيها in two hemistichs |
| 450:8 وعد مؤمن | 83:13 رعد موهن |
| 450:9 زار | 83:14 زار |
| 450:11 يجاوره | 84:2 تجاوره |
| 450:14 تعباً | 84:5 تقباً |
| 450:17 يقل | 84:8 تقل |
| 450:23 رفعت | 85:1 رفقت |
| يديك | نديك |
| 453:3 لي | 86:12 بي |
| 453:7 شدا | 87:4 شذا |
| 453:10 الصدغ | 87:7 الصدع |
| اللاحظ | الللحظ |
| 453:12 مرنج غربة | 87:9 مريخ غرته |
| 453:13 ينثني | 87:10 يتثنى |
| 453:20 معتمدي | 87:17 معتهدي |



| | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| تمضي | يمضي |
| 453:21 يواري | 87:18 تواری |
| 454:1 الفرس | 87:19 الغرس |
| 459:6 مضى لا مضى لي لا | 93:15 مضى بي لا |
| 459:7 ذكراك | 93:16 ذكرك |
| 459:10 ملك | 94:1 مللت |
| 460:16 نشتاق | 95:6 تشتاق |
| 460:20 beginning of 2nd hemistich وينقضي | 95:10 end of 1st hemistich وينقضي |

Volumes 2 and 3 present the text of the Istanbul MS, Köprülü 1037, which covers the years 725/1325 to 738/1338. This is the first complete edition, to my knowledge, of this portion of al-Jazarī's work.⁸ For the reasons mentioned above, a lengthy introduction is provided here, in Volume 2. It includes (1) a general description of the manuscript (pp. 5-7), (2) re-pagination of the misplaced folios (pp. 8-18), (3) an overview of the contents of the manuscript (pp. 18-20), (4) al-Jazarī's method (pp. 20-23), (5) source criticism (pp. 24-29), (6) discussion of al-Jazarī's reliance on 'Alam al-Dīn al-Birzālī (pp. 29-34), and (7) al-Jazarī's biography (pp. 34-41). The somewhat repetitive introduction does offer a great deal of information. However, for those familiar with earlier works by Cahen, Sauvaget, Haarmann, and Little on the subject, very little can be found that is new.

The edition of the three volumes is overall competent. The editor has supplied headings (marked with brackets) to each cluster of the text. Some additional contents, drawn from other contemporary or later sources, are provided as well (marked with brackets). The editor also thought fit to add to Volume 1 appendixes that contain quotations of al-Jazarī's "original" from parallel sources, some still in manuscript (al-Fayyūmī's [d. 1369] "Nathr al-Jumān fī Tarājim al-A'yān," Dār al-Kutub MS 1746), that are missing from the Paris MS (pp. 469-79). The footnotes include grammatical corrections as well as variant readings from parallel sources. The indexes include Quran and hadith quotations and poems, as well as the table of contents and bibliographical references. But there is no index of proper names of persons and places, which is inconvenient.

⁸For the Istanbul MS, see Haarmann, *Quellenstudien*, 48-50.



SAMIRA KORTANTAMER, *Bahrî Memlûklar' da Üst Yönetim Mensupları ve Aralarındaki İlişkiler* (İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi, 1993). Pp. 208.

REVIEWED BY STEFAN WINTER, The University of Chicago

To many scholars in Turkey today, medieval Islamic history is of interest simply as a backdrop to the emergence of the early Turkmen beylicates in Anatolia. A noteworthy exception is Samira Kortantamer, lecturer in the Literature Faculty at Aegean University in Izmir, who treats the phenomenon of Qipchak Mamluk rule in Egypt and Syria first and foremost as a remarkable and unique episode in Middle Eastern and comparative political history. Her past contributions have included articles both on Mamluk historiography and on the Mamluk bureaucratic apparatus, as well as Turkish translations of key essays by David Ayalon and P. M. Holt (see the on-line Mamluk Bibliography).¹ In this monograph, Kortantamer sets out to explore the informal relations, sympathies, and personal rivalries between high government officials in order to explain the human and social dynamics that underpinned this sui generis form of rule.

Following Ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il's *Al-Nahj al-Sadīd* (a portion of which the author edited and translated for her University of Freiburg dissertation in 1973), the members of the administration are defined here as the sultan, the caliph, the high amirs, the four head qadis, and the vizier. Kortantamer does not so much analyze the Mamluk system of government as provide an anthology of textual passages illustrating individual office holders' mutual interactions. Her sources are limited in essence to Ibn Abī al-Faḍā'il and Maqrīzī's *Sulūk*. While the citations are generally evocative and colorful, and are supplemented by extensive footnotes on technical terms and biographical references, one almost wishes the author had also developed a deeper, more essayistic interpretation of her subject.

After a brief overview of the genesis of Mamluk rule, the first section treats the sultans' relations with their wives, sons, and daughters. Much of this is used to relate the story of Shajar al-Durr which, sensational as it may be, hardly typifies family relations in Mamluk-era aristocratic households. The author is then left to demonstrate that the women are really only mentioned in the sources in the context of royal weddings, the births of heirs, and occasionally pilgrimages. The situation is naturally different with respect to sons, and Kortantamer provides a few lively examples of some sultans' attempts to get their offspring recognized as their political successors, and of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's increasingly frustrated efforts to have his son and prospective heir Anūk give up his girlfriend.

¹<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/mideast/MamBib.html>.



The discussion turns to the sultans' relations with other state functionaries, beginning with the caliph. After reproducing Maqrīzī's account of the caliphate's transfer to Cairo, the author describes how the Mamluks' respect for the institution gradually deteriorated to the point that individual caliphs could be deposed and exiled by the sultans, even against the wishes of the religious judges. Next comes the sultans' relationships to the leading Mamluk amirs, which the author classes according to whether the incumbent sultan was strong or weak. The prototype of the former—al-Nāṣir Muḥammad—showered favors on his mamluk Tankiz until he wearied of his arrogance and set about to destroy him. For another example of a strong sultan's wrath against his Mamluks, the author devotes ten pages to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's attempts to have agents assassinate Qarāsunqur and Ākkūsh al-Afram in Ilkhanid Iran. In contrast, weak or youthful sultans, such as al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's son Barakah, were constrained to do the powerful amirs' bidding. The qadis, on the other hand, had no political role at all, other than attending a new sultan's enthronement and legitimizing his rule. Utilized to manifest the Mamluks' respect for the religious law, the qadis could in fact be ignored or overruled in important matters such as the succession to the caliphate. Another position which lost much of its importance under the Mamluks was that of vizier. While political affairs became the sole prerogative of Mamluk military officers such as the *nā'ib*, the civilian vizierate saw its area of responsibility reduced to finance. Incumbents were frequently Coptic converts and invariably wealthy, which, as Kortantamer illustrates with the case of Ibn Zunbūr, made them especially susceptible to spectacular instances of divestment, torture, and expropriation.

Chapter II is devoted to relations from the caliph's point of view and inevitably reiterates much of what was stated under sultan-caliph relations in Chapter I. Kortantamer quotes at length the passages describing the inductions of the first and second caliphs, contrasting this with al-Manṣūr 'Alī's abrupt dismissal of al-Mutawakkil in 1377. No matter how much religious prestige the caliphs were made to embody, the author concludes again, a strong sultan could always impose his choice for the office even against the opposition of the qadis.

The most stimulating excerpts are perhaps those presented in the final chapter, which deals with the high amirs' relations to the sultan and to each other. The author begins by describing how slaves were imported and integrated into the military aristocracy of Egypt, while remaining rooted in their Turkish cultural background. Loyalty to one's original master (and his household) was the highest moral value within Mamluk circles and thus a *sine qua non* for a successful political career. The only tie stronger than this was the Mamluk's to his *khushdash*, or brother-in-arms. Kortantamer again categorizes Mamluk peer relations according to whether the sultan was weak or strong, as illustrated by the story of the amirs Qawṣūn and Bashtāk. Even on his deathbed, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad could still



pledge his two leading Mamluks to mutual loyalty. Afterwards, however, Qawṣūn succeeded in manipulating the ineffectual new sultan in order to eliminate his rival. Only when he thus overplayed his hand did the other amirs rally around the newly influential Aydughmish and topple Qawṣūn, with the term "Qawṣūnī" going down in popular parlance as an insult.

If Kortantamer's sources are already well-known to specialists, her selection of passages certainly captures much of the intrigue of "the Mamluk phenomenon." As a pioneering work in the arena of Turkish-language Mamluk studies, Kortantamer's contribution should do much to spark further interest and research.

SHAI HAR-EL, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East: The Ottoman-Mamluk War, 1485-1491* (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: E. J. Brill, 1995) Pp. 238.

REVIEWED BY W. W. CLIFFORD, The University of Chicago

More than twenty years ago Andrew Hess challenged us to think of the early sixteenth/tenth century Mediterranean world not as geographically unitary but, rather, culturally differentiated. Hess believed his post-Braudelian "new segregation" of Mediterranean life could best be discerned at the fringe of its most antagonistic cultural zone—Ottoman-Habsburg North Africa. Fueling cultural segregation along this "archetypal" frontier was a mid-fifteenth/ninth century convergence of technological and political change into a military revolution benefiting Iberian expansion into the Western Islamic lands. Beset by structural bottlenecks, Andalusian and Maghribian states proved unable to replicate Iberian advantages in administrative centralization and military specialization. Even the Sa'dian dynasty, after a credible start, failed ultimately to harness the "unique combination of firepower, mobility and political unity" which made the Ottomans so competitive in the struggle for leadership within the Maghrib—just as it had made them in the Levant. For like the North African Sa'dians, the Levantine Mamluks had seemingly also failed to master the "new style of warfare." Despite its segregated, post-tribal, urban-based, institutional structure, the early sixteenth/tenth century Mamluk state was unmistakably "in the throes of its own decline," according to Hess, owing to its failure to "restructure [its] armies to fit the new (gunpowder) technology."¹

¹Andrew C. Hess, *The Forgotten Frontier: A History of the Sixteenth-Century Ibero-African Frontier*. (Chicago and London, 1978); idem, "Firearms and the Decline of Ibn Khaldun's Military Elite," *Archivum Ottomanicum* (1973): 173-200.



Despite its rather obvious importance, Islamicists have been generally reticent about Hess's revisionism. Typically perhaps, while the author of the book under review, Shai Har-El, affects some knowledge of Hess's work, he addresses it only tangentially in the end. This is all the more regrettable as his own thesis about the "defensive strategic principles" driving late Mamluk foreign policy largely parallels Hess's belief about the decline of Mamluk political and military power over the course of the fifteenth/ninth century. What analysis Har-El does provide of this decline constitutes little more than a potted summary of David Ayalon's traditional views on the systemic collapse of Mamluk civilization. Concerning the role of Hess's "new technology" in Mamluk decline, Har-El acknowledges only that there existed within the late Mamluk military an "insufficient use of firearms and new methods of warfare" (pp. 28, 54-55). Indeed, from Har-El's narrative of the decisive frontier battle at Ağa-Çayır (1488/893) one infers that Mamluk victory was based less on their non-use of the "new technology" than their ability simply to frustrate Ottoman tactical deployment of their own. Despite its apparent validation of *furūsīyah*, Ağa-Çayır was nevertheless a "hard lesson" to some in Cairo about the shortfall in Mamluk military preparedness, including Sultan Qāyrbāy, who in its aftermath began inducting the arquebus formally into the Mamluk military arsenal (pp. 201-2).

While much of Har-El's book is filled expectably by traditional military-diplomatic narration, it is not entirely the kind of *l'histoire événementielle* about which Braudel liked so much to fret. At the outset Har-El attempts to center the usual story of Mamluk-Ottoman relations in a novel heuristic framework of interlocking regional "subordinate system[s]." Already embedded in a "Mediterranean subordinate system," the Mamluk and Ottoman states found themselves, according to Har-El, unavoidably entangled in the struggle for control of an Anatolian "subordinate frontier system" adrift since the collapse of Mongol authority in west Asia. Despite the successful evolution of a "balance of power system," which employed "shifting alliances" to limit "the amount of violence," traditional statecraft could not ultimately overcome regional centrifugal tendencies. The final collapse of the Anatolian frontier system into a post-Aqqyunlu "power vacuum" coincided with a sudden waning of Mamluk and waxing of Ottoman military capabilities. The concomitant differentiation between Cairo's "status quo" policy and Istanbul's increasingly "imperialist" one engendered an uncontrollable conflict that would achieve denouement not on the plains of Cilicia but in the Nile river valley itself. Thus was sown at Ağa-Çayır (1488/893), Har-El seems to be intimating, the crop bitterly reaped at Raydānīyah (1517/923).

Indeed, the effectiveness of Har-El's study of the 1488/893 campaign cannot be divorced from his fine, antecedent geo-political analysis of Cairo's "status quo" policy. Briefly, in an effort to consolidate their post-Mongol strategic-commercial



position in the Near East, the Mamluks absorbed in 1375/776 the Little Armenian kingdom of Cilicia, inaugurating a "new epoch" which was to bring Cairo "into a confrontation with the growing power of the Ottomans." To forestall this inevitable conflict, the Mamluks assembled an elaborate "defense-in-depth system" anchored by natural defensive barriers, i.e. the Anti-Taurus and Amanus mountains, as well as man-made ones, i.e. historic "frontline" (*thughūr*) and "rearline" (*'awāṣim*) military infrastructures. Layered into these relatively stable geo-strategic echelons were more frangible political sub-systems, i.e. "outer" buffer-client principalities (Karaman and Kadi Burhan al-Din) as well as "inner" ones (Ramadan and Dulkadir). While the Mamluks themselves guaranteed "basic security" against theater invasion, the Turkman buffer-clients were tasked to deal with border provocations. It was a break-down in this "current security" mission on the "inner" frontier after 1464/868 that would effectively doom the classical Mamluk state.

In general Har-El's taxonomy helps to impose a certain meaningful order on the jumble of military-diplomatic events characteristic of this period. Some concepts, though, appear to have greater integrative value than others. His "buffer-client system," for instance, seems a less affected and more dynamic heuristic structure than his quasi-stable, inter-regional "subordinate systems." Har-El has furthermore an effective grasp of regional geography. Particularly valuable is his terrain overview of the Cilician campaign, giving readers a good feel for the operational problems confronting both Mamluk and Ottoman war planners. Ağa-Çayırı, by the way, is "a plain roughly mid-way between Adana and Tarsus." Har-El has moreover sensibly buttressed his written descriptions with a variety of maps, an important inclusion too often omitted by scholars.²

A significant if somewhat undeveloped subplot in Har-El's story of terrestrial conflict in Cilicia is that of maritime warfare, particularly the risky Ottoman projection of naval power onto the Mamluk littoral. Har-El draws attention principally to an important contemporary Ottoman naval *defter*, not much studied over the last half century, which lists the naval armament employed in the Ottoman flotilla.³

The *defter* notes intriguingly what appear to be two large, heavily-gunned, carrack-rigged sailing vessels—*bârças* (*barza*). But aside from associating these vessels with the Ottoman sea-*ghāzī*, Burak Reis, who a decade later at the battle of Zonchio would command another of these experimental sailing warships, Har-El

²While the book can rightly be praised for its map production, the same cannot be said for editorial control over errata, of which there is a great deal.

³Haydar Alpagut, *Denizde Türkiye* (Istanbul, 1937), 627; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Merkez ve Bahriye Teşkilâtı* (Ankara, 1948), 512-13.



adds little to the historical appreciation of his own document.⁴ This is not wholly surprising as his own secondary sources, while venerable, are quite dated. Absent, for instance, is Svat Soucek's seminal, modern study of late medieval Ottoman naval terminology.⁵

And while any organized discussion of contemporary Ottoman sea-going artillery is difficult to discern in the secondary literature, Har-El's own characterizations seem unaccountably problematic. The *prangi*, for instance, which figures prominently as the most numerous type of gun counted in the *defter*, is described by Har-El merely as "certain firearms." In fact the *prangi* was a small-caliber swivel gun and a standard piece of Ottoman secondary naval armament. Har-El also defines the somewhat larger caliber swivel guns, *zarbazans*, as "mortars," a confusing appellation. Is he perhaps conflating the term with the smaller Spanish bow swivel gun (*mortere*) or with a siege mortar-bombard, or does he mean to suggest that the Ottomans had successfully mounted sea-going mortars on their warships two centuries before the accepted advent of a dedicated bomb vessel? Har-El's own illustration of the Ottoman flotilla (p. 182) is a curious pastiche of round-bottomed, oared, single-masted, and square-rigged ship types, none visibly mounting, by the way, any of the guns listed in the *defter*. Har-El might have done better simply to re-read John Guilmartin, who not only describes but correctly illustrates some of these Ottoman gun tubes (pp. 158-72; 301-2).

While perhaps technical, the issue of naval artillery is not entirely scholastic. As a purpose-built, sailing gun-platform, the *pârça* did not long survive the fifteenth/ninth century to provide the Ottomans a possible blue-print for their own version of the "fast and maneuverable carriers of artillery" they would soon face in the Atlantic-style galleons.⁶ We possess, then, in this contemporary naval *defter* a rare snapshot of an evolutionary dead-end in Ottoman naval development, one which was to have momentous historical repercussions for the Ottoman retention of strategic control of the early modern Mediterranean. While Har-El's evaluation of both the operational and tactical significance of the Ottoman flotilla in the overall Cilician campaign is satisfactory, he might have brought greater historic insight to this important puzzle.

⁴Har-El, *Struggle*, 173-74; John Francis Guilmartin, *Gunpowder and Galleys: Changing Technology and Mediterranean Warfare in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1974), 86-88; see also Andrew C. Hess, "The Evolution of the Ottoman Seaborne Empire in the Age of the Oceanic Discoveries, 1453-1525," *American Historical Review* 75 no. 7 (1970): 1905, who notes Burak Reis's appearance in Ottoman service somewhat later than Har-El.

⁵Svat Soucek, "Certain Types of Ships in Ottoman-Turkish Terminology," *Turcica* 7 (1975): 233-49.

⁶Guilmartin, *Gunpowder*, 158-72, 301-2; see also idem, "The Early Provision of Artillery on Mediterranean War Galleys," *Mariner's Mirror* 50 (1973): 257-80; Soucek, "Certain," 244.



Concerning the demise of the Ottoman fleet off Cilicia, its foundering and partial capture in August 1488/Ramādan 893 after a sudden storm—possibly a seasonal *khamsīn*—Har-El’s short account (pp. 181-83) fails to appreciate fully the special characteristics of the local maritime environment. It is curious that his close attention to the geographical does not seem to extend “offshore,” as it were, to the hydrological or meteorological. Ottoman naval planners would almost certainly have known that Cilician waters posed a serious natural obstacle. Counter-clockwise currents, high waves, and katabatic squalls descending the Taurus range made even the summer months unfavorable, even dangerous, for sea-borne operations.⁷

It is sometimes claimed conveniently by Ottomanists, including Har-El (p. 192), that the unsuccessful campaign of 1488/893 was a token military gesture. Yet, how likely is it that Ottoman war planners would have jeopardized such a large, well-equipped fleet, including expensive “capital” ships (*pârças*) in such a high-risk maritime environment and at such extreme operational range without serious expectation of strategic dividends? Upon reflection, Bayezid II’s naval descent on Ayas (1488/893) seems no more whimsical than his father’s (Mehmed II) sea-borne gambit at Otranto (1481/885).

From the Mamluk maritime perspective, one transcendent question emerges: Where was the Mamluk navy in 1488/893? Cilicia was still within operational range of Mamluk flotillas well into the early sixteenth/tenth century. Even the Ottoman naval force commander (*kapudan*) (and Sultan Bayezid’s son-in-law), Hersek-oğlu Ahmed Paşa, feared a Mamluk amphibious landing in Cilicia (pp. 177-78). Moreover, the fifteenth/ninth century had already witnessed the highly competent exercise of Mamluk *Seemacht* in the eastern Mediterranean, one which would be extended just a few years later into the Indian Ocean. Unfortunately, the mystery of the Mamluks and their relationship with firearms is surpassed in Har-El’s scholarship only by the puzzle of their relationship with naval vessels. And, as with firearms, Har-El is content to invoke *ipse dixit* David Ayalon’s rambling commentary on Mamluk naval history as answer (pp. 58-9).

Finally, the generally positive results of Har-El’s campaign study are somewhat spoiled by his over-calculated historical summation. His claim, for instance, that the aftermath of Ağa-Çayırı, including the peace treaty of 1491/896, somehow “saved [Sultan Bayezid’s] prestige” and gave the Ottomans “a symbolic victory” (p. 212) is unconvincing. Certainly, it diverges in sum and substance from the

⁷See for instance John H. Pryor, *Geography, Technology and War: Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean 649-1571* (Cambridge, 1988); idem, “Winds, waves, and rocks: the routes and the perils along them,” *Maritime Aspects of Migration* (1989): 71-85; Victor Goldsmith and Stan Sofer, “Wave climatology of the Southeastern Mediterranean,” *Israel Journal of Earth Sciences* 32 (1983): 1-51.



interpretation given recently by Carl Petry, whose biography of Sultan Qāyṭbāy Har-El seems to have entirely overlooked.⁸

Furthermore, Har-El's contention that the subsequent Mamluk "shift from neutrality in [the] Ottoman-Safavid conflict" led to an actual "military alliance" between Cairo and Tabriz after 1514/920 also does not jibe. Though preliminary strategic talks were held, Mamluk-Safavid summitry ultimately derailed on their mutual struggle for symbolic diplomatic precedence.⁹

This all suggests a certain *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy underpinning Har-El's basic historical reasoning. Despite the generally sensible integration of geo-politics into his study, there lingers a faint reductionist whiff of Turnerian physiography-as-history in his stress on the inevitability of some final reckoning between the proximal Mamluk and Ottoman states. Clearly, Har-El has unsuccessfully eluded the historicist embrace of Turkish nationalist scholarship, which has long held a belief in the mythic expansion of the frontier march (*uc*) as a primary source of Ottoman values and institutions. Yet, the violence of Ottoman-Mamluk encounters after Ağa-Çayırı, notably at Raydānīyah, should be interpreted as neither redemptive by Ottomanists nor apocalyptic by Mamlukists.

MUḤAMMAD 'ABD AL-GHANĪ AL-AŠHQAR, *Tujjār al-Tawābil fī Miṣr fī al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī* (Cairo: al-Ḥay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1999), Pp. 571.

REVIEWED BY HAYRETTIN YUCESÖY, The University of Chicago

This study was originally a doctoral dissertation submitted to Ayn Shams University in Egypt. It treats the emergence, development, and demise of the spice trade in Egypt known as Kārimī. It comprises seven chapters, an introduction, a conclusion, and appendices (a list of Kārimī merchants during the Mamluk period, maps showing the trade routes and major centers, and charts depicting the family trees of two prominent Kārimī merchants).

As one may expect, al-Ashqar begins his study with a consideration of two central issues: the origins and etymology of the name Kārimī, and the circumstances of the rise of Kārimī commercial activity. His discussion of the first problem, in

⁸Carl F. Petry, *Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of the Mamluk Sultans al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy and Qanṣūh al-Ghawrī in Egypt* (Seattle and London, 1993), especially 88-103.

⁹W. W. Clifford, "Some Observations on the Course of Mamluk-Safavi Relations (1502-1516/908-922): I & II," *Der Islam* 70 no. 2 (1994): 272-74.



which he compares and contrasts the main theories on the subject (such as that of Ṣubḥī Labīb [who has authored the article in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*], of Goitein, and of al-Shātir Buṣaylī), concludes, unfortunately, without any new suggestions. Likewise, the author's conclusion that the Kārimī emerged as a group of merchants who had been known to operate locally up until the eleventh century, when they gradually expanded their horizons and began to engage in long-distance trade between the Indian Ocean and the coasts of the Red Sea and the Mediterranean, is a recapitulation of previous conclusions of scholarship.

Al-Ashqar pays due attention to the relationship between the high volume-big profit trade and the ruling institution, and highlights the benefits of the cooperation between the Kārimī merchants and the Mamluks in fostering trade on the one hand, and for stabilizing the Mamluk ruling apparatus, and launching large-scale military, architectural, and administrative projects on the other. His awareness of the role that European powers and merchants played in the Kārimī trade, and especially of the Mongol-European alliance and of the attempts to exclude the Mamluks from the east-west trade (a project that ended in the fourteenth century) show al-Ashqar's interest in considering the larger picture of the spice trade. However, one would expect to see a reference to Janet Abu-Lughod's study *Before European Hegemony*, a knowledge of which could have greatly improved his treatment. His disinterest in the theoretical dimensions of his subject is also evident in other chapters.

For instance, al-Ashqar deals with the social status and role of Kārimī merchants, categories of financial transactions, commercial and financial institutions, commodities, routes, centers, vessels, and seasons of Kārimī trade. He discusses how the Kārimī merchants realized very early their unique position and formed an intercontinental and long-lasting connection among themselves and how, by virtue of their wealth, organization, and control of Kārimī commodities, for which there was a high demand, they became a significant part of Mamluk economy, politics, and society. He also emphasizes the Kārimīs' skills and world-view which allowed them to master languages, chivalry, social manners, trade laws, taxation, astronomy, arithmetic, seafaring, etc. However, there is no attempt whatsoever to initiate an informed theoretical discussion about the role of Egypt in the crucial economic changes that took place globally in the period from the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. In particular, a discussion of the rise of capitalism in Western Europe vis-à-vis the economic context of the Middle East, would have been desirable. It is perhaps asking too much to expect al-Ashqar to discuss the theoretical implications of the trade boom, capital accumulation, group solidarity, and international outlook of the Kārimīs and of the ways in which they might have affected the configuration and outlook of Mamluk society. After all, if he is silent on these matters, so is the mainstream of historical scholarship.



Al-Ashqar's explanation of the decline of the Kārimī trade hurts his study, rather than helping it reach a convincing conclusion. His division of the causes of decline into "external" and "internal" is artificial and is based on a perspective other than that of the Kārimīs themselves. It shatters the whole notion of the intercontinental scope and sophistication of the spice trade, thus giving the wrong impression that internal and external causes can be separated. Al-Ashqar seems to have gathered material and presented it as a cause for decline without much analysis or attention to the time-frame in which events took place. It is neither appropriate nor convincing to string together "causes" spanning from the beginning of the fourteenth century to the sixteenth century (the papal boycott, for example, the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope and the following Portuguese monopoly of the spice trade in the period between 1499-1509, and Qāytbāy's confiscation of the property of the Kārimīs in the beginning of the sixteenth century). He does not mention the specific conditions which caused some recurring phenomena throughout two centuries, (e.g., confiscation of property, the papal boycott, pirate activity, etc.) to be crucial factors in the collapse of the Kārimī trade in the late fifteenth century.

All in all, al-Ashqar makes extensive use of sources in his study, consults contemporary scholarly literature—not necessarily the most recent, however—and incorporates some of their arguments in his research primarily to verify his suggestions or to argue a point. One could wish he had provided the reader with a brief assessment of the scholarly literature on his topic and then highlighted his own contributions. Despite all the shortcomings of the study and the lack of new insights for specialists on the Kārimī merchants, just to see ideas substantiated by evidence taken from primary sources and enriched by examples, without unnecessary and misleading rhetoric of religiosity and nationalism, is refreshing. To be sure, there is repetition and needless digression in some parts; the print is not reader-friendly, nor are the maps and charts. There are many spelling mistakes where the Latin alphabet is used, and yet more embarrassingly there is a missing signature of sixteen pages between pages 193 and 208. One must point out also that his description of trade routes is less than adequate. Also, al-Ashqar would have done a much better job had he included legible maps and better studied the commercial centers in terms of their specific value for Kārimī trade. Chapter Six, which discusses how the Kārimīs deployed their intercontinental potential to connect distant territories by acting as envoys, missionaries, and patrons of art and learning, could have been integrated into the previous three chapters, since it deals with many of the subjects treated in Chapters Three, Four and Five. One would say in conclusion that the book makes an acceptable "inflated version" of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* article "Kārimī," albeit in a not very attractive form.

