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Some Remarks on Ibn Ṭawq's (d. 915/1509) Journal *Al-Ta'liq*, vol. 1 (885/1480 to 890/1485)

I

On our table lies the first volume of a four-volume journal or diary (*Al-Ta'liq*) that Ibn Ṭawq, a native of Jarūd (near Damascus, today Jayrūd), wrote some five hundred years ago. With its customary thoroughness and high quality, the Institut Français d'Études Arabes de Damas (IFEAD) has published the first 555 pages of a work in which one finds the everyday notes of a little-known Damascene court clerk covering the years from 885/1480 up to 908/1502. The edition is based on the autograph manuscript held by the Maktabat al-Ẓāhiriyyah (Asad National Library Ms. 4533).

The story of how this text was published is just as remarkable as the manuscript itself: The Shi'ite qadi of Baalbek, al-Shaykh Ja'far al-Muhājir, who is known as the author of several historical works on the Shi'ites in Bilād al-Shām,¹ came to IFEAD with the manuscript in 1996. He had worked intensively on the text from 1977 to 1982. When he decided to leave Beirut with his family and settle in Baalbek because of the Lebanese civil war, his attention was directed to the *Ta'liq* by Thurayyā Kurd 'Alī, who was in charge of the manuscripts of the Ẓāhiriyyah library at that time. During the war, he spent several hours every day at his desk deciphering the difficult script. In this way, little by little, a bundle of papers with the transcription of the whole text emerged, around 1,800 pages all together. Sarab Atassi, the secrétaire scientifique at IFEAD, took care of the manuscript and promised to publish it in the following years. Ja'far al-Muhājir had done excellent work, considering that Ibn Ṭawq frequently uses the vernacular to express himself and it is well known that there are only a few preliminary studies in this field.²

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Edited by Ja'far al-Muhājir (Damascus: Institut Français d'Études Arabes de Damas, 2000). Pp. 555. This is an extended review of the first volume. The second and third volumes have now also been published. We would like to express our thanks for useful hints and help to Frédéric Bauden, Lutz Berger, Tarif Khalidi, Hilary Kilpatrick, Bernadette Martel-Thoumian, Florian Schwarz, and Dana Sajdi.

¹See, for example, his *Al-Hijrah al-Āmiliyyah ilā Īrān fī al-ʿAṣr al-Ṣafawī* (Beirut, 1989), *Sittat Fuqahāʾ Abṭāl* (Beirut, 1994), and *Jabal ʿĀmil taḥta al-Iḥtilāl al-Ṣalībī* (Beirut, 2001).

²Cf. the bibliography in Joshua Blau's excellent *Handbook of Early Middle Arabic* (Jerusalem, 2002). Information on the spoken Arabic of the Mamluk period can be found in Clifford Edmund



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DOI: [10.6082/M15M63V9](https://doi.org/10.6082/M15M63V9). (<https://doi.org/10.6082/M15M63V9>)

DOI of Vol. XI, no. 2: [10.6082/M19021V0](https://doi.org/10.6082/M19021V0). See <https://doi.org/10.6082/Z7BW-SQ52> 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.

Furthermore the author's handwriting is extremely difficult to read, particularly since the diacritics are almost completely missing (as is shown by the facsimile printed at the end of volume 1). In the printed version, the original text is left almost unchanged. To make it more understandable, minor modifications were made in some places which are always marked and in many cases commented upon.

The journal itself is quite unusual. It contains much information about all strata of society, i.e., about the different circles of ulama, the professors of the madrasahs, the shopkeepers, rural society, and the local population. Ibn Ṭawq primarily focuses on the groups at the fringe of urban society who usually are not the main subjects of Arabic historical literature. He writes about the business of the simple man, everyday economic life, public festivals, protests against the encroachments of the authorities, and about organized gangs who made the streets insecure. Ibn Ṭawq describes things in his *Ta'liq* which he has witnessed or about which he has been informed firsthand. He himself was from a rural family and earned his living as a minor court clerk (*shāhid-kātib*). He had a special relationship with the Shafi'i qadi and *shaykh al-islām* Qāḍī 'Ajlūn (Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr ibn 'Abd Allāh, d. 928/1521), and whenever he was off duty, Ibn Ṭawq joined the sessions of this scholar. In the shade of the Qāḍī 'Ajlūn, he wrote his own work that was actually intended as a sort of local chronicle but also was meant to contain some of the author's personal experiences (*ba'd mā yata'allaqu bi-kātibihī*, as is expressly stated in the second sentence of the chapter devoted to the year 888).

II

One could end the review of the first volume of Ibn Ṭawq's *Ta'liq* with that. But perhaps it makes sense to put the text in a broader context by suggesting at least one path for further research. We would like to draw attention to a group of texts which can to varying degrees be called "diaries" or "journals" as well. What they have in common is that they convey information about events which happened during the authors' lifetime in chronological order, i.e., proceeding from day to day, from month to month, and from year to year. This is, of course, something they have in common with many works belonging to the annalistic branch of Arabic historical writing. But they differ in that they do not focus only on political events and the lives and deaths of prominent personalities but also provide details and commentary on mundane topics of everyday occurrences and on personal matters, or both. Even so, a clear demarcation of what can be called

Bosworth, *The Medieval Islamic Underworld: The Banū Sāsān in Arabic Society and Literature* (Leiden, 1976); Paul Kahle, "Eine Zunftsprache der ägyptischen Schattenspieler," *Islamica* 2 (1926): 313–22; and Karl Vilhelm Zetterstéen, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Mamlukensultane in den Jahren 690–741 der Hira nach arabischen Handschriften* (Leiden, 1919), 1–33.



a diary and what should rather be considered a political journal remains a matter of opinion.

Furthermore, one can ask whether or not certain parts of voluminous works such as *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr* by Ibn Iyās (d. ca. 930/1524)³ should be included in the group of diaries in this sense as well. Ibn Iyās also describes many events of his own era in a diary-like style, where festivities, scandals, petty crimes, and the gossip of the day figure prominently. And one last point: even though our scope goes beyond the Mamluk area and time, dynastic changes cannot divide a literary genre that develops and flourishes over the centuries.

The year 1985 may be considered as signaling a new interest in the history of everyday life, at least in Germany, manifesting itself in universities as well as in exhibitions. In that year, but probably completely independent of that fashionable novelty, Annemarie Schimmel's book *Alltagsnotizen eines ägyptischen Bürgers* (An Egyptian citizen's notes on everyday life) was published,⁴ being an extract from volumes 4 and 5 of Ibn Iyās' above-mentioned work *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr*. And even decades before Schimmel's work appeared, everyday life in the medieval Islamic world was considered an interesting topic, a prominent example being Adam Mez' *Die Renaissance des Islams*, which was published in 1922.⁵ Since then, many publications have in passing made some contribution to the history of everyday life in medieval Islam,⁶ but an attempt to give an encyclopaedic survey has, to our knowledge, not so far been made.

III

Some works will probably be familiar already. The first chronicle which, without too much discussion, can be included within the genre of Arabic diaries is al-Musabbiḥi's (d. 420/1029) *Akhbār Miṣr wa-Faḍāʾiluhā*, of which only the last of its forty volumes has been preserved.⁷ This volume treats parts of the years 414 and 415 Hijrah which correspond to the years 1023 to 1024 A.D., that is, some years after al-Ḥākim's reign (r. 386–411/996–1021). Some of the first volumes seem to

³Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr fī Waqāʾiʿ al-Duhur*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā (Beirut and Wiesbaden, 1960–84).

⁴Annemarie Schimmel, *Alltagsnotizen eines ägyptischen Bürgers* (Stuttgart, 1985).

⁵Adam Mez, *Die Renaissance des Islams* (Heidelberg, 1922).

⁶Cf. *Patterns of Everyday Life*, ed. David Waines (Ashgate, 2002).

⁷Ed. Ayman Fuʾād Sayyid and Thierry Bianquis, *Tome quarantième de la Chronique de l'Égypte de Musabbiḥi* (Cairo, 1987). This edition is based on the unique manuscript preserved in the Escorial. 80 pages of poetry are not included in the printed text but have been published separately: *Al-Juzʾ al-Arbaʿin min Akhbār Miṣr*, ed. Ḥusayn Naṣṣār (Cairo, 1984). Al-Musabbiḥi is said to have written 28 books, which, with two exceptions, are all devoted to *adab*. See Thierry Bianquis, "Al-Musabbiḥi," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 7:650–52.



have dealt with periods long before the author's own lifetime. The preserved last part, which quotes from official documents, is an important source for political history and court intrigues, but also is a gold mine for facts about everyday life. We hear about a dog who enters a mosque and is killed as a consequence, a boy drowning in the Nile, a hippopotamus which found its way to Cairo, three "yellow" Indians curing eye diseases, a bear causing panic, a convert to Islam who had only pretended to undergo circumcision (which becomes obvious only after his death), about people recovering the corpses of persons drowned in the Nile and demanding money from the relatives, and much more. As with many of the diarists, al-Musabbihī had a peculiar thematic preoccupation: he was especially interested in crimes in his native quarter al-Fuṣṭāṭ, and it seems that he had access to the log of the local police station. His reports are useful for gaining a picture of the *practice* of law enforcement, which is much less well known than the rules of *fiqh* manuals, handbooks for judges, and fatwa collections.⁸ He writes about his own activities in several instances, for example when he had participated in audiences at the caliph's court or in one of the caliph's public appearances. Once he tells us that he was unable to attend a festivity due to severe pains. Among the many obituaries, there are several persons mentioned from his own circle of friends or acquaintances without any political significance. A slave girl with whom al-Musabbihī has a child suddenly dies, and he expresses his deep grief in moving words which sound much more authentic than most of the many elegies we know from Arabic poetry.⁹

Then we have the autograph diary of Ibn al-Bannā', an eleventh-century Hanbali doctor of Baghdad. His text deals with the period from 1 Shawwāl 461/3 August 1068 until 14 Dhū al-Qa'dah 461/4 September 1069, but originally his notes seem to have been continued for nine more years.¹⁰ Like al-Musabbihī, he is said to have been a prolific author, but his diary, unlike his Egyptian colleague's work, seems not to have been meant for the eyes of the public. Its main topics are the social, political, and religious affairs in Baghdad in which Ibn al-Bannā' took part. He records his own activities in this sphere, for example, his delivery of the Friday *khuṭbah* in the palace mosque or cathedral mosque, or a funeral oration, or

⁸Al-Musabbihī was the main source for Yaacov Lev, "The Suppression of Crime, the Supervision of Markets, and Urban Society in the Egyptian Capital during the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 3 (1988): 71–95. For some more aspects of criminal justice drawn from al-Musabbihī, see Tilman Seidensticker, *On Crucifixion in Medieval Islam* (forthcoming).

⁹Al-Musabbihī, *Akhbār*, 16, lines 9–10 (*wa-nālani 'alayhā min al-wajdi mā lā ajidu lahu kāshifan illā Allāh*).

¹⁰George Makdisi, "Autograph Diary of an Eleventh-Century Historian of Baghdad," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 18 (1956): 9–31 (= part 1), 239–60 (= part 2); 19 (1957): 13–48 (= part 3), 281–303 (= part 4), 426–43 (= part 5).



his visit to an ill colleague. All in all, he includes himself and his own activities in his book much more than al-Musabbiḥī, but everyday life is seldom mentioned, with the exception of some miraculous incidents and the information that he had his blood drawn together with a number of others from his family on 17 Rajab 461/11 May 1069.¹¹ Instead of al-Musabbiḥī's passion for crime, Ibn al-Bannā' devotes special attention to dreams, both his own and those which were reported to him by others. This happened many times because he was considered an expert in the interpretation of dreams. During the 13 months which are covered by the fragment, 26 dreams are reported, the length of which are between a few lines and a whole page. Some are just recorded, others briefly commented upon, and still others are subject to extensive interpretation. The author's own dreams give, voluntarily or involuntarily, some insight into his ambitions and longings. Besides the dreams, there are about half a dozen remarks of a personal character. To give just one example: "A woman with a baby girl came to my door. The family and a maid-servant of ours saw her. They said, 'She has two heads.' But I could not bear to look at her (*mā tāba qalbī anẓur ilayhā*). We gave her mother something, and she went away."¹²

Like his forerunners al-Musabbiḥī and Ibn al-Bannā', Ibn Ṭawq has a particular interest: he is obsessed with weather. With the help of his *Ta'liq*, we are able to write a nearly uninterrupted history of the meteorologic phenomena in Damascus for more than two decades. This fact can best be explained by his rural background, because he shares this predilection with two authors of another diary who were farmers: the father and son al-Rukaynī from the Jabal 'Āmil in the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries (see below). He tells us about the direction of the wind, changes in the weather, differences in the appearance of clouds, about cold, heat, frost, and snow. Typical of the almost affectionate manner in which the topic is treated is what he says about 18 Muḥarram 888: *wa-fī laylatihi 'inda al-tasbīḥi ḥaṣala bakhākhu maṭarin wa-istamarra ilā ākhirihi lam tura al-shamsu wa-al-maṭaru 'ammālun bi-sukūnin wa-ḥaṣala bi-hi khayrun kathīrun wa-lillāhi al-ḥamd* ("in the night, at the time we said *subḥāna Allāh*, a drizzle began and continued until the end of that day; the sun was not seen all day long, and the rain did its work quite calmly, and caused much benefit, praised be the Lord!").¹³ In comparison to his two forerunners, Ibn Ṭawq devotes even more attention to everyday life than al-Musabbiḥī; the *Ta'liq* allows a reconstruction of all aspects of life in Damascus in the last decades of the Mamluk period.

To give just a few examples from a random selection of about 60 pages (*Al-Ta'liq*

¹¹Ibid., part 4, 290 § 143 (Arabic text) = 302 (English translation).

¹²Ibid., Part 2, 246 § 34 (Arabic text) = 258 (English translation).

¹³Ibn Ṭawq, *Al-Ta'liq*, 1:232, ll. 9–10.



23–63 and 224–41): his master Qāḍī ‘Ajlūn has a severe marital row (*ghayṣ kabīr jiddan*) with his Egyptian wife (25, lines 11–12); a farmer’s wife and a stranger are struck dead by a dilapidated wall somewhere in the gardens and the wife is not buried properly due to the dubious circumstances of her death (29, ll. 9–12); in a garden, two men are caught together with a strange woman; their wine is poured out, and one of the men manages to flee, while the other one is punished with 40 lashes, and the woman is imprisoned (58, ll. 2–6); the caretaker of the al-Saqīfah mosque does illicit things (*al-makrūh*) in the mosque with the slave girl of a shaykh’s wife, and after they are caught, he flees by throwing himself in the river, while the girl is struck with a sword and wounded (61, ll. 15–18); a tavern is closed (29, l. 2); wine is poured out (36, ll. 14–15; 233, l. 13; 236, l. 19–237, l. 2); two Muslims drink wine, and someone informs Qāḍī ‘Ajlūn (239, ll. 6–9); some poor people force their way into a Christian’s house where some Muslims are drinking wine together with beardless boys (240, ll. 11–13); the collapse of a ceiling of a building kills six persons, two survive (36, ll. 5–7); forty poor farmers attack three shops owned by Christians (48, ll. 4–10).

Ibn Ṭawq devotes even more space to his personal life than Ibn al-Bannā’. On a Monday, his wife and children visit the Turkish bath, and the sums of money given to the staff are enumerated in detail: *lil-dāyah hibat ashrafī, lil-ḥammāmiyah* 20, *al-nāṭūrah wa-ummuhā* 12, *al-waqqād* 2 (35, ll. 2–3). On the occasion of the pilgrims’ return, the author buys two sheep and has them cooked (45, ll. 7–8). When Ibn Jum‘ah’s wife gives birth to a dead girl, he sends her three chickens (233, ll. 17–18). He mentions that he caught a cold accompanied by a shivering fit and fever (29, ll. 7–8), and he tells us that a room called *al-murabba‘* is covered (with mattresses) and that the family sleeps in this room on the next night (35, ll. 16–17). A visit to the flowering gardens of Zamlakā and Daqqāniyah with five friends is reported (36, ll. 8–9); several days later Ibn Ṭawq notes that the flowers and blossoms are extremely beautiful (*fī ghāyat al-ḥusn*, 39, l. 14), and even the picking of some flowers is considered worth mentioning (*qataftu min satrā ba‘ḍ ward*, 235, l. 2). The author’s wife has, on 15 Rabī‘ I 888/23 April 1483, her brother sell a brooch made of gold to buy a copy of the Quran with the money (237, ll. 8–9). Value judgements are not very frequent, but they exist: a book written by Shihāb al-Dīn al-I‘zāzī is generously assessed as “not bad, for him” (*wa-ḥiya kitābah bi-al-nisbah ilayhi lā ba’sah bihā*, 32, ll. 13–14), and the transfer of the *muqaddam Dimashq* to Ṭartūs is warmly welcomed (*wa-hādhīhī nafyah wa-lillāh al-ḥamd*, 43, ll. 3–4).

IV

After this comparison between Ibn Ṭawq and his two predecessors, we would like to conclude our contribution with a list of later works that have some affinity with



the “diary” genre. In some cases we can only adduce the authors, titles, and dates, while in other instances we give some additional information. There is a certain overlap with the authors treated by Dana Sajdi in her doctoral dissertation on contemporary chronicles written by commoners in the eighteenth-century Levant.¹⁴ Our list does not, of course, claim to be exhaustive. We did not include authors who died after the year 1800 A.D., with the exception of the Rukaynis’ chronicle, because al-Rukaynī senior wrote his part prior to 1778.¹⁵

1. About one generation after Ibn Ṭawq, Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 953/1546) wrote his *Mufākahat al-Khillān fī Ḥawādith al-Zamān*, which treats Damascus up to 951/1544; for the years before the author’s adulthood, Ibn Ṭawq and other historians such as al-Buṣrawī (see below) are used as sources.¹⁶ “The importance of Ibn Ṭūlūn’s history—which is a contemporary chronicle written as *dhayl* to the contemporary chronicle of Ibn Ṭūlūn’s teacher, ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Nu‘aymī (d. 1521)—may be seen in the fact that it was among the most widely circulated history books in Damascus during the two centuries after his death. . . . Ibn Ṭūlūn, an ‘*ālim par excellence*, was acutely conscious of being a member of a scholarly community . . . [but:] In other words, Ibn Ṭūlūn’s chronicle is less about the ‘*ulamā*’ and more about the suffering of ‘the people.’”¹⁷

2. In 1099/1687, Yaḥyā Ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Qāsim, author of the *Bahjat al-Zaman fī Ḥawādith al-Yaman*, died.¹⁸ This work, devoted to the history of the Yemen, and above all of Ṣan‘ā’, is also mainly restricted to the five decades which the author himself witnessed. The author turns out to be especially fond of repeating second-hand horror stories and fairy tales.

3. Ismā‘īl ibn Tāj al-Dīn al-Maḥāsini (d. 1102/1691), preacher of the Umayyad

¹⁴Dana Sajdi, “Peripheral Visions: The World and Worldviews of Commoner Chroniclers in the 18th Century Ottoman Levant” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2002).

¹⁵Ibid., 126–28.

¹⁶Ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafá (Cairo, 1962–64) and Aḥmad Aybāsh (Damascus, 2002, under the title *Ḥawādith Dimashq al-Yawmiyah Ghadāt al-Ghawz al-‘Uthmāni lil-Shām 926–951: Ṣafahāt Maḥqūdah Tunsharu lil-Marrah al-Ūlā min Kitāb ‘Mufākahat al-Khillān ilkh.*”). The Cairo edition contains the preserved parts of the first volume, covering roughly the years from 884/1479 to 926/1519, based on the unique manuscript (autograph) of the Tübingen University Library. The Damascus edition is a reconstruction of the second volume with the help of quotations in later works.

¹⁷Sajdi, “Peripheral Visions,” 479–80.

¹⁸Ed. ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥabashī as *Yawmiyāt Ṣan‘ā’* (Abu Dhabi, 1996). This text is based on the author’s *musawwadah* from the library of the Friday mosque in Ṣan‘ā’. It is not a complete edition but a selection of parts considered important for social history. The manuscript has three volumes with altogether 1,459 pages of 20 to 22 lines. This means that the edition is shortened to a third of the size of the manuscript. On Yaḥyā ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn al-Qāsim, see ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥabashī’s introduction, containing a long list of his works (5–16, 122 titles).



mosque in Damascus, wrote his account of the time between Ṣafar 1077/August–September 1666 and Jumādā I 1100/February–March 1689 on the empty space in a volume of Arabic poetry. These notes, spread throughout all 325 pages, were extracted from that scrapbook (*kunnāsh*) by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid.¹⁹ There are many remarks on everyday matters and the author's personal life.²⁰

4. Muḥammad al-Makkī, author of a *Tārīkh Ḥimṣ*,²¹ died in 1135/1722 and also concentrates on the three decades before his own death, mainly in the region of Hims and its environs. “All of the above factors lead us to conclude that al-Makkī must have had an intimate professional involvement with the *maḥkamah* of Ḥimṣ, similar in function to that of a court clerk; what exactly that function was, however, we are unable to identify. . . . The fact of al-Makkī's occupation is reflected in the writing and content of his chronicle. Just like a court *sijill*, his chronicle records deeds and transactions in summary form, with a minimum of narrative, external context, and authorial interjection. . . . Al-Makkī is remarkably eclectic about who or what he reports: his news ranges from the comings and goings of the town notables, to the death of a garbage collector, to the marriage of a barber, to a water-bearer's murder of his mother-in-law, to the death of the neighbor of the author's daughter. . . . Muḥammad al-Makkī was a court clerk with more than a touch of opportunism.”²² Al-Makkī does not talk too much about himself, but everyday life is one of his favorite topics. His style shows a peculiar fondness for nominal expressions instead of verbs, a sort of “officialese” (*nuzūl al-bard, islām dhimmī, majīʿ fulān, wuqūʿ fulān fī al-ʿĀṣi*).

5. Another author from the Bilād al-Shām is Muḥammad ibn Kannān (d. 1153/1740) who, in his *Al-Ḥawādith al-Yawmiyah min Tārīkh ʿAsharah Alf wa-Mīʾah*, covers the time from 1111 to 1153 (1699 to 1740), all of which he witnessed himself.²³ The autograph is preserved in two manuscripts in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (nos. 9479 and 9480 Ahlwardt). On him and his work, Dana Sajdi writes: “Perhaps unexpectedly of a bookish man, Ibn Kannān was also a socially active fellow. He spent much [of] his time paying social visits and going to engagement

¹⁹“Ṣafāḥāt fī Tārīkh Dimashq fī al-Qarn al-Ḥādīyah ʿAsharah al-Hijrī Mustakhrajah min Kunnāsh Ismāʿīl al-Maḥāsīnī,” *Majallat Maʿhad al-Makḥḥūṭāt al-ʿArabiyyah* 6 (1960): 77–160.

²⁰Sajdi, “Peripheral Visions,” 28, n. 82, states that al-Maḥāsīnī is dealt with by Naila Takieddine Kaidbey, “Historiography in Bilad al-Sham: the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries” (Ph.D. diss., American University of Beirut, 1995), 387–96.

²¹Ed. ʿUmar Najīb al-ʿUmar (Damascus, 1987). Al-Makkī is one of the seven chroniclers dealt with in Sajdi, “Peripheral Visions”; on his biography, cf. the section “Muhammad Ibn Kannān: Struggling for Tenure in the Damascene Academy,” 91–113.

²²Sajdi, “Peripheral Visions,” 85–86, 91.

²³Ed. Akram Ḥasan al-ʿUlābī under the title *Yawmiyāt Shāmīyah* (Damascus, 1994). The author is another one of the seven chroniclers dealt with in Sajdi, “Peripheral Visions.”



parties, weddings, and circumcision celebrations. His favorite pastime, however, was picnicking. Ibn Kannān loved the gardens and parks of Damascus, and it was there that he spent most of his springs and summers, particularly toward the end of his life. . . . Ibn Kannān's enchantment with nature is not only illustrated by his interest in botany (reflected in a very large section of *Al-Mawākib al-Islāmīyah*) but also in the fact that he marked time according to the seasonal fruits and flowers: 'in the days of the apple,' 'in the days of the attack of the roses (*fī hujūm al-ward*),' 'in the days of the apricot,' and 'in the days of grapes and figs.' Often, these picnics functioned as scholarly salons. It was in the fresh air, surrounded by flowers, and sitting by the water, that Ibn Kannān and his fellow teachers exchanged knowledge and discussed topics outside their teaching curricula."²⁴

6. Thirty years later, another Syrian author, Aḥmad al-Budayrī al-Ḥallāq (d. 1175/1762), wrote his *Ḥawādith Dimashq al-Yawmīyah*, treating the years 1154–75/1741–62, again as an eyewitness. Al-Budayrī's "Daily Events of Damascus" is surely one of the most fascinating documents of eighteenth-century Bilād al-Shām. This collection of current events, observations, and comments, arranged in the form of annals written by an obscure Damascene barber, provides a much-needed corrective and supplement to the indispensable but often dry and monotonous biographical and historical works of the time. Al-Budayrī's precious text, which is remarkably close to the vernacular, has a complex history. It is even possible that the folios of the original manuscript had been used as wrapping paper in the *sūq*. But somehow the importance of the work had ever been forgotten. The man who used al-Budayrī's diary as a historical source was in any case Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Qāsimī (d. 1317/1900), who is justly famous for his work on the crafts and guilds of Damascus.²⁵ He changed the wording of the original text by rewriting it. Al-Budayrī had written his diary in a language which al-Qāsimī found too close to the colloquial and therefore repulsive, so he changed the wording wherever he deemed necessary, and in an unspecified number of places omitted passages which he found long-winded or otherwise superfluous. The revised form of the diary in the redaction of al-Qāsimī is preserved in the family library of the Qāsimīs in Damascus under the title *Tanqīḥ al-Shaykh Muḥammad Sa'īd al-Qāsimī li-Ḥawādith Dimashq al-Yawmīyah*. The book was edited in 1959 by Aḥmad 'Izz al-Dīn in Cairo.²⁶ The barber's original work is preserved in a unique manuscript in the Chester Beatty Library in Dublin (no. 3551/2, autograph?). Dana Sajdi is currently editing this manuscript. The original version omits the *nisbah* al-Budayrī

²⁴Sajdi, "Peripheral Visions," 99.

²⁵*Qāmūs al-Šinā'āt al-Shāmīyah*, ed. Zāfir al-Qāsimī (Paris, 1960).

²⁶Muḥammad Jamīl Sulṭān published a second edition together with a short study on the author and his work (Damascus, 1997).



for which reason Sajdi refers to him as Ibn Budayr.²⁷ Ibn Budayr's diary faithfully reflects the shop-talk of his time. He has a lot to say on this subject, especially, for example, on prostitutes. In a barber's talk with his customers, conversation would naturally also turn to gossip and scandals involving "honor," mistreatment or unacceptable behavior of women, and the like. The author writes about the everyday problems of people of his class and social standing, elucidating many details. He was not in anyone's service and was therefore in a position to praise and criticise freely whatever he felt merited praise or criticism.

7. Ḥaydar Riḍā al-Rukaynī and his unnamed son left a diary which was first published in an incomplete edition of the subsequently lost unique manuscript in the Shī'ite journal *Al-ʿIrfān* in 1938–39.²⁸ "The chronicle begun by the Shī'ī farmer Ḥaydar Riḍā al-Rukaynī (henceforth al-Rukaynī Sr.) and completed by his unnamed son (henceforth al-Rukaynī Jr.) records events in rural Jabal ʿĀmil in the years 1163/1749 to 1247/1832. While neither father nor son informs us exactly where they live in southern Lebanon, the events of the chronicle take place overwhelmingly in that region, and end with al-Rukaynī Jr.'s migration to Damascus. . . . This is the first contemporary chronicle in the Shī'ī tradition of Jabal ʿĀmil, and the only chronicle in Arabic-Islamic history known to have been written by farmers. . . . These novel spheres are reflected in the content of the Rukaynīs' chronicle: for example, the agriculturalists' overriding concern with the weather, on the one hand; and the ʿĀmili Shī'ī's iteration of a strong sense of regional and communal identity on the other."²⁹

V

As stated above, our knowledge of the history of everyday life in medieval Muslim times is still in its beginnings, and this is even more evident if we widen the somewhat vague notion of "everyday life" to include mentality, "Lebensgefühl," perceptions and emotions of the individual. It is true that some promising beginnings have been made, e.g., the study of Thomas Bauer on love (especially

²⁷On Ibn Budayr, another one of the chroniclers treated by Sajdi, cf. "Peripheral Visions," 66–80, and idem, "A Room of His Own: the 'History' of the Barber of Damascus," *MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* 3 (2003): 19–35. See also George Haddad, "The Interests of an Eighteenth Century Chronicler of Damascus," *Der Islam* 38 (1963): 258–73, and Antonino Pellitteri, "Imagine Donna in *Hawadith Dimashq al-Yawmiyya* (1741–1762) di Ahmad al-Budayri al-Hallaq," in *Verse and the Fair Sex: Studies in Arabic Poetry and in the Representations of Women in Arabic Literature*, ed. Frederick de Jong (Utrecht, 1993), 153–70.

²⁸More recent editions based in part on the *ʿIrfān* printing, entitled *Jabal ʿĀmil fī Qarn, 1163–1274 H/1749–1832 M*, have been published by Aḥmad Ḥuṭayṭ (Beirut, 1997) and Ḥasan Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ (Beirut, 1998).

²⁹Sajdi, "Peripheral Visions," 40–41, 505. The Rukaynīs' book is again one of the chronicles dealt with by Sajdi, *ibid.*, where the authors and their diary are introduced on pp. 125–39.



homosexual and homoerotic, and concentrating mainly—but not exclusively—on early Abbasid times)³⁰ and three articles by Bernadette Martel-Thoumian on crime, suicide, illicit pleasure, and punishment in Mamluk times.³¹ For all these questions our diaries are one important source, but of course ample information can be found in other types of documentary evidence. Within the last few years historians with a focus on Europe have been occupied with similar sources and invented the technical term “ego documents.”³² Originally, this phrase was coined by the Dutch historians Jacques Presser and Rudolph Dekker in the 1950s. Their main field was the analysis of memoirs, travel stories, letters, and diaries. All of them had one thing in common: an author who reports in the first person “about his own behavior and feeling and about topics and events that concern him personally.” This approach was then picked up and developed further at a workshop organized by Winfried Schulze in 1992.³³ The participants came to a comprehensive definition:

All texts which can be typified as ego documents should have one thing in common: you should find in them rudimentary or explicit statements made by an individual about his perception of social phenomena like family, community, country, group or tribe or about his reflection on his relations with these societal systems and their changes. These statements should justify individual behavior, reveal fears, manifest values and norms, and reflect a personal conception of and an outlook upon life.³⁴

This definition significantly broadens the scope of our sources. Now we have to

³⁰*Liebe und Liebesdichtung in der arabischen Welt des 9. und 10. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden, 1998).

³¹“Voleurs et assassins à Damas et au Caire (fin IXe/XVe-début Xe/XVIe siècle),” *Annales islamologiques* 35 (2001): 193–240; “La mort volontaire: le traitement de suicide et du suicidé dans les chroniques mamloukes tardives,” *Annales islamologiques* 38 (2004): 405–35; and “Plaisirs illicites et châtements dans les sources mamloukes (fin IXe/XVe-début Xe/XVIe siècle),” *Annales islamologiques* 39 (2005): 275–323.

³²Andreas Rutz, “Ego-Dokumente oder Ich-Konstruktion? Selbstzeugnisse als Quellen zur Erforschung des frühneuzeitlichen Menschen,” *zeitenblicke* 1, 2 (2002) <www.zeitenblicke.historicum.net/2002/02/rutz/index.html> (7 March 2006). On the problem of the perception of the subject, see Stefan Elit, “‘Ich’ war einmal: Literaturwissenschaftliche Problemhorizonte bei Subjektivität in Texten,” *ibid.* (7 March 2005). After being declared dead some time ago, the author has now been resurrected: *Rückkehr des Autors: Zur Erneuerung eines umstrittenen Begriffs*, ed. Fotis Jannidis, Gerhard Lauer, Matias Martinez, and Simone Winko (Tübingen, 1999).

³³Winfried Schulze, “Ego-Dokumente: Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte? Vorüberlegungen für die Tagung ‘EGO-DOKUMENTE,’” in *Ego-Dokumente: Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte*, ed. Winfried Schulze (Berlin, 1996), 11–30.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 28.



take into consideration not only the above-mentioned autobiographical or semi-autobiographical works but all texts in which information about an individual are given indirectly, i.e., non-intentionally and non-purposefully: wills, tax records, criminal case files, merchant and invoice books, interrogation protocols, photographs, or other documents of a non-literary character.

For the first corpus, the so-called autobiographical genre, the term “Selbstzeugnisse” has been established.³⁵ In a pathbreaking essay, Benigna von Krusenstjern comes to the conclusion that, on the one hand, “Selbstzeugnisse” include a “Selbstthematisierung durch ein explizites Selbst” and, on the other hand, they are “selbst verfaßt, in der Regel auch selbst geschrieben (zumindest diktiert) sowie aus eigenem Antrieb, also ‘von sich aus,’ ‘von selbst’ entstanden.”³⁶ Furthermore, she distinguishes four categories of “Selbstzeugnisse”:³⁷ (1) “egocentric” reports in which the reference to the speaker is central and forms the greater part of the work; (2) texts, in which the speaker speaks about himself but also about his interests, emotions, and concerns. In the third category, material things (“die Anteile von Welt”) are the main theme of the narration. The world of the speaker has to stay in the background. The fourth variant hardly refers to the “Selbstzeugnisse” since there is no explicit individual speaking. Instead of a speaker we hear an implicit narrator, for example in the form of a chronicler.

Today, ego documents, “Selbstzeugnisse,” and their categorization are well known among historians. They are a fertile field of research so that within the last fifteen years numerous monographs, collective volumes, and articles have been published.³⁸ This phenomenon is closely connected with the historical-anthropological turn within the humanities which itself has been initiated by a concentration on micro-historical and “alltagsgeschichtliche” approaches.³⁹ What

³⁵Benigna von Krusenstjern, “Was sind Selbstzeugnisse? Begriffskritische und quellenkundliche Überlegungen anhand von Beispielen aus dem 17. Jahrhundert,” *Historische Anthropologie* 2 (1994): 462–71.

³⁶Ibid., 463.

³⁷Ibid., 470.

³⁸Up to now, research on ego documents seems to have been a European field of study. By far the greater part of the literature is in German. Cf., for example, Benigna von Krusenstjern, *Selbstzeugnisse der Zeit des Dreißigjährigen Krieges: Beschreibendes Verzeichnis* (Berlin, 1997); Harald Tersch, *Österreichische Selbstzeugnisse des Spätmittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit (1400–1650)* (Vienna, 1998); *Das dargestellte Ich: Studien zu Selbstzeugnissen des späteren Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, ed. Klaus Arnold, Sabine Schmolinsky, and Urs Martin Zahnd (Bochum, 1999); *Das Strafgericht Gottes: Kriegserfahrungen und Religion im Heiligen Römischen Reich Deutscher Nationen im Zeitalter des Dreißigjährigen Krieges*, ed. Matthias Asche (Münster, 2001); *Von der dargestellten Person zum erinnerten Ich: Europäische Selbstzeugnisse als historische Quellen (1500–1850)*, ed. Kaspar von Greyerz, Hans Medick, and Patrice Veit (Cologne, 2001).

³⁹See Dirk van Laak, “Alltagsgeschichte,” in *Neue Themen und Methoden der Geschichtswissenschaft*,



we can see is a reconsideration of the (historical) individual and the epistemological circumstances of his socialization.⁴⁰ The central questions can be: What did a pre-modern person think of faith, religion, sexuality, power, society? How did he experience war, violence, childhood, aging? What was his relationship to his own body? What can we say about his feelings and emotions?⁴¹

If Mamlukologists are going to work with categories like ego documents and “Selbstzeugnisse,” we obviously have to find new material. A number of different kinds of sources can be added to our diaries. By way of example, some works from the Mamluk era can be listed, such as memoirs: Ibn Iyās’ *Badā’i’ al-Zuhūr*; reports of diplomatic missions: Ibn Ājā’s (d. 881/1476) *Tārīkh al-Amīr Yashbak al-Zāhiri*;⁴² autobiographies: Ibn Khaldūn’s (d. 808/1406) *Kitāb al-Ta’rīf bi-Ibn Khaldūn wa-Riḥlatuhu Gharban wa-Sharqan*,⁴³ Ibn Ṭūlūn’s *Al-Fulḥ al-Mashḥūn fī Aḥwāl Muḥammad Ibn Ṭūlūn*,⁴⁴ al-Suyūṭī’s (d. 911/1505) *Al-Taḥadduth bi-Ni’mat*

ed. Michael Maurer (Stuttgart, 2003), 14–78; Hans Medick, “Quo vadis Historische Anthropologie? Geschichtsforschung zwischen Historischer Kulturwissenschaft und Mikro-Historie,” *Historische Anthropologie* 9 (2001): 78–92; Alf Lüdtke, “Alltagsgeschichte, Mikro-Historie, historische Anthropologie,” in *Geschichte: Ein Grundkurs*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Goertz (Reinbek, 1998), 557–78; *Alltagsgeschichte: Zur Rekonstruktion historischer Erfahrungen und Lebensweisen*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Goertz (Frankfurt and New York, 1989); *Sozialgeschichte, Alltagsgeschichte, Mikrohistorie*, ed. Winfried Schulze (Göttingen, 1994).

⁴⁰Cf. Michael Maurer, “Historische Anthropologie,” in *Neue Themen und Methoden der Geschichtswissenschaft*, ed. Maurer, 294–387; Gert Dressel, *Historische Anthropologie: Eine Einführung* (Vienna, 1996); Richard van Dülmen, *Historische Anthropologie: Entwicklung, Probleme, Aufgaben* (Cologne, 2000).

⁴¹On these topics, see also the articles in *Islamwissenschaft als Kulturwissenschaft: Mentalitätsgeschichte: Ansätze und Möglichkeiten*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Syrinx von Hees (Schenefeld, 2007).

⁴²On this text, see Stephan Conermann, “Ibn Aḡās (st. 881/1476) ‘Ta’rīḥ al-Amīr Yašbak az-Zāhiri’—Biographie, Autobiographie, Tagebuch oder Chronik?” in *Die Mamluken: Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur: Zum Gedenken an Ulrich Haarmann (1942–1999)*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Anja Pistor-Hatam (Schenefeld, 2003), 123–79.

⁴³Cairo, 1979. On Mamluk autobiographies, see Stephan Conermann, “Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 955/1548): Life and Works,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 8, no. 1 (2004): 115–40.

⁴⁴Damascus, 1929.



Allāh;⁴⁵ private letters;⁴⁶ travel literature;⁴⁷ *bid'ah* works;⁴⁸ *waqfiyāt*;⁴⁹ and last but not least, chronicles.⁵⁰

It is no easy task for Mamlukologists to identify the world view, experiences, and emotions of individuals, because our sources are much scantier than their European counterparts. Nevertheless, we are convinced that we are in a good position for further studies in this field. To track down the independent and creative element of men and women during the Mamluk era seems to be a promising task. It would help to understand power as a form of social practice, and the constructed experience of the self, as well as the outlines of a self-image, can be one way to

⁴⁵Ed. Elizabeth M. Sartain (Cambridge, 1975).

⁴⁶See, for example, al-Ṣafadī's (d. 764/1363) "Alḥān al-Sawāji' min al-Nādī wa-al-Rāji'," Berlin MS 8631. An introduction to the analysis of such texts is Stephan Conermann, "Arabische Privatbriefe des 13./19. Jahrhunderts: Ego-Dokumente, Selbstzeugnisse und historisch-anthropologische Quelle," in Ulrich Haarmann, *Briefe aus der Wüste: Privatpapiere der in Gadamis ansässigen Yuṣā'-Familie aus dem 19. Jahrhundert*, aus dem Nachlaß herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Stephan Conermann (Schenefeld, 2006), 1–40.

⁴⁷One could name al-Qāsim ibn Yūsuf al-Tujibī's (d. 730/1329) *Mustafād al-Rihlah wa-al-Ightirāb*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥafīz al-Manṣūr (Tunis, 1981), and Abū Ḥasan 'Alī al-Qalṣādī al-Andalusī's (d. 891/1486) *Rihlah*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Ajfan (Tunis, 1985). Both of them spent a long time in Egypt on their pilgrimage. On Arabic travel literature, see now Ralf Elger, "Der Raum als Zeichen göttlicher Macht und des Wirkens der Zeit im Libanon-Reisebericht *al-Manāzil al-mahāsiniyya fi r-rihla at-Ṭarābulusiyya* des Yahyā al-Mahāsini (st. 1053/1643)," in *Erzählter Raum in Literaturen der islamischen Welt*, ed. Roxane Haag-Higuchi and Christian Szyska (Wiesbaden, 2001), 69–80; idem, "Adab and Historical Memory: The Andalusian Poet/Politician Ibn al-Khaṭīb as Presented in Aḥmad al-Maqqarī (986/1577–1041/1632), *Nafḥ at-ṭib*," *Die Welt des Islams* 42 (2002): 289–306; idem, "Selbstdarstellungen aus Bilād ash-Shām: Überlegungen zur Innovation in der arabischen autobiographischen Literatur im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert," in *Eigene und fremde Frühe Neuzeit: Genese und Geltung eines Epochenbegriffs*, ed. Renate Dürr, Gisela Engel, and Johannes Süßmann (Munich, 2003), 123–37; idem, "Individualität und Kulturkritik in arabisch-muslimischen Ego-Dokumenten, 15.–18. Jahrhundert," *Periplus* (2003): 30–50; and idem, "Narrheiten und Heldentaten: Die merkwürdigen Reisen des Muṣṭafā al-Laṭīfī (1602–1711)," in *Erkundung und Beschreibung der Welt: Zur Poetik der Reise- und Länderberichte*, ed. Xenja von Ertzdorff and Gerhard Gieseemann (Amsterdam and New York, 2003), 267–87.

⁴⁸Typical works of this genre are al-Turkumānī's (fl. at the end of the eighth/fourteenth and at the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century) *Kitāb al-Luma' fi al-Ḥawādith wa-al-Bida'*, ed. Subhi Labib (Cairo and Wiesbaden, 1986), Ibn Taymiyyah's (d. 728/1328) *Kitāb al-Iqtidā' al-Ṣira'āt al-Mustaqīm Mukhālafat Aṣḥāb al-Jahīm*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ḥamid al-Fiḳī (Cairo, 1950), and Ibn al-Ḥājj's (d. 737/1336) *Al-Madkhal* (Cairo, 1929).

⁴⁹For an overview of this material, see Stephan Conermann and Lucian Reinfandt, "Anmerkungen zu einer mamlukischen *waqf*-Urkunde aus dem 9/15. Jahrhundert," in *Die Mamluken*, ed. Conermann and Pistor-Hatam, 179–238, esp. 179–90.

⁵⁰Konrad Hirschler, in his *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors* (London, 2006), presents a fresh and original theoretical approach to Ayyubid/Mamluk historiography.



approach that notion. If the layers of the different discourses can be removed, it would be possible to reveal Mamluk individuals. In the last analysis, we would like to find new ways to describe the process of individualization in terms other than the common European ones.⁵¹

⁵¹On the concept of European individuality, see *Entdeckung des Ich: Die Geschichte der Individualisierung vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Richard van Dülmen (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna, 2001), and Martin Scheutz and Harald Tersch, "Individualisierungsprozesse in der Frühen Neuzeit? Anmerkungen zu einem Konzept," *Wiener Zeitschrift zur Geschichte der Neuzeit* 1 (2001): 38–59.

