

THOMAS BAUER  
UNIVERSITÄT MÜNSTER

## Mamluk Literature: Misunderstandings and New Approaches

We live in hard times for pioneers and discoverers. There are no more blank spots on the map of our globe, there are no undiscovered continents, no unexplored jungles, and no unknown tribes to be found. But still there is Mamluk literature. Despite several remarkable efforts in recent years—especially volume 7 [no. 1] of *Mamlūk Studies Review*, which was devoted entirely to Mamluk literature—the state of the art of Mamluk literature is, in a word, deplorable. There is no comprehensive and reliable overview of the literature as a whole, many crucial texts still remain unedited, and monographs on Mamluk poets or the most important genres of Mamluk literature are lacking almost altogether, and so it is not easy even today to determine who were the most important literati or even which books were the most characteristic, influential, and important. What we see is an enormous contrast between a flourishing literary culture on the one hand and a remarkable dearth of scholarly enterprises dealing with that culture on the other. In fact, it seems as if no other field in the realm of Arabic studies has been neglected as much as that of Arabic literature of the Mamluk and Ottoman periods. Not even the increasing interest in the Mamluk period witnessed in the last decades has been enough to ensure a lasting effect on the study of Mamluk literature so far. This state of affairs requires an explanation, since thinking today about the reasons for the actual plight of the study of Mamluk literature will be helpful, I hope, in determining what has to be done in the future. I want to start with a couple of rather general and theoretical considerations before I then examine recent achievements in the various fields of literature.

Searching for the reasons for this sorry state of affairs, we inevitably end up in the second half of the nineteenth century, a period in which perceptions of Arabic culture and literature were shaped that to a certain degree prevail up to the present day. Many of the prejudices and misconceptions that for a long time prevented scholars in the Arab and Western world alike from appropriately assessing Mamluk and Ottoman literature can easily be discerned as originating in Western ideologies of this era. Therefore, I dare to say that the study of Mamluk literature should start with an enquiry into Western prejudices that originated in the colonial climate of the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>

---

© Middle East Documentation Center. The University of Chicago.

<sup>1</sup>Elsewhere I have examined contemporary and earlier Western attitudes towards the work of Nāṣif al-Yāzījī, one of the most prominent representatives of late Ottoman Arabic literature, and



©2005 by Thomas Bauer.

DOI: [10.6082/M1BP00ZC](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1BP00ZC). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1BP00ZC>)

DOI of Vol. IX, no. 2: [10.6082/M1Q52MQP](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1Q52MQP). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/4TK1-MA23> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.

In several European countries, the middle of the nineteenth century signalled a turning point in the perception of non-Western literatures. In previous decades, the attitudes mainly displayed towards "oriental" poetry were those of curiosity and fascination. Several decades later, a colonial point of view began to dominate. Western intellectuals and scholars began to look at what they called "the Orient" with the conviction of unquestionable superiority, which included the notion of the superiority of Western culture and literature. From that point on, differences between Arabic literature and contemporary Western literature were no longer seen primarily as interesting, stimulating, and inspiring, but rather as a deficiency on the side of Arabic literature. These negative perceptions of the differences between Arabic and Western literature, and the subsequent disdain for post-Saljuq Arabic literature, were crucial for the colonial enterprise, given that this enterprise was justified by the mission to bring civilization to the rest of the globe. However, nobody could deny that the Islamic world had once been one of the most impressive civilizations of the world. The trick now was to impute a notion of decadence and stagnation to the history of the Islamic world, which allowed at one and the same time acknowledgment of its former greatness, as well as the need to restore its former glory through colonialism and Westernization. This perception was fostered by contemporary philosophic ideas about history, such as those of Hegel and of Darwinism. According to these ideas, each culture was destined to fulfill a certain historical mission to contribute to the overall progress of the human race. Having fulfilled its mission, a culture becomes obsolete and a new form of culture emerges which in turn serves as a basis for further progress. In our case, this new culture was, of course, contemporary Western culture. From this perspective, it was deemed that the mission of Islamic culture was to bridge the "dark ages" of the European Middle Ages and to stimulate Western development by conveying the knowledge and philosophy of antiquity to the West.<sup>2</sup> After having accomplished this mission, there seemed to be no further justification for continuing with a distinct Arabo-Islamic culture, because now an allegedly superior culture had come into existence. Therefore, any pure continuation of Islamic culture was seen as an embarrassment, and any differences in relation to Western culture were a deficit that needed to be nullified, even for the Arabs' own sake.

---

one of the first Arabic poets who was directly confronted with Western writers and intellectuals (Lamartine, Elie Smith); see Thomas Bauer, "Die *badī'iyya* Nāṣif al-Yāziǧīs und das Problem der spätoosmanischen arabischen Literatur" (to appear in *Festschrift Renate Jacobi* [forthcoming]). Despite a rapidly growing literature on "orientalism," the phenomenon of the colonialization of Arabic literature (still mainly described in outright positive terms such as "liberation" or "modernization") remains largely unstudied.

<sup>2</sup>This is one of several reasons why I oppose the application of the notion of "Middle Ages" to the Islamic world; see also my note in *MSR* 7, [no. 1] (2003): 74–75.



This colonial perception is mirrored, both then and now, by the state of research on Arabic literature.<sup>3</sup> The whole of the post-Saljuq period was neglected and stigmatized as being imitative, worthless, and irrelevant. But whereas Western and Arab scholars alike merely neglected Mamluk literature, the period of late Ottoman Arabic literature often aroused contempt and even deep repugnance. On closer examination we find, however, that there is no case in which these attitudes were engendered by any single specific text. Whenever texts from this period were analyzed (rarely enough), scholars found them interesting, to say the least. Rather, it was the singular existence instead of any form of traditional non-Western literature which displayed aesthetic norms and ideological content different from modern Western literature that provoked the discomfiture of adherents to "modernization," which inevitably means Westernization.<sup>4</sup> We must therefore conclude that the perception of post-Saljuq literature has been shaped thus far by ideology rather than by accepted scholarly standards of cultural, aesthetic, and literary history.

In our own day, only a few still subscribe to these ideas, but prejudices often prove to be lasting. To recognize this history and to question well-established perceptions is therefore the first and foremost task in approaching Mamluk literature. A better understanding of post-Saljuq Arabic literature is best achieved via a dialectic process. One part of this process is to appreciate the relativity of our own values, standards, and prejudices, and to locate them in their respective historical and social contexts. The other part is to examine the social, aesthetic, and ideological circumstances of any period of Arabic literature and thus to establish the values and standards that the members of the specific literary communities themselves applied to their own literature. This can only be done through a close reading of literary, theoretical, biographical, and historical texts, against which we constantly have to check and correct our assumptions about the literary system of any given period. Therefore, dealing with pre-modern Arabic literature must mean primarily the execution of an ongoing process of learning, in which the object of study is not only an object, but also an agent that helps to establish and formulate the objects and methods of study themselves.

This cultural studies background now brings me to the first of five issues which I consider to be the five major obstacles in the way of a proper understanding of Mamluk literature and society.

<sup>3</sup>This is also true for many other fields of Islamic culture. So, e.g., scholars only very recently started to take into account the development of Islamic law after al-Shāfi'ī.

<sup>4</sup>Bauer, "Die *badī'iyya* Nāṣīf al-Yāziǧīs;" idem, "Vom Sinn der Zeit: Aus der Geschichte des arabischen Chronogramms," *Arabica* 50 (2003): 501–31.



**(1) IMPORTANCE**

We should always be aware of the fact that in modern Western societies, literature is by and large a marginalized field, and that poetry above all has comparatively little social relevance today beyond advertising jingoism. This attitude towards the relative unimportance of poetry is tacitly transferred to other societies and thus may account for the backward state of the art in the field of Arabic literature in general. Many periods of Arabic literature—not only the Mamluk period—are still by and large unstudied; students avoid courses dealing with poetry (which is considered both extremely difficult and unimportant), and the number of Western scholars dealing with classical Arabic literature is steadily decreasing; projects involving literature have worse chances for support than those dealing with other fields; and, of course, scholars dealing with historical and religious texts may feel free to skip poetry that occurs in these texts on the grounds that nothing important will be missed. Instead, and by contrast to our own attitudes, poetry especially was a foremost means of communication in Arabic societies throughout the ages, used on both trivial occasions as well as in those of major social and political importance. The role literature played in these societies was in general more important than in modern Western societies, but it also differed in various periods and regions in Arabic history. Therefore, my next point addresses:

**(2) THE SOCIAL ROLE OF LITERATURE AND OF THE POET**

During the Abbasid era, literary culture was mainly shaped by the values and attitudes of the *kuttāb* whereas religious scholars took part in belles-lettres only marginally. During the Saljuq period, however, we can see the gradual merger between the *adab*-oriented culture of the *kuttāb* and the *sunnah*-oriented culture of the ulama. From then on, the *kuttāb* gradually ceased to form a distinct social group with its own cultural values. Instead, the duties of the *kātib* came to be fulfilled by people who had received the training of a religious scholar. The result was a rather homogeneous group of ulama who became the bearers of Islamic religious as well as of secular culture. Remarkably, this development did not prove detrimental to literary culture. Instead, the process of “ulamaization of *adab*” was counterbalanced by a process of “*adab*ization of the ulama,” who in the meantime had made the *adab* discourse of the *kuttāb* their own.<sup>5</sup> Poetry became a pre-eminent medium of communication between ulama, and this medium also included panegyric poetry, which now was addressed by one alim to another,

---

<sup>5</sup>Examples of ulama composing poetry in the beginning of this period are given in Th. Emil Homerin, “Preaching Poetry,” *Arabica* 38 (1991): 87–101; Thomas Bauer, “Raffinement und Frömmigkeit: Säkulare Poesie islamischer Religionsgelehrter der späten Abbasidenzeit,” *Asiatische Studien* 5 (1996): 275–95.



rather than to rulers and military leaders. For the ulama, it would become more and more important to be able to take part in this form of poetic communication.

Some of the main consequences of this development are the following:

(a) A general *increase in the number of ulama taking part in literary communication*. In al-Şafadī's *A'yān al-'Aşr*, which is not a work of literature but a collection of the biographies of two thousand of al-Şafadī's most eminent contemporaries, about a quarter of the entries contain or mention poetry composed by the person portrayed. If we consider the high number of Mamluks who hardly ever composed poetry in Arabic and the fact that al-Şafadī quoted only poetry of quality, it would not be an exaggeration to say that virtually every member of the ulama took part in poetic communication in one form or another.

(b) The *rise of genres serving the immediate communication among ulama*. Mamluk ulama communicated in the form of poetry. They addressed panegyric poetry to each other, congratulated each other for the *a'yād*, the safe return from the hajj, or the birth of a child, or offered their condolences on the death of a teacher or relative in the form of often-lengthy poems. They accompanied presents with epigrams and sent each other poetic enigmas for entertainment, and they always expected an answer, of course also in the form of poetry. *Dīwāns*, anthologies, and biographical works are full of this sort of poetry, but none of these genres has been studied so far. This leads us to the next point:

(c) The *blurring of the boundaries between everyday and literary communication*. The post-enlightenment Western conception of the poet as a genius who reveals eternal truths has led to a general disapproval of all forms of occasional poetry which came to be considered as trivial and of no literary value. This conception does not do justice to Mamluk literature. Here we find poems of purely literary value side by side with poems or documents that primarily fulfill practical purposes but were nevertheless considered of literary value. Consequently, modern concepts about what is literature and what is not have to be adapted to this situation.

(d) An *increase in poetic production of any quality*. All this led to an enormous increase in poetic and other forms of literary production which inevitably results in countless poems that are well-made but at best of only minor literary interest. This observation ought not to be used to depreciate Mamluk literature. Instead, it should help to heighten the admiration of a culture that achieved a great deal of poetization of everyday life and made the reaffirmation of cultural values and the training of linguistic consciousness a permanent trait of daily routine.

(e) A *growing interest in matters of private life*. Most Abbasid poetry mirrored asymmetrical social relations (poet/patron; poet/loved) and poets were not supposed to talk about their private lives. The ulama-poets of the Mamluk period instead communicated on more or less equal terms, had a similar personal history



and a similar life style. Now they could talk about their personal circumstances and take it for granted that their fellow ulama would be interested in this on the basis of shared experiences.<sup>6</sup> Consequently, we find love poems addressed to one's own wife (Ibn Ḥajar), and a more intimate tone in poems on the death of one's own son, daughter, or mother (Ibn Nubātah; Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī; Ibn Sūdūn).

(f) *Poetry as a means of distinction.* Despite a common outlook on life and similar habits and experiences, the group of the ulama was far from uniform and their members had a strong appreciation and feeling for prestige and hierarchy. The large number of madrasahs and the high prestige attributed to learning contributed to the rise of a broadened layer of people with a more or less superficial scholarly training.<sup>7</sup> These people may have memorized a textbook on grammar and another one on law and may have heard a reasonable amount of hadith, but they could not be accepted by the professional ulama as equals. But since there were no guild rules, no entrance examinations, and no membership cards for the group of the ulama, there had to be other means of delimitation. Instead of such formal criteria for membership, the group of the ulama defined itself as consisting of those who participated in their leading discourses in a qualified way. Poetry was one of these discourses, and linguistic proficiency, especially a flawless mastering of Arabic grammar, became one of the main criteria that the high-brow ulama used to distinguish themselves from lesser-educated aspirants. This is the reason why scholars like al-Ṣafadī and Ibn Ḥajar used to express their reserve whenever they quoted texts displaying interference of the spoken language. They never denied that they enjoyed these texts, but were simply afraid of violating professional ulama standards by quoting (or even composing) them, without making clear that they knew better. Just the opposite. As far as popular literature is concerned, we can even speak of

(g) *The blurring of the boundaries between popular and educated literature,* a fact that has already been noted repeatedly.<sup>8</sup> This is again a consequence of the

<sup>6</sup>Thomas Bauer, "Communication and Emotion: The Case of Ibn Nubātah's *Kindertotenlieder*," *MSR* 7, [no. 1] (2003): 49–95, here 63–64.

<sup>7</sup>See Jonathan P. Berkey, "Culture and Society during the Late Middle Ages," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 1, *Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge, 1998), 375–411, here 403–4, 409; Stefan Leder, "Postklassisch und vormodern: Beobachtungen zum Kulturwandel in der Mamlūkenzeit," in *Die Mamlūken: Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur: Zum Gedenken an Ulrich Haarmann (1942–1999)*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Anja Pistor-Hatam (Hamburg, 2003), 289–312.

<sup>8</sup>Leder, "Postklassisch und vormodern," 290–304; Robert Irwin, "Mamluk Literature," *MSR* 7, [no. 1] (2003): 1–29, here 18. For the shadow-play see Amila Buturovic, "The Shadow Play in Mamluk Egypt: The Genre and Its Cultural Implications," *MSR* 7, [no. 1] (2003): 149–76, here



"bourgeois" tendency of Mamluk literature and society. The ulama were as much at home in the *sūqs* as the craftsmen were in a madrasah. And as long as no concerns about scholarly prestige were involved, little prevented the ulama from displaying their interest in everyday affairs and in popular literature. Though the popular epics seem to have remained rather outside their horizon, popular poetry in dialect as well as in standard language (sometimes deficient) by poets like Ibrāhīm al-Mi'mār and Ibn Sūdūn were held in great esteem by the leading ulama as well as by the "people of the street." 'Izz al-Dīn al-Mawṣilī [27]<sup>9</sup> even bothered to adorn the *dīwān* of al-Mi'mār with a colorful example of his *inshā'*.<sup>10</sup> The poems and *maqāmahs* of these popular poets, as well as other texts like the shadow plays of Ibn Dānyāl, provide insight into the life of the crafts and the lower classes incomparable to what we know from earlier periods. Even in the *dīwāns* of ulama-poets, scenes of everyday life turn up from time to time.

### (3) THE ROLE OF RHETORICAL DEVICES

In considering the social functions of poetry mentioned above, we must not forget the immediate function of poetry for the individual, that is, to provide for her/his emotional needs, to bring about entertainment and fun, and to provoke amazement and surprise. The use of rhetorical devices should be seen in this context. The Mamluk poet was not supposed to express his very individual feelings, but to help his audience to cope with their own. Linguistic foregrounding, such as the use of figures of speech and rhetorical devices, arouses emotions in the recipient and thereby stimulates a process of recontextualization of his/her own previous emotions. In this respect, the usage of rhetorical devices cannot be considered a sign of lack of veracity, but as a means to initiate a process of catharsis in the hearer/reader of the text.<sup>11</sup> In addition to this emotional aspect, there is an intellectual side of rhetoric. Similar to the conceit in European literature, rhetorical devices may serve "to surprise and delight by wit and ingenuity. The pleasure we get from many conceits is intellectual rather than sensuous."<sup>12</sup> This is certainly also true for many of the *tawriyah*-pointed epigrams that were so popular in all levels of Mamluk society. And this is small wonder, since there has hardly been a culture with a comparable linguistic consciousness as the culture of Islam, a religion that

---

158–60.

<sup>9</sup>Numbers in square brackets refer to the list of some major poets and *udabā'* of the Mamluk empire at the end of this article.

<sup>10</sup>"Dīwān Ibrāhīm al-Mi'mār," Dār al-Kutub MS 673 Shi'r Taymūr, fols. 2–3.

<sup>11</sup>Bauer, "Communication and Emotion," 86–88; idem, review of *Ibn Nubātah: Shā'ir al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī*, by Maḥmūd Sālim Muḥammad, *MSR* 6 (2002): 219–24.

<sup>12</sup>J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms* (London, 1979), 144.



is entirely based on texts and their interpretation and linguistic exegesis.

#### (4) ORIGINALITY

One of the main points of criticism directed against Mamluk literature is its alleged conservatism, or, as it is often put in a more deprecatory way, its lack of originality, its stagnation. Some of these statements even give the impression that the poets were positively prohibited from treating new themes in their poetry.<sup>13</sup> This, of course, is nonsense, since no person or institution ever existed that could force poets to adhere to established conventions. Therefore, the reason for the perception of Mamluk literature as stagnant and unoriginal must lie somewhere else, and since I do not believe that it lies in the literature itself, we have to examine again the background of our own expectations. This expectation is doubtlessly shaped by European literary history, with its rapid succession of consecutive literary epochs, each of which seems to have lasted but a single century. And since Western literary historians are accustomed to think in clearly separated epochs, they are trained to figure out discontinuities rather than stressing the phenomena of continuity.

This is not the place to try to explain the rapid pace of modern European literature, but it should be observed here that, taken in a global context, it is a singular case. Other great literary traditions—especially China and other East Asian literature, but also classical literatures of antiquity—display a pattern of development very similar to that of Arabic literature (and other Islamic literatures). Consequently, this form of change can be called “organic” in contrast to the “catastrophic” form found in several post-medieval European literatures. In any case, neither type of development necessarily implies superiority to the other. The notion of backwardness and lack of innovative power can only be applied to single poets in relation to their contemporary literary system, but not to literatures as a whole.

In any case, no literary period springs up from out of nowhere, but inevitably has points of reference in the past. Therefore, a much more promising approach is to look for the points of reference for Mamluk authors and the specific relationship between poets and culture, instead of complaining about the supposed conservatism of this era. But what were these points of reference for Mamluk authors, what constituted their literary horizon? The few studies that pay attention to this question

---

<sup>13</sup>See, for example, Shmuel Moreh, “Traditionelle und neue Formen der Dichtung in der Gegenwart,” in *Grundriß der arabischen Philologie*, vol. 2, *Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. Helmut Gätje (Wiesbaden, 1987): 89–95, here 89: “Diese Arten von Poesie waren in ihre eigenen strengen Konventionen von Motiv und Stil gebunden und ließen somit dem Dichter keinen Spielraum, seine Gefühle oder Lebensumstände auszudrücken.”



suggest that the situation was complex and further studies are needed to develop a clearer picture. Inevitably, then, the following remarks must be seen as quite preliminary.

My first observation is that Mamluk readers were unusually keen on reading contemporary literature. As is evidenced by many anthologies (most explicitly by Ibn Nubātah's *Maṭla' al-Fawā'id*),<sup>14</sup> pre-Abbasid poetry was considered primarily a part of the cultural heritage of mainly philological interest. For the Mamluk public, the first to compose palatable poetry were the *muḥdath* poets from Abbasid times, especially their late representative Ibn al-Mu'tazz (d. 296/908), the only pre-Mutanabbian poet whose verses are encountered often and regularly in Mamluk anthologies. But still these forms of Abbasid literature must have had a strongly antiquarian flavor for the Mamluk public. Nevertheless, there are several cases of referring back to Abbasid literature, but their relevance has been perhaps somewhat overestimated by Robert Irwin.<sup>15</sup> And, after all, it was not lack of originality that led Mamluk authors to refer back to such early traditions. Rather, the authors had something new to say about the matters treated by their predecessors. To mention some of the most prominent cases: in his preface to his anthology entitled *Al-Ghayth al-Musajjam fī Sharḥ Lāmīyat al-'Ajam*, al-Ṣafadī refers to al-Jāḥiẓ's ideal of *adab* in deliberately mixing different topics in order to prevent boredom. This Jāḥiẓian ideal, however, is not revived in any antiquarian or restorative way, but put in the form of a definitively Mamluk invention, i.e., the anthology in form of a commentary. Al-Ṣafadī's book has the outward form of a commentary on a famous poem by the Saljuq poet al-Ṭuḡrā'ī (d. 514/1120-1) known as *Lāmīyat al-'Ajam*. But the form of commentary is mainly a pretext for compiling an anthology of texts of both old and recent origin, both earnest and humorous, in order to give a colorful picture of subjects relevant to any educated person of "modern" (i.e., Mamluk) times. Therefore, this book is an experiment in how to embody the Jāḥiẓian ideal of *adab*, and it is definitely not a case of falling back on tradition out of cultural impotence. The same holds true for al-Ṣafadī's and Ibn Nubātah's commentaries (or rather: anthologies in the form of commentaries) on two *risālahs* by Ibn Zaydūn,<sup>16</sup> and for Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī's early-Abbasid-style anthology *Thamarāt al-Awrāq*.<sup>17</sup> Obviously it is the purpose of these texts to reinterpret and

<sup>14</sup>Thomas Bauer, "Literarische Anthologien der Mamlukenzeit," in *Die Mamluken*, ed. Conermann and Pistor-Hatam, 71–122.

<sup>15</sup>"Mamluk Literature," 9 ("antiquarian feel"), 29.

<sup>16</sup>See Everett Rowson, "An Alexandrian Age in Fourteenth-Century Damascus: Twin Commentaries on Two Celebrated Arabic Epistles," *MSR* 7, [no. 1] (2003): 97–110; for al-Ṣafadī's *Ghayth* see also Nabīl Muḥammad Rashād, *Al-Ṣafadī wa-Sharḥuhu 'alā Lāmīyat al-'Ajam* (Cairo, 1423/2002) and its review by Everett Rowson in *MSR* 8, no. 1 (2004): 315–23.

<sup>17</sup>It is one of the few anthologies that deliberately imitates the pattern of the unstructured *adab*



remodel Abbasid ideals and to put them into a contemporary context. By remodelling works of the past, Mamluk authors did not try to create pieces of literature that resembled their models as closely as possible or that could be taken for Abbasid creations, nor did they aspire to revive a "golden age." Classical attitudes seem to have played no noteworthy role. Instead, these and other forms of intertextual references, such as allusion, *mu'āraḍah*, *takhmīs*, *tashṭīr*, etc., may fulfill a range of different purposes. They may serve as a means to determine one's relation with the past, to enter into a dialogue with its central texts, to introduce their message into contemporary discourse and to adapt it to the then-prevailing tastes. In other cases, it may be mainly a demonstration of virtuosity in reshaping an older text, but this procedure also inevitably contributes to the forming of the cultural memory of the times. It may well be the case that different sorts of texts were approached by different forms of intertextuality. So it may turn out that texts from the more ancient periods were rather made the object of a creative play such as the *takhmīs* and *tashṭīr*,<sup>18</sup> whereas texts reflecting a more recent aesthetic, such as those from the late Buyid, Saljuq, and Ayyubid periods, may have been reshaped in more individual ways, such as a *mu'āraḍah*, but this is only one of several possibilities considering the present state of knowledge. Further studies of Mamluk manifestations of intertextuality and a comparison with forms of intertextuality in other periods of Arabic literature will certainly yield interesting results. After all, it should not be forgotten that a heightened degree of synchronic as well as diachronic intertextuality is characteristic for all periods of Arabic poetry, from the *jāhilīyah* right up to the present day.<sup>19</sup> The Mamluk period is in no way out of the ordinary in this respect.

What is true for single texts, is also true for whole genres. Even the most conservative genres did not owe their conservatism to a lack of creativity or to nostalgic yearning. Instead, they retained many inherited features because it turned out that in this way they could most effectively serve the emotional and communicative requirements of society. A good example is furnished by the genre of *ghazal*, which was perhaps the most widespread genre in the Mamluk period and which more than others is characterized by a thematic and formal

---

anthology of the Abbasid period, and indeed it also consists largely of Abbasid material, mixed up, however, with specimens of Mamluk *inshā'*. I suspect that the proper *raison d'être* of this book has not yet been established.

<sup>18</sup>See P. F. Kennedy, "Takhmīs," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 10:123–25.

<sup>19</sup>For the *jāhilīyah* see Thomas Bauer, "Formel und Zitat: Zwei Spielarten von Intertextualität in der altarabischen Dichtung," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 24 (1993): 117–38; for the modern period see Birgit Embaló, "Intertextuelle Bezüge zeitgenössischer arabischer Poesie zur arabischen Dichtungstradition," in *Understanding Near Eastern Literatures*, ed. Verena Klemm and Beatrice Gruendler (Wiesbaden, 2000), 37–57.



continuity (which lasted well into the nineteenth century). But this continuity can easily be explained by the fact that *ghazal* poetry was the primary medium by which a collective knowledge about love was preserved and thereby through which the feelings and experiences of the people were influenced, whereas these feelings and experiences in turn influenced the shape of the *ghazal*. Therefore we come to understand that on one hand the Mamluk *ghazal* follows models that were created by and large during the early and middle Abbasid period. On the other hand, many Mamluk *ghazal* poems display a distinct Mamluk flavor and are clearly recognizable as pertaining to the Mamluk, and not to the Abbasid, period—for example Ibn Ḥajar’s “Red Sea *ghazal*,” in which the author interweaves a number of different strains of Arabic love poetry in order to transform them into a definitely contemporary expression of his experiences.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, elements that at first sight appear as purely conventional and traditional may well also have had the function of adding an additional dimension of complexity to the poem by virtue of introducing a reference to the collective experience preserved in literary tradition. This function of poetry as contributing to the preservation of the collective memory of society and of adapting it to contemporary needs has been given little attention in Arabic studies so far, probably because poetry does not play such a great role in these same contexts today in modern societies. For the Arabo-Islamic world, however, I can hardly see how studies in the history of social knowledge, culture, attitudes, and mentalities can be carried out without resorting to the study of literature and especially poetry.

These remarks on phenomena of intertextuality should not detract from the fact that the Mamluk period was indeed a particularly innovative and creative period. Whenever Mamluk works of literature have been studied without prejudice and in greater detail, they have been found to be interesting and original (as in the contributions to *MSR* 7 [no. 1]), and there is no lack of genre origination during the Mamluk period or of definitive stages of development during that time. As examples I could mention the *badī‘īyah*, the shadow-plays of Ibn Dānyāl, the nonsense-poetry by Ibn Sūdūn, popular poetry dealing with the crafts, the popular festivals, and with hashish. I could also mention the erotic *maqāmah*,<sup>21</sup> travelogues in the form of *inshā’*, or, in the fields of stylistics, the practical and theoretical

<sup>20</sup>Thomas Bauer, “Ibn Ḥajar and the Arabic Ghazal of the Mamluk Age,” in *Ghazal as World Literature: Transformations of a Literary Genre*, ed. Thomas Bauer and Angelika Neuwirth (Beirut, 2004): 35–55.

<sup>21</sup>Everett K. Rowson, “Two Homoerotic Narratives from Mamlūk Literature: al-Ṣafadī’s *Law‘at al-shākī* and Ibn Dānyāl’s *al-Mutayyam*,” in *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature*, ed. J. W. Wright, Jr., and Everett K. Rowson (New York, 1997): 158–91. A collection of heteroerotic *maqāmāt* based on the stylistic device of the *tawjīh* is Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūfī, *Rashf al-Zulāl min al-Sihr al-Ḥalāl* (Beirut, 1997).



preoccupation with the *tawriyah*. Whether these genres are appreciated or not, we can hardly deny that they were innovative.

Therefore, we may conclude, that Mamluk Arabic literature is not characterized by stagnation and a lack of innovation, but rather by a steady and gradual development, which, however, did not evolve towards the same endpoint as Western literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. According to a colonial point of view, the modern West is the only legitimately-existing culture, and every other development that went in a different direction must be seen as an historical error. What is described as "stagnation" is therefore not the lack of development per se, but the lack of developments that mimicked and confirmed Western models. Such divergences should, of course, serve as a paradigm for a critical scholarly analysis—but only for recognizing and appreciating differences and not for a rejection of those differences.

##### (5) MORALITY

Still today, we repeatedly come across complaints about the moral decadence of the Mamluk period. Since the notion of "decadence" is linked so inseparably to that of the erotic, it seems not out of place to make some remarks on this subject here. Two genres in particular touch on the subject of morality, namely *ghazal* (love poetry), and *mujūn* (satire). The *ghazal* was one of the most popular genres of Mamluk poetry, and it was widely cultivated because of its overall emotive potential.<sup>22</sup> The majority of *ghazal* poetry is homoerotic, i.e., the beloved is of male gender. The first Arabic poet to popularize the homoerotic *ghazal* was Abū Nuwās (d. ca. 198/813), and for the next thousand years to come Arabic love poetry remained primarily homoerotic (yet not to the same degree as the Persian and Turkish *ghazal*). The situation changed only in the middle of the nineteenth century, when the massive and deep-reaching influence of colonialism brought about the enforcement of Western conceptions of gender and sexuality. Western influence deeply modified, at least officially, previous indigenous concepts. From then on, Arab poets stopped composing homoerotic poems and began to deal with their own poetic traditions in imitation of Western scholars, i.e., by suppressing parts of it and by denying the homoerotic character of the rest. Victorian moral standards inherited in colonial times are still deeply rooted in the Islamic world today and have started to enter into an alliance with modern Islamist ideologies. Meanwhile Western attitudes about homosexuality have changed, and there is an equally great danger now of Western scholars falling into another trap, which is to

---

<sup>22</sup>A convincing study of the Mamluk *ghazal* is still lacking; the book by Majd al-Afandī, *Al-Ghazal fī al-‘Aṣr al-Mamlūkī al-Awwal* (Damascus, 1994), displays all the prejudices and misconceptions discussed above; see the review in *MSR* 3 (1999): 214–19.



presume the existence of a coherent and identifiable “gay community” in the pre-modern Arab world as well. This would be a grave anachronism. In reality, neither approach to the phenomenon does justice to the real background of homoerotic Arabic poetry. As a matter of fact, not only are nineteenth-century moral standards inapplicable to the pre-modern Islamic world, but the whole concept of love and sexuality turns out to have been so different that even our notions of hetero- and homosexuality prove not to be universal. But if it is now difficult to free oneself from deeply-rooted conceptions of aesthetics, how difficult it must be to realize the relativity of one’s feelings in so personal a realm as love and sexuality!

Despite this difficulty, a couple of recent studies have been able to show with sufficient evidence that love and sexuality in the pre-modern Arabic world were not regulated according to parameters of sex, but according to parameters of gender. All forms of love in which persons of a male gender fell in love with persons of non-male gender identity were socially acceptable. Here, persons of male gender means those of the male sex who have reached adulthood. And persons of non-male gender identity can be females; or males who have not yet grown a dense beard; eunuchs; or “effeminate”—*mukhannathūn*. Religious norms prohibited certain sexual practices and encouraged marriage,<sup>23</sup> but in general religious institutions were indifferent towards men falling in love with beautiful youths.<sup>24</sup> Therefore it is not too surprising to find homoerotic poems composed by pious religious scholars such as Ibn Ḥajar (who at the same time erected a memorial to marital love in two of his *ghazal* poems).

The genre of *mujūn* was less important and less respected than the *ghazal*. It was cultivated widely but not very intensively. Nevertheless, not only popular poets like al-Mi‘mār, Ibn Dānyāl, and Ibn Sūdūn were given to composing *mujūn*, but also representatives of the established ulama culture, such as Ibn Nubātah, participated in this genre as well.<sup>25</sup> Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī [18] dedicated a whole

<sup>23</sup>A number of publications have appeared on this subject during the last decade. Here it may suffice to mention *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature*, ed. J. W. Wright, Jr., and Everett K. Rowson (New York, 1997); Thomas Bauer, *Liebe und Liebesdichtung in der arabischen Welt des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts: Eine literatur- und mentalitätsgeschichtliche Studie des arabischen Ġazal* (Wiesbaden, 1998), 150–84; idem and Angelika Neuwirth, “Introduction,” in *Ghazal as World Literature*, 9–31; Arno Schmitt, “Liwāt im Fiqh: Männliche Homosexualität?” *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 4 (2001–2): 49–110.

<sup>24</sup>Discussions about the permissibility of getting religiously stimulated by gazing at beardless youths are centered either around theological conceptions of the nature of man’s relation to the divine or the fear that this practice might instigate unlawful acts (a problem also discussed in the context of love poetry).

<sup>25</sup>Ibn Nubātah also brought together a selection of the *Dīwān* of Ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 391/1000), the



chapter of his *Dīwān* to the subject of *mujūn*, which was included in the Damascus edition of the years 1297–1300 (1879–83). This edition appeared at a time in which Victorian morals obviously had not yet been as strongly internalized in the Arab world as today. In the recent edition of al-Ḥillī's *Dīwān* the *mujūn* chapter is purposely omitted.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the *mujūn* chapter has also been removed from the edition of al-Ḥillī's anthology of his own two-line epigrams.<sup>27</sup> Equally unfortunate is the fact that the only existing edition of the poetry of Ibn Dānyāl [9] is heavily bowdlerized.<sup>28</sup> The *Dīwān* of Ibrāhīm al-Mi'mār [19] was so popular in the Mamluk period that Ibn Taghrībirdī did not dare to quote very much of it, since it was known to everybody anyway.<sup>29</sup> This *Dīwān* is preserved in a number of manuscripts but remains unedited, even though it is one of the most original *dīwāns* of that period. The reason for this neglect is, I am convinced, the fact that many of al-Mi'mār's poems are frivolous, and some of them might even be considered obscene. This shows very clearly the damage that is done to a proper appreciation of Mamluk literature and cultural history by the adoption of false Western conceptions which, in this case, proved to be quite short-lived. While modern Western technology nowadays floods the whole world with pornography, in the Arab world Western moral standards of yesterday still fight a monstrous battle against six-hundred-year-old penis-epigrams. Those who fight staunchly against "pornography" do not realize that there is good reason to be proud of a culture that managed to integrate a conversation about "the sexual" into an established, sophisticated literary discourse, thus showing that there is a way to cultivate the obscene without having to take recourse either to psychopathic suppression nor to pornographic consumption. Again it seems to me that none of the solutions offered by modern culture (both Western and Islamic) are conspicuously superior to those of pre-modern Islamic culture and that modern solutions can in no way provide the yardstick by which other cultures can or should be measured.

These five points certainly do not exhaust the list of possible misunderstandings about Mamluk literature or their origins, but it may suffice to show the principal

---

most famous *mujūn* poet of the Abbasid period. The collection has been edited now in Tunisia: *Taltīf al-Mizāj min Shi'r Ibn al-Ḥajjāj: Ikhtiyār Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Nubātah*, ed. Najm 'Abd Allāh Muṣṭafá (Sūsah, 2001): see the review by S. Moreh in *Journal of Semitic Studies* 48 (2003): 212–14.

<sup>26</sup>See the discussion of the issue in *Dīwān Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥawwar (Beirut, 2000), 1:14–15.

<sup>27</sup>Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī, *Dīwān al-Mathālith wa-al-Mathānī fī al-Ma'ālī wa-al-Ma'ānī*, ed. Muḥammad Ṭāhir al-Ḥimṣī (Damascus, 1419/1998).

<sup>28</sup>*Al-Mukhtār min Shi'r Ibn Dānyāl*, ed. Muḥammad Nā'if al-Dulaymī (Mosul, 1399/1979).

<sup>29</sup>Abū al-Maḥāsīn Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Manhal al-Ṣafī wa-al-Mustawfá ba'd al-Wāfī*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo, 1984), 1:192.



direction of reorientation that is necessary in the study of the literature and culture of the Mamluk era.

I would now like to present a short overview of the most important achievements and the most pressing desiderata in the field of Mamluk literature.<sup>30</sup> Looking for a Mamluk text that would help us to follow indigenous concepts of literature, one may resort to Ibn Nubātah's anthology *Maṭla' al-Fawā'id*, a prescriptive text in which the author tries to define the social role of the *adīb*.<sup>31</sup> According to him, the task of the *adīb* is threefold. First, he has to be a linguistic exegete of the principal texts of Islamo-Arabic culture (such as the Quran, hadith, and pre- and early Islamic poetry). Second, he must be a poet as well as an expert and connoisseur in the field of poetry, and third, he has to fulfill the same role in the field of *inshā'*, thus inheriting the tasks of the *kātib* of the Abbasid era. Ibn Nubātah does not explicitly mention the *maqāmah*, but it goes without saying that the composition of *maqāmāt* was a major activity of Mamluk literati. As far as poetry is concerned, we have to take into account *dīwāns* as well as anthologies, as is already shown in Ibn Nubātah's own production (not least in his *Maṭla'*, which is an anthology itself). In sum, it becomes quite clear that the major fields of activity of the Mamluk *adīb* must be seen in the following five realms: (1) poetry, (2) anthologies, (3) *maqāmahs*, (4) *inshā'*, and (5) theory (literary theory and rhetoric).

(1) To start with *Poetry*: Recent years have granted us editions of the *dīwāns* of al-Talla'farī, Ibn Ghānim al-Maqdisī, al-Jazzār, Ibn Tamīm, al-Maḥḥār, al-Ḥillī, and Ibn Ḥajar. The early Mamluk poet and compulsive gambler al-Talla'farī [2] is known to all readers of Rosenthal's *Gambling in Islam*. Unfortunately, Rosenthal did not live to see the long-awaited appearance of an edition of al-Talla'farī's complete *Dīwān*.<sup>32</sup> Ibn Ghānim al-Maqdisī [3] is a major Sufi author of the period

<sup>30</sup>This overview is to be understood as a continuation of the "state of the art" articles that appeared previously in this journal: Th. Emil Homerin, "Reflections on Poetry in the Mamluk Age," *MSR* 1 (1997): 63–85, and Robert Irwin, "Mamluk Literature," *MSR* 7, [no. 1] (2003): 1–29. In general, I will concentrate on texts and studies not yet treated in these contributions. I will not consider the popular epics, the Arabian Nights, nor Mamluk literature in Turkish. These groups of texts have been dealt with amply by Irwin, to whose knowledgeable explanations I have little to add. Recent contributions are Stefan Leder, "Postklassisch und vormodern," 290–93, and Thomas Herzog, "Legitimität durch Erzählung: Ayyūbidische und kalifale Legitimation mamlūkischer Herrschaft in der populären *Sīrat Baybars*" in *Die Mamluken*, ed. Conermann and Pistor-Hatam, 251–68. Ten contributions on *Sīrat Baybars* are assembled in *Arabica* 51 (2004): 1–221. Recent contributions on Mamluk literature in Turkish are reviewed by Robert Dankoff in *MSR* 8, no. 1 (2004): 303–7.

<sup>31</sup>See Bauer, "Literarische Anthologien," 85–94.

<sup>32</sup>*Dīwān al-Talla'farī*, ed. Riḍā Rajab (Damascus, 2004); and see Franz Rosenthal, *Gambling in Islam* (Leiden, 1975).



whose *Dīwān* is an important supplement to his more famous *maqāmah*-style *Kashf al-Asrār fī / ‘an Hikam al-Ṭuyūr wa-al-Azhār*, one of most interesting Sufi texts of the period, edited and translated several times.<sup>33</sup> Yaḥyá al-Jazzār [4] is one of the first of the many craftsmen poets of the period. Growing up in his parents’ butcher shop in al-Fuṣṭāṭ, he discovered his literary talent and joined the companionship of the leading poets of his time who held him in great esteem. This encouraged him to try to earn his livelihood by composing panegyric poetry, only to realize the difficulty of making a living as a professional poet in this time. Thus he returned to his original job, saying that as a butcher, the dogs would run after him, whereas as a poet, he had to run after the dogs. A selection of his poetry has been preserved and edited in an unsatisfying way.<sup>34</sup> Ibn Tamīm’s [5] small *Dīwān*<sup>35</sup> furnishes us with formidable specimens of the Ayyubid and Mamluk art of the epigram, a form that was extremely popular in the Mamluk period. The Syrian poet al-Maḥḥār [10] is important for the history of *muwashshah* and *zajal* in the East.<sup>36</sup> In the field of the *zajal*, al-Maḥḥār styled himself as a new Ibn Quzmān and purposely imitated the Andalusian style and dialect. But the Syrian and Egyptian public came to prefer *azjāl* in their local dialects. This may have been a reason why his *zajal* seems to have been less popular than the *zajal* of other authors.<sup>37</sup> In any case, a study of the Eastern *zajal*, its language, style, and content, is a major desideratum. An important event was the publication of Muḥammad Ḥawwar’s critical edition of the *Dīwān* of Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī [18], which is clearly superior to several older uncritical editions, but which does not contain the chapter on *mujūn*. For that, the Damascus edition still remains the only source.<sup>38</sup> Finally, Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī [35] met with interest because he was the most ingenious hadith scholar of his time. In a way not atypical for the Mamluk period, he started as a poet by eulogizing princes from the Rasulid dynasty, before he turned to hadith studies. The published recension of his *Dīwān*—one of three recensions compiled by the author himself—is in fact an

<sup>33</sup>*Dīwān al-‘Izz ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Ghānim al-Maqdisī*, ed. Māhir Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir (Damascus, 2001); ‘Abd al-Salām ibn Ghānim al-Maqdisī, *Kashf al-Asrār ‘an Hikam al-Ṭuyūr wa-al-Azhār*, ed. idem (Jiddah, 1416/1996).

<sup>34</sup>*Dīwān al-Jazzār*, ed. Muḥammad Zaghlūl Sallām (Alexandria, 2001); see my review in this issue of *MSR*.

<sup>35</sup>*Dīwān Mujīr al-Dīn Ibn Tamīm*, ed. Hilāl Nājī and Nāzim Rashīd (Beirut, 1420/1999).

<sup>36</sup>Sīrāj al-Dīn al-Maḥḥār, *Dīwān*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad ‘Aṭā (Cairo, 1422/2001).

<sup>37</sup>In his collection of *muwashshahāt* and *azjāl* entitled ‘*Uqūd al-La’āl fī al-Muwashshahāt wa-al-Azjāl* by al-Nawājī, ed. ‘Abd al-Laṭīf al-Shihābī (Baghdad, 1982), the author included two *muwashshahs* by al-Maḥḥār, but none of his *zajals*.

<sup>38</sup>*Dīwān Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥawwar (Beirut, 2000). For earlier editions see Wolfhart Heinrichs, “Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī,” *EL*<sup>2</sup>, 8:801b–805b.



anthology comprising those poems that were considered best by Ibn Ḥajar himself.<sup>39</sup>

The number of major poets whose *dīwāns* are still unedited is, however, larger. I will mention here only eight examples: (1) Ibn Qurnāṣ [1], whose epigrams of nature poetry are often quoted; (2) Ibn Dānyāl [9], whose poetry is preserved in a selection by al-Ṣafadī edited only in bowdlerized form; Li Guo's studies on two of his poems have demonstrated sufficiently that not only his shadow plays but also his *Dīwān* contains precious gems;<sup>40</sup> (3) Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī [16], the famous grammarian, was also a prolific poet and attracted the attention of Th. Emil Homerin, who dedicated several studies to him;<sup>41</sup> (4) Ibrāhīm al-Mi'mār [19], a popular poet who was in several ways a forerunner of Ibn Sūdūn and whose satirical portrayal of middle-class life in Cairo is of enormous importance for literary and cultural history alike;<sup>42</sup> (5) and (6) al-Qīrāṭī [26] and Ibn Makānis [28] belong to the most often-quoted poets of their time: their *dīwāns* have been preserved in several manuscripts and their edition will be a considerable help to gain a more precise idea about Mamluk poetry in the second half of the eighth century.<sup>43</sup> The same holds true for (7) al-Shihāb al-Manṣūrī [39], one of the "seven shooting stars" of the ninth century. And finally (8) the poetess 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah [43] must not be forgotten, author of exquisite Sufi poetry and of a remarkable *badī'īyah*, the last protagonist of Mamluk poetry, who died even as the Ottoman army was approaching Cairo. She has become the object of several studies, but promises to edit her *Dīwān* have not yet been fulfilled, as far as I know.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup>See my review in *MSR* 4 (2000): 267–69.

<sup>40</sup>Li Guo, "Paradise Lost: Ibn Dānyāl's Response to Baybars' Campaign against Vice in Cairo," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121 (2001): 219–35; idem, "The Devil's Advocate: Ibn Dānyāl's Art of Parody in His *Qaṣīdah* No. 71," *MSR* 7, [no. 1] (2003): 177–209.

<sup>41</sup>Th. Emil Homerin, "A Bird Ascends the Night. Elegy and Immortality in Islam," revised ed., *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 59 (1991): 247–79, and idem, "I've stayed by the Grave': An elegy/*nasīb* for Nuḍār," in *Literary Heritage of Classical Islam: Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honour of James A. Bellamy*, ed. Mustansir Mir (Princeton, 1993): 107–18.

<sup>42</sup>Cf. Thomas Bauer, "Ibrāhīm al-Mi'mār: Ein dichtender Handwerker aus Ägyptens Mamlukenzeit," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 152 (2002): 63–93; idem, "Die Leiden eines ägyptischen Müllers: Die Mühlen-Maqāme des Ibrāhīm al-Mi'mār (st. 749/1348)," in *Ägypten–Münster: Kulturwissenschaftliche Studien zu Ägypten, dem Vorderen Orient und verwandten Gebieten (Festschrift Erhart Graefe)*, ed. Anke Ilona Blöbaum et al. (Wiesbaden, 2003), 1–16; and idem, "Das Nilzağal des Ibrāhīm al-Mi'mār: Ein Lied zur Feier des Nilschwellenfestes," in *Alltagsleben und materielle Kultur in der arabischen Sprache und Literatur (Festschrift Heinz Grotzfeld)*, ed. U. Stehli-Werbeck and Th. Bauer (Wiesbaden, 2004): 69–88.

<sup>43</sup>Some verses of Ibn Makānis' *urjūzah* on good behavior, satirizing the manners of the parvenus of his times, are translated in Geert Jan van Gelder, "Arabic Didactic Verse," in *Centres of Learning*, ed. J. W. Drijvers and A. A. MacDonald (Leiden, 1995): 103–17.

<sup>44</sup>Th. Emil Homerin, "Living Love: The Mystical Writings of 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah (d. 922/1516),"



(2) *Anthologies*: With the *Dīwāns* of al-Jazzār and Ibn Ḥajar we have already entered the domain of anthologies, a vast and largely unexplored field which, however, is of crucial importance to the understanding of the whole of Mamluk culture.<sup>45</sup> Undoubtedly the Mamluk period was the golden age of the anthology. In no other period did the literati compose as many anthologies and so wide a range of different types of anthologies. This again is no sign of lack of originality,<sup>46</sup> but the result of the dynamic literary culture of the period. Anthologies functioned more and more as the visiting cards of the *adīb*. By composing an anthology, an *adīb* could prove his literary taste, as well as his knowledge and mastery of texts and traditions, and could prove himself worthy of joining the ranks of its masters. Thus anthologies functioned somewhat like offprints today in modern academic life. This is corroborated by the significant amount of intertextuality between anthologies in this period. Furthermore, in a society in which everybody tried to take part in poetic communication, anthologies provided their readers with material to learn from or to be quoted in conversations. Popular anthologies such as the *Kanz al-Madfūn* by Yūnus al-Mālikī served to entertain and instruct less-educated layers of society. In anthologies, the material could be trimmed to match special occasions, purposes, and circumstances, and this flexibility was certainly among the reasons that this form of text was able to flourish in the Mamluk period. It is also one of the reasons why most anthologies focus on “new” (i.e., Ayyubid and Mamluk) material, because the readers wanted to be “up to date.” More often than not, even poets themselves did not strive to leave a sum of their work in the form of a *dīwān* but rather published their creations in the form of anthologies. The most important Mamluk poet besides al-Ḥillī, Ibn Nubātah [22], did not compile a definitive version of his *Dīwān*. The collection known today as *Dīwān Ibn Nubātah* is a compilation of his pupil al-Bashtakī, who drew on several anthologies compiled by Ibn Nubātah himself (a collection of his poems on Abū al-Fidā’, a collection of *ghazal* epigrams, a book containing seven liners, etc.).<sup>47</sup> Unfortunately, none of these anthologies has been published (though several of them are preserved in manuscript form) so that we cannot identify the sources of many poems of the *Dīwān*. A critical edition of the *dīwān* of as important a poet as Ibn Nubātah

---

MSR 7, [no. 1] (2003): 211–34; idem, review of ‘*Ā’ishah al-Bā’ūnīyah*, by Ḥasan Rabābi’ah, *ibid.*, 237–39.

<sup>45</sup>A comprehensive but necessarily preliminary survey is given in my article “Literarische Anthologien.”

<sup>46</sup>Brockelmann saw the only value of these books in their preservation of older texts that have been lost (*Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur* [Leiden, 1949], 2:7–8).

<sup>47</sup>A survey of Ibn Nubātah’s works is given in ‘Umar Mūsā Bāshā, *Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī: Amīr Shu‘arā’ al-Mashriq* (Cairo, 1963).



would be a desideratum anyway, and I would strongly favor a critical edition of Ibn Nubātah's poetic anthologies first.

Perhaps the most important edition of a literary anthology compiled by the poet himself is the edition of the *Nuzhat al-Nufūs* of Ibn Sūdūn [37]<sup>48</sup> which opened a window into a hitherto little-known area of "popular" poetry of the Mamluk period. Ibn Ḥajar's and Ibn Sūdūn's contemporary, al-Nawājī [36], has found a competent and engaged advocate in Ḥasan 'Abd al-Hādī. So far, 'Abd al-Hādī has edited two of al-Nawājī's anthologies and a bio-bibliographical text.<sup>49</sup> Al-Nawājī, an outstanding *homme de lettre* of the first half of the ninth century, is known primarily for his anthology of wine poetry (and related subjects) entitled *Ḥalbat al-Kumayt*,<sup>50</sup> which, due to its importance, deserves at least a reprint or better yet a critical edition. But I would encourage even more an edition of al-Nawājī's comprehensive *ghazal* anthology *Marāṭi' al-Ghizlān* (a model for two anthologies by al-Shihāb al-Ḥijāzī [38] already published)<sup>51</sup> and his anthology of beard-epigrams (*Khal' al-'Idhār fī Waṣf al-'Idhār*) preserved in many manuscripts and widely known in his own time. I am afraid that again pseudo-moral scruples will get in the way in the case of these titles. Therefore it was a wise decision by 'Abd al-Hādī to start his Nawājī project with the poet's collection of his poems in praise of the Prophet. Though this genre is doubtlessly morally unquestionable, it remains virtually unstudied.<sup>52</sup> The Mamluk period witnessed a great blossoming of this genre, but Western scholars were reluctant to book this fact on the positive side of the balance of Mamluk literature because this form of religious poetry led the Arabs even further away from the direction of secular modernity. It is high time now for an unprejudiced pioneering study on the genre of *madḥ al-nabī*, which is not even treated in the standard dictionaries. In this context, it should be noted that we still lack an edition of Ibn Sayyid al-Nās' [15] collection of his own

<sup>48</sup>Arnoud Vrolijk, *Bringing a Laugh to a Scowling Face: A Study and Critical Edition of the "Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-Muḍḥik al-'Abūs" by 'Alī Ibn Sūdūn al-Baṣbugāwī* (Leiden, 1998). See my review of this and another edition in *MSR* 7, [no. 1] (2003): 267–72.

<sup>49</sup>*Al-Maṭāli' al-Shamsīyah fī al-Madā'ih al-Nabawīyah* (Amman, 1999); *Ṣaḥā'if al-Ḥasanāt fī Waṣf al-Khāl* (Amman, 2000); *Mu'allafāt Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan al-Nawājī al-Shāfi'i* (Amman, 2001).

<sup>50</sup>See G. J. van Gelder, "A Muslim Encomium on Wine: *The Racecourse of the Bay* (*Ḥalbat al-Kumayt*) by al-Nawāḡī (d. 859/1455) as a Post-Classical Arabic Work," *Arabica* 42 (1995): 222–34.

<sup>51</sup>Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Ḥijāzī, *Al-Kunnas al-Jawārī fī al-Ḥisān min al-Jawārī* and *Jannat al-Wildān min al-Ghilmān*, ed. Raḥāb 'Akkāwī (Beirut, 1418/1998).

<sup>52</sup>Of some relevance is Nāzīm Rashīd, *Al-Madā'ih al-Nabawīyah fī Adab al-Qarnayn al-Sādis wa-al-Sābi' lil-Hijrah* (Baghdad, 2002).



poems in praise of the Prophet.<sup>53</sup>

As far as anthologies comprising material from different authors are concerned, we can record a few very welcome editions of texts hitherto accessible only in poor prints, such as al-Ibshīhī's [34] *Mustaṭraf*.<sup>54</sup> The *tadhkirah*-style anthology *Al-Muḥāḍarāt wa-al-Muḥāwarāt* by al-Suyūṭī has been edited in an exemplary way.<sup>55</sup> Its diligent philological method of editing, its detailed indices, clear print, and solid binding stand in marked contrast to the faulty and negligent way Mamluk literary texts are usually presented, which only reflects the general disdain in which these texts are held. But the great majority of existing texts still remain in manuscript form. In a survey of Mamluk anthologies, I mentioned ninety anthologies by fifty different authors.<sup>56</sup> This list can easily be augmented, but it may provide a first orientation for future efforts. What we need most urgently given the present state of our knowledge are preliminary studies of as many of these anthologies as possible. They should determine the contents of the book, the plan of the author, its main sources, and give a first judgement of the supposed target group of the author. To exploit the enormous wealth of Mamluk anthologies, dozens of studies are needed to determine the character of all of these books, in order to give a comprehensive idea of the literary market in Mamluk times, to establish the literary canon of the Mamluk period, and to find out which of these books deserve to be edited.

In this context, I would like especially to point to anthologies by unknown authors or to altogether anonymous works designed for those with less education and which may yield valuable insights into the values and the world view of the lower middle class. They are perhaps an abundant, still untapped source for the study of the culture and the mentalities of the people below the class of the highbrow ulama.<sup>57</sup>

(3) *Maqāmāt*: One of the most famous legends so typical of the "orientalist" approach to post-Saljuq literature is the often-told story that Nāṣif al-Yāzījī (1214–87/1800–71) was drawn to the genre of *maqāmah* by de Sacy's edition of

<sup>53</sup> *Buṣhrā al-Labīb bi-Dhikrā al-Ḥabīb*; his anthology of early Islamic poems of this genre entitled *Minah al-Midah* has been edited by 'Iffat Wiṣāl Ḥamzah (Damascus, 1407/1987).

<sup>54</sup> *Al-Mustaṭraf fī Kull Fann Mustaṭraf*, ed. Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ (Beirut, 1999).

<sup>55</sup> Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Kitāb al-Muḥāḍarāt wa-al-Muḥāwarāt*, ed. Yaḥyá al-Jubūrī (Beirut, 1424/2003).

<sup>56</sup> Bauer, "Literarische Anthologien," 41–52 (no. 30k should be deleted from the list).

<sup>57</sup> See, with special reference to Yūsuf al-Mālikī's *Kanz al-Madfūn*, *ibid.*, 28–36, and see also G. Canova, "Una pagina di *al-Kanz al-Madfūn* sugli uomini più illustri," in *Ultra mare: mélanges de langue arabe et d'islamologie offerts à Aubert Martin*, ed. Frédéric Bauden (Louvain, 2004), 93–107.



the *maqāmahs* of al-Ḥarīrī.<sup>58</sup> According to this legend, al-Yāzījī “revived” a classical Arabic genre, thus becoming a protagonist of the *nahḍah*, the “revival” of Arabic literature. In reality, however, there was nothing to revive, because there had been no death. Instead, al-Yāzījī must have been familiar with the *maqāmah* genre, because quite simply, there was a living and uninterrupted tradition of *maqāmah* literature from al-Hamadhānī right down to al-Yāzījī. In the colonialist view, however, the *maqāmah* tradition had to be hushed up (with the exceptions of al-Hamadhānī and al-Ḥarīrī) in order to present a picture of death and decadence. Ultimately, however, this view is no longer tenable, because in the interim the first (!) comprehensive presentation of *maqāmah* literature has appeared.<sup>59</sup> Its author Hämeen-Anttila has recorded 175 authors of *maqāmāt* between al-Ḥarīrī and al-Yāzījī.<sup>60</sup> Sixty of them belong to the Mamluk period,<sup>61</sup> but only a small portion of these *maqāmāt* is accessible in print,<sup>62</sup> and studies are lacking almost altogether. But we see that it is sometimes enough just to compile a simple list in order to refute prejudiced claims about Mamluk literature. This list also provides the necessary data for future research, which hopefully will not fail to materialize before too long. I am confident in this respect, since the *maqāmah* genre seems to be more attractive for modern scholars than poetry. At the present stage of research, an overview of the different types of the Mamluk *maqāmah* and their respective literary and social functions would be especially welcome. Still, a great number of relevant texts have not yet been edited, and so editions remain a major agenda in this field also.<sup>63</sup>

(4) *Inshā'*: The next point on the list is *inshā'*, the drawing up of official and private correspondence, official documents, notes, and related texts (such as prefaces to books) in elaborated and rhymed prose. And here again we have to cope with established Western assumptions. According to these standards, texts of an outright pragmatic nature, such as letters of appointment, are not considered to be proper literature. But Mamluk texts speak a different language. Texts in rhymed prose

<sup>58</sup>Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, “1000 Years of Maqāmas: A List of Maqāma Authors,” *Zeitschrift für Geschichte der arabisch-islamischen Wissenschaften* 13 (1999–2000): 244–315, here 244.

<sup>59</sup>Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqāma: A History of a Genre* (Wiesbaden, 2002).

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 372–405; the number will increase if additional sources are considered (e.g., al-Muḥibbī, *Nafḥat al-Rayḥānah*).

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid.*, nos. 66–123 (some of them do not belong to Mamluk literature in the sense of being the literature that was created within the borders of the Mamluk empire).

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, nos. 69, 75, 85, 89, 94, 97, 97bis, 98, 103, 112, 115, 116, 119.

<sup>63</sup>A recent edition is Ibrahim Kh. Gerjes, *A Literary and Gastronomical Conceit: Mufākharat al-Ruzz wa 'l-Ḥabb Rummān: The Boasting Debate Between Rice And Pomegranate Seeds Or al-Makāma al-Simāṭiyya (The Tablecloth Makāma)* (Wiesbaden, 2002).



are included in literary anthologies. Ibn Nubātah devotes a whole section of his *Maṭla‘ al-Fawā’id to inshā’*. His and Ibn Ḥijjah’s travelogues are presented in the previously mentioned *Thamarāt al-Awrāq*. Furthermore, al-Ṣafadī’s congratulatory note on the occasion of the Nile flood is even included in the popular anthology *Kanz al-Madfūn*. In several Mamluk *dīwāns*, such as the *Dīwān* of al-Qīrāṭī [26], poetry and *inshā’* are presented side by side without any real difference in status. Therefore, to understand Mamluk and Ottoman perceptions of *inshā’*, new approaches to the aesthetics of literature must inevitably be developed, ones that will surmount the still current “Diskreditierung der Okkasionalität durch die Erlebnisästhetik.”<sup>64</sup> But before this can be accomplished, philologists will have to do their job and provide us with an edition of the most important *inshā’* collections above and beyond al-Qalqashandī’s *Ṣubḥ*, especially *Alḥān al-Sawāji‘ bayn al-Bādi‘ wa-al-Marāji‘* by al-Ṣafadī [21], *Al-Saj‘ al-Muṭawwaq*, *Zahr al-Manthūr*, and *Ta‘līq al-Dīwān* by Ibn Nubātah [22], and *Qahwat al-Inshā’* by Ibn Ḥijjah [33].<sup>65</sup>

(5) *Theory*: When we talk about *adab* of the Mamluk period, it is not out of place to discuss several texts that themselves claim to be about history or have to do with religion, whether in the form of, as Irwin aptly puts it, “literature of piety and rigorism,” or in the form of Sufi literature.<sup>66</sup> There should be no objection to that because the boundaries of *adab* are fluid, anyway. But there is another vast field which indeed is part of *adab*, although it is usually omitted when talking about Mamluk literature. This is the field of ‘*Ulūm al-adab*. In the Mamluk period, the term *adab* was no longer primarily associated with the entertainment and education of *belles lettres*, but rather more closely with those scholarly disciplines that deal with the Arabic language. Many professional *udabā’* must have recognized that their most powerful justification for taking their rank among the ulama and their presence in the madrasahs lay in their theoretical preoccupation with philology and linguistics.

At a time in which everyone composed poetry, it is difficult to distinguish oneself by poetry alone. Of course, poets could distinguish themselves by composing better poetry than their contemporaries, but poets may have sought a more scholarly field to become on a par with the hadīth and *fiqh* specialists. We should probably

<sup>64</sup>H.-G. Gadamer; see W. Segebrecht, *Das Gelegenheitsgedicht: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte und Poetik der deutschen Lyrik* (Stuttgart, 1977), 56.

<sup>65</sup>A profound study on *inshā’* with special reference to *tashrīf* is Werner Diem, *Ehrendes Kleid und ehrendes Wort: Studien zu Taṣrīf in mamlūkischer und vormamlūkischer Zeit* (Würzburg, 2002); an edition of the *Qahwat al-Inshā’* is in preparation by Rudolf Veselý; see Veselý, “Das *Taqrīz* in der arabischen Literatur,” in *Die Mamluken*, ed. Conermann and Pistor-Hatam, 379–85.

<sup>66</sup>See, e.g., Irwin, “Mamluk Literature,” 16–77 (history); 18 (magic); 23–25 (“literature of piety and rigorism”); 25–26 (Sufi literature).



locate the many complaints of Ibn Nubātah about his poverty and the low esteem in which poetry is held within this context. Of course, such complaints are a topos and are plainly contradicted by the overall presence and overwhelming social importance of poetry, and also by the fame and respect that Ibn Nubātah acquired during his lifetime. But it seems as if Ibn Nubātah had a different sort of appreciation in mind when he composed his aforementioned anthology *Maṭla' al-Fawā'id*, which, on a closer look, turns out to be a manifesto for the importance of the professional *adīb*. It shows that the *adīb* had his place in the madrasah as a scholar in the field of the propaedeutic linguistic disciplines; in the chancellery as specialist in *inshā'*, and in a way also in everybody's home as an advisor in literary matters and as a supplier of poetic stuff. Therefore, the picture of *adab* is not complete if we do not regard the achievements of Mamluk *udabā'* in the fields of philology, linguistics, and rhetoric. Again, this is a vast field, and again, the Mamluk contribution to it is only superficially known. Thus all I can do here is to limit myself to a kind of name dropping. In the discipline of grammar, besides the great and well-known names such as Ibn Mālik, Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī [16], Ibn Hishām, and al-Suyūṭī [42], lesser-known figures ought not to be overlooked, such as Ibn Kaykaldī, the author of a recently-printed work on linguistic generalization and specification (*ṣiyagh al-'umūm*), which is equally relevant for linguistics and *uṣūl al-fiqh*.<sup>67</sup> In the field of lexicography, we have the famous dictionaries by Ibn Manẓūr, al-Fayyūmī, and al-Fīrūzābādī with their respective merits, and we should not forget al-Suyūṭī's *Al-Muzhir fī 'Ulūm al-Lughah wa-Anwā'ihā* with its unconventional theoretical approach towards lexicography.

Much to our chagrin, the Arabs still displayed only minor interest in the Arabic lexicon of later periods and of substandard Arabic.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, the reader often encounters more lexical difficulties with Mamluk *zajals* than with pre-Islamic odes. Those texts in which different registers of speech are mixed, such as the shadow-play and the *zajal*, especially still give Arabists a lot to do. Besides Dozy's indispensable *Supplément*, several studies on special terminological subjects (to mention only Ayalon's studies on administrative and military terminology) have been carried out, and many studies in cultural history treat lexicographical problems. However, a comprehensive dictionary that would give convenient access to our present knowledge is still lacking. I would like to call attention to the genres of dialect poetry such as the *zajal*. There are more of them than is commonly

<sup>67</sup>Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Kaykaldī, *Talqīh al-Fuhūm fī Tanqīh Ṣiyagh al-'Umūm*, and Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Aḥkām "Kull" wa-Mā 'alayhi Tadull*, ed. 'Alī Mu'awwad and 'Ādil 'Abd al-Mawjūd (Beirut, 1418/1997).

<sup>68</sup>I could find no further details about al-Bishbīshī's (d. 820/1417) *Al-Tadhīl wa-al-Takmil li-Mā Ustu'mila min al-Lafẓ al-Dakhīl*, mentioned in *GAL*, 2:26, and possibly a forerunner of al-Khafājī's (d. 1069/1659) famous *Shifa' al-Ghalīl fīmā fī Kalām al-'Arab min al-Dakhīl*.



assumed, and most of them are not written in imitation of Andalusian Arabic, but rather neatly reflect the dialects of Cairo and Damascus. A critical edition of these texts will also contribute to our knowledge of the Arabic language of the Mamluk period.

But let me return to Arab linguistics. The Mamluk era is a post-Sakkākian era. In the beginning of the seventh/thirteenth century, al-Sakkākī systematized the ingenious ideas of ‘Abd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī and thus revolutionized the Arab perception of language. His achievements have been superficially studied, and there is a German translation of the *‘Ilm al-Ma‘ānī* section of al-Sakkākī’s *Miftāḥ*<sup>69</sup> that also contains a useful terminological glossary. Still, however, the real importance of al-Sakkākī’s and his successors’ teachings has not yet been realized. Even a superficial glance in Ḥājji Khalīfah’s *Kashf al-Zunūn* demonstrates that al-Sakkākī’s *Miftāḥ*, together with its revision and abbreviation by al-Qazwīnī, is one of the most influential and most studied books of the post-Saljuq Arabic world.<sup>70</sup> The three fields of *‘ilm al-bayān*, *‘ilm al-ma‘ānī*, and *‘ilm al-badī‘* comprise subjects that are studied today under headings such as stylistics, rhetoric, semantics, and pragmatics. As far as the Mamluk production in these three fields is concerned, besides al-Khaṭīb al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338), the names of Ibn al-Zamlakānī (651/1253), Ibn Abī al-Iṣba‘ (654/1256), and Badr al-Dīn ibn Mālik (686/1287) come to mind, none of them yet the subject of thorough study. In this regard, Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ṭībī (743/1343) should also be mentioned. He wrote an important book on *al-ma‘ānī wa-al-bayān*, but also tried to apply his results in the study of rhetoric to his commentary on hadith.<sup>71</sup>

One of the most comprehensive commentaries on al-Qazwīnī’s *Talkhīṣ* is the “Bride of Happiness” by Bahā’ al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 773/1372).<sup>72</sup> In a book of this scale, the text of al-Qazwīnī’s précis provides for little more than the structure and the chapter headings. As a matter of fact, a book like that of Bahā’ al-Dīn is an independent and critical work of rhetoric that contains many insights which can still enrich contemporary linguistics and communication theory.

Works dedicated in a more practical way to literary theory and criticism, as well as of rhetoric, often take the form of anthologies, to mention only the treatises

<sup>69</sup>Udo G. Simon, *Mittelalterliche arabische Sprachbetrachtung zwischen Grammatik und Rhetorik: ‘ilm al-ma‘ānī bei al-Sakkākī* (Heidelberg, 1993).

<sup>70</sup>See the statistics in my review of Simon, in *Zeitschrift für Arabische Linguistik* 35 (1998): 86–90.

<sup>71</sup>*Sharḥ al-Ṭībī ‘alā Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ al-Musammá bi-al-Kāshif ‘an Ḥaqā’iq al-Sunan*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Hindāwī (Beirut, 1417/1997).

<sup>72</sup>Bahā’ al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Subkī, *Arūs al-Afrāḥ fī Sharḥ Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ*, ed. Khalīl Ibrāhīm Khalīl (Beirut, 1422/2001).



on the stylistic devices of *jinās*, *tashbīh*, and *tawriyah* composed by al-Şafadī, Ibn Ḥijjah, and al-Suyūṭī. Several of them have been edited recently, among them al-Şafadī's book on comparison, containing interesting remarks on the neuropsychological background of literature.<sup>73</sup>

In addition to this monographic treatment of rhetoric, a new form of dealing with rhetoric appeared, the *badī'iyah*, a poem, composed as a *mu'araḍah* to al-Būşīrī's *Burdah* in praise of the Prophet, in which each line exemplifies one or more stylistic devices. This curious mixture between poetry, theory, and piety (invented by Şafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī [18]) has been utterly misunderstood by its modern critics, who complain that *badī'iyāt* are neither profound theoretical texts nor emotionally overwhelming literary works of art, nor even deeply felt expressions of religious feelings. But they fail to understand that the fascination of the *badī'iyah* is exactly the fact that it represents so much all at once! Thus far, twenty-five authors of *badī'iyāt* from the Mamluk period are known, with each of their texts displaying its own characteristics. Studies are almost totally lacking.<sup>74</sup> From a literary point of view, the most beautiful *badī'iyah* is probably the poem composed by 'Ā'ishah al-Bā'ūnīyah [43]. More interesting from a theoretical point of view are those *badī'iyāt* that were accompanied by a commentary plus an anthology. The only Mamluk representative of this sort of text is Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī's [33] *Khizānat al-Adab*, which is one of our most important sources for thinking about literature and rhetoric from the Mamluk period.<sup>75</sup> There are two mediocre editions of this book, but a critical and indexed edition of this key text is a strong desideratum. Equally important would be studies on the actual usage of rhetorical devices in the texts of Mamluk authors in order to establish the relation between theory and practice in this vast field.<sup>76</sup>

To sum up, the Mamluk period is one of the apogees of Arabic literature, displaying an extremely broad, lively, and vital literary culture—as every unprejudiced observer

<sup>73</sup>See the review by Everett Rowson in *MSR* 8, no. 1 (2004): 315–23.

<sup>74</sup>Alī Abū Zayd, *Al-Badī'iyāt fī al-Adab al-'Arabī: Nash' atuhā, Taṭawwuruhā, Atharuhā* (Beirut, 1403/1983); Pierre Cachia, "From Sound to Echo in Late *badī'* Literature," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 108 (1988): 219–25; idem, *The Arch Rhetorician or The Schemer's Skimmer: A Handbook of Late Arabic badī' drawn from 'Abd al-Ghanī an-Nābulusī's Nafaḥāt al-Azhār 'alā Nasamāt al-Ashār* (Wiesbaden, 1998); Bauer, "Die *badī'iyā* Nāşif al-Yāziğis."

<sup>75</sup>The book was so popular that even an edition based exclusively on manuscripts preserved in Syria can be considered a major step towards making accessible one of the most important sources for Mamluk literary culture: Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī, *Khizānat al-Adab wa-Ghāyat al-Arab* (Beirut, 1421/2001; 2nd ed. 1425/2005).

<sup>76</sup>Geert Jan van Gelder, "Poetry for Easy Listening: *Insijām* and Related Concepts in Ibn Ḥijjah's *Khizānat al-Adab*," *MSR* 7, [no. 1] (2003): 31–48.



surely will concede. During the two and a half centuries of the Mamluk period, its literati composed some veritable masterpieces of Arabic literature, many interesting and original works of literature, literary theory, and rhetoric, as well as countless less remarkable works of everyday poetry, which, despite its lack of originality, reflects an interest in literature and a linguistic consciousness. And Mamluk literature is fascinating because it transcends boundaries: the boundaries between everyday and literary communication; between popular and high literature; between poetry and prose; between the private and the public; between theory and praxis. Colonial delusions have thus far prevented a proper appreciation of this culture. It is high time now to critically investigate and question these prejudices and erroneous assumptions and to open up new ways to a better understanding of the fascinating world of Mamluk literature.



©2005 by Thomas Bauer.

DOI: [10.6082/M1BP00ZC](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1BP00ZC). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M1BP00ZC>)

DOI of Vol. IX, no. 2: [10.6082/M1Q52MQP](https://doi.org/10.6082/M1Q52MQP). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/4TK1-MA23> to download the full volume or individual articles. This work is made available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license (CC-BY). See <http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/msr.html> for more information about copyright and open access.

**Some Major Poets and *Udabā'*  
of the Mamluk Empire**

			poetry	anthol.	maqāmah	inshā'	theory
1	Ibn Qurnāṣ	671/1272	■		■		
2	al-Talla'farī	675/1277	■				
3	Ibn Ghānim al-Maqdisī	678/1279	■		■		
4	al-Jazzār	679/1281	■				
5	Mujīr al-Dīn Ibn Tamīm	684/1285	■				
6	al-Shābb al-Zarīf	688/1289	■		■		
7	Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir	692/1292	■			■	
8	al-Būṣirī	c. 694/1294	■				
9	Ibn Dānyāl	710/1310	■		■		
10	al-Maḥḥār	711/1311	■				
11	al-Wadā'ī	716/1316	■	■		■	■
12	Shams al-Dīn Ibn al-Ṣā'igh	725/1325	■		■	■	■
13	al-Shihāb Maḥmūd (Ibn Fahd)	725/1325	■	■	■	■	■
14	al-Nuwayrī	733/1332		■		■	■
15	Ibn Sayyid al-Nās	734/1334	■	■	■		
16	Abū Ḥayyān al-Gharnāṭī	745/1344	■				■
17	Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī	749/1349	■	■		■	
18	Ṣafī al-Dīn al-Ḥillī	749/1348	■	■	■		■
19	Ibrāhīm al-Mi'mār	749/1348	■		■		
20	Ibn al-Wardī	749/1349	■		■		
21	al-Ṣafādī	764/1363	■	■	■	■	■
22	Ibn Nubātah	768/1366	■	■	■	■	■
23	Ibn Abī Ḥajalah	776/1375	■	■	■		
24	Ibn Ḥabīb	779/1377	■	■	■		
25	Ibn Jābir al-Andalusī al-A'mā	780/1378	■				■
26	al-Qīrāṭī	781/1379	■	■		■	
27	'Izz al-Dīn al-Mawṣilī	789/1387	■				■
28	Ibn Makānis	794/1392	■				
29	al-Ghuzūlī	815/1412	■	■			
30	al-Qalqashandī	821/1418	■	■	■	■	■
31	(Ibn) al-Damāmīnī	827/1424	■	■	■	■	■



**Some Major Poets and *Udabā'*  
of the Mamluk Empire**

			<i>poetry</i>	<i>anthol.</i>	<i>maqāmah</i>	<i>inshā'</i>	<i>theory</i>
32	al-Āthārī	828/1425					
33	Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī	837/1434					
34	al-Ibshīhī	c. 850/1446					
35	Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī	852/1449					
36	al-Nawājī	859/1455					
37	Ibn Sūdūn al-Bashbughāwī	868/1464					
38	Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ḥijāzī	875/1470					
39	Ibn al-Hā'im al-Shihāb al-Mansūrī	887/1482					
40	al-Badrī	894/1489					
41	Tāj al-Dīn Ibn ‘Arabshāh	901/1495					
42	al-Suyūfī	911/1505					
43	‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’ū’nīyah	922/1516					

