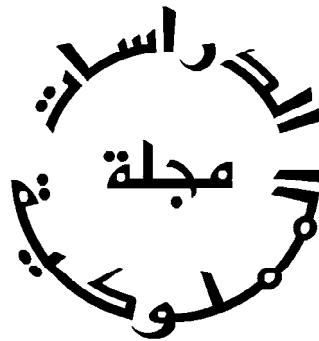


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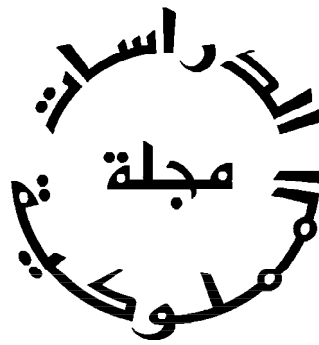
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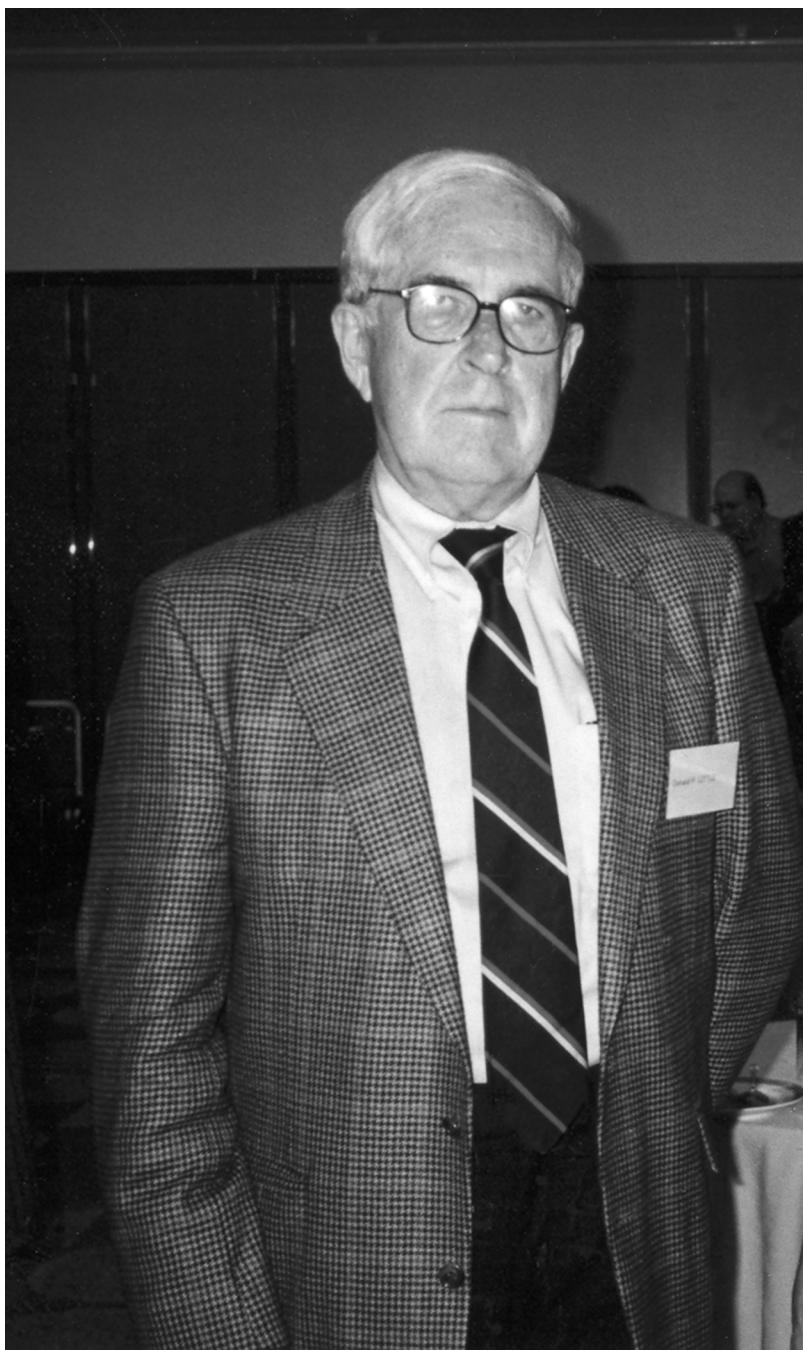
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This volume is dedicated to Professor Donald P. Little,
in recognition of his profound influence
on the field of Mamluk Studies,
by his colleagues and former students.

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Mamluk Era Documentary Studies: The State of the Art*

INTRODUCTION

Manuals on historiography routinely say that the discipline of history is shaped by documents. In this context, the word "document" is interpreted in a broad sense as the traces left behind by the thoughts and actions of men. More pragmatically, what is understood in the field of history as a document are the authentic traces of tools necessary for the needs of daily life (thus administrative and private documents, coins, buildings, etc.), or put in other words "everything that has remained immediately and directly of the historical facts or events."¹

All these materials are the subjects of particular disciplines, that is to say papyrology, epigraphy, numismatics, and archeology, better known as the auxiliary sciences of history. Each one studies a documentation defined as impartial, because documents are not reckoned to lie (although forgeries are sometimes found); that must be the starting point for research, "the historian's choice morsels" to quote one documents expert.² It is thus clear that in speaking of documentary studies, one could expect this article to treat all these disciplines. It does not, but rather aims at presenting the state of actual research on handwritten documents from the Mamluk period. I do not say papyrology because I think this word is unfortunately misleading. Although influenced by the discipline developed by scholars of antiquity, Arabic papyrology does not deal exclusively with documents written on papyrus. In the Islamic context, this would be nonsensical, as other writing materials

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*To Donald Little for the countless hours he has devoted to Mamluk documents. This article is the revised version of a paper presented at the Conference on Mamluk Studies organized by the University of Chicago (7–8 May, 2003). On various occasions, I benefited from the help and information provided by several colleagues, among whom are Gladys Frantz-Murphy, Anne Regourd, Donald Little, Geoffrey Khan, Johannes Pahlitzsch, and Christian Müller. I wish to express to all of them my gratitude for having shared with me their experience and their knowledge.

¹Ahasver von Brandt, *Werkzeug des Historikers*, 15th ed. (Stuttgart, 1998), 52, cited in Klaus U. Hachmeier, "Private Letters, Official Correspondence: Buyid *Inshā'* as a Historical Source," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 13 (2002): 127. Von Brandt names this category *Überreste* and divides it into three classes, which comprise the written *Überreste*, that is private and official documents, as well as some literary works not primarily intended as historical evidence.

²Hans Robert Roemer, "The Sinai Documents and the History of the Islamic World: State of the Art—Future Tasks," in *Studia Arabica et Islamica: Festschrift for Iḥsān 'Abbās on His Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Wadād al-Qāḍī (Beirut, 1981), 386.



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were used together with papyrus (ostracum, parchment, and at a rather early stage paper, but also cloth, and such odd materials as ostrich eggs, etc.). On the other hand, as we will see, archives have been preserved in institutions for which the documents had been issued. If we were considering only papyrology, they would not be included in this survey since they were not discovered through excavation, or in a cave.³ Numismatics,⁴ epigraphy, and archeology are thus left aside even though they clearly involve documents and some of them are of great help in corroborating information found in handwritten documents. I particularly think of the Mamluk decrees found on monuments in Egypt and Syria which reproduce originals that once were written on paper.⁵ Documents, in the sense just defined (handwritten), are thus the exclusive focus of this article.

Students of medieval Islamic history are confronted with a leitmotiv that until the sixteenth century Islamic civilization has left only a few documents. This calamitous statement, somewhat tempered for Egypt, which historically, even in antiquity, has preserved more documents than other areas like Syria, the Arabian peninsula, or even North Africa, has been reassessed recently, particularly by R. Stephen Humphreys, who judged the situation to be encouraging,⁶ and Donald Little, who said some time ago that "original documents [for the Mamluk period] or remnants of archives are exceedingly important."⁷ I do not know if this is a problem of the bottle being half full or half empty, but I am rather optimistic, too.

³Arabic papyrologists generally consider that their discipline covers all the documents from the dawn of Islam until the emergence of Ottoman rule on the grounds that official archives prior to this period have not been preserved. I agree that it is difficult in Islamic studies to trace a border line between papyrology and diplomatics, which in Western studies defines archival materials in a broad sense, but I tend to believe that differences remain between the study of a papyrus of the first century of Islam and a document of the late Mamluk period, and the criteria invoked by papyrologists are not relevant, in my opinion.

⁴Numismatics has lately been the subject of a review article: Warren Schultz, "Mamluk Monetary History: A Review Essay," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999): 183–205.

⁵Jean Sauvaget, "Décrets mamelouks de Syrie," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 2 (1932): 1–52; 3 (1933): 1–29; 12 (1947–48): 5–60; Gaston Wiet, "Répertoire des décrets mamelouks de Syrie," in *Mélanges syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud* (Paris, 1939), 2:521–37; Janine Sourdel-Thomine, "Deux décrets mamelouks de Marqab," *BEO* 14 (1952–54): 61–64; Gaston Wiet, "Un décret du sultan mamelouk Malik Ashraf Sha‘ban à La Mecque," in *Mélanges Louis Massignon* (Damascus, 1957), 3:383–410. Recently an important tool has been published by the Fondation Max van Berchem that puts at the disposal of searchers a database of all Arabic, Persian, and Turkish inscriptions, published or unpublished, up till 1000 A.H. The latest update covers Egypt and now includes more than 20,000 searchable items. See *Thesaurus d'épigraphie islamique*, ed. Ludvik Kalus and Frédérique Soudan, CD-ROM (Paris and Geneva, 2003).

⁶*Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (Cairo, 1992), 40.

⁷"The Use of Documents for the Study of Mamluk History," *MSR* 1 (1997): 9.



Of course, compared to medieval Europe or China, the situation is not so good and it has led some scholars to allege that medieval Islamic civilization (not the Ottoman one) was less bureaucratic than, say, Sung China or the Italian states.⁸ This statement is based on the surviving evidence, but is a non sequitur. It is as if Assyriologists, prior to the discovery of thousands of tablets through excavations, would have said that the chancery of the Assyrian kingdom was not fond of red tape. The problem, for medieval Islam, lies in the fact that few official documents which have been preserved are the original documents that were issued by the chancery and given to the beneficiary. What we lack are the state archives, because we know that for every original document issued, a copy was made in the various bureaux in charge of the affair treated. These state archives have completely disappeared, except for one item, almost a hapax, going back to the Fatimid period,⁹ which offers us the opportunity to imagine how the registers prepared by chancery clerks must have looked.

To explain the disappearance of the state archives, different scholars have offered various explanations. One of the most repeated is that, unlike what happened in Europe, Islam had no legally organized social bodies which could have preserved archives, the unique exception being the *waqf* documents, as shown by Carl Petry. This means that only state archives could exist. Secondly, it has been argued that written documents do not establish the law (*kitābun yushbih kitāban*: one writing looks like another writing and can be exchanged with it), but if so why would non-Muslim communities have held for centuries documents that had no legal value and that were referred to in case of necessity? Thirdly, it has been alleged that in Europe most of the documents are of a judicial nature, while in Islam, on the other hand, these kinds of documents were kept by the qadis. When they became useless or obsolete, they were discarded. Whatever the case may be, my feeling is that an answer must be found in the sources, considering both state archives and private documents, including original documents issued by the chancery and handed over to the beneficiaries. In the first case, an important protagonist of the Mamluk sultanate, who experienced the transition between the Qipchak and Circassian regimes, witnessed a decisive event for our purpose: al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442). Speaking of his experience as a secretary in the chancery, he notes that in 791–92/1389–90, during Sultan Barqūq's reign, all the documents kept in the

⁸Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge, 1994), 13 ff.

⁹Geoffrey Khan, "A Copy of a Decree from the Archives of the Fāṭimid Chancery in Egypt," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 49 (1986): 439–53. According to the author (oral communication), other documents originating from the archives of the Fatimid chancery are preserved in the Geniza papers.



room of the *dīwān al-inshā'* at the Citadel of Cairo were removed and sold by weight,¹⁰ probably to paper merchants. Clearly, the disappearance of the state archives of the first Mamluk dynasty may be explained by this testimony, and this behavior must have been repeated in the periods that preceded and followed. As for private archives, the sources remain silent, although we may surmise that the same conduct prevailed. Original documents were often recycled and used as scrap paper. A unique case of this phenomenon, for the Mamluk period, has recently been discovered in several autograph manuscripts of al-Maqrīzī.¹¹ To conclude with this crucial problem, documents were obviously no longer valuable after a given period of time, and depending on various circumstances (political events, need for money, etc.), they were either destroyed, or more appropriately, reprocessed due to economic reasons.¹²

SURVEY

In what follows, the reader will find a census that aims at surveying quite exhaustively the collections that hold documents from the Mamluk period.¹³ Two approaches to the subject may be employed: either to take into account the venue of the collections, or to consider the nature of the documents as described above. I chose the first because it gives a more unequivocal idea of the number of documents preserved and their location.

Islamic documents, generally speaking, whatever their nature may be, are to be found in two different forms: copies preserved in historical or literary sources,

¹⁰ Al-Maqrīzī, *Al-Mawā'iz wa-al-I'tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār* (Bulāq, 1853), 2:225–26. See now Frédéric Bauden, "The Recovery of Mamlūk Chancery Documents in an Unsuspected Place," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, ed. Michael Winter and Amalia Levanoni, The Medieval Mediterranean, no. 51 (Leiden, 2004), 74.

¹¹ See Bauden, "The Recovery of Mamlūk Chancery Documents," and below, pp. 56–57. Other examples may be found in the Geniza papers, as shown previously (see n. 9).

¹² Interestingly, it could be added that Islamic civilization has been described as the civilization of the book. No other civilization for the medieval period has produced such a vast quantity of works and manuscripts. Among those preserved, estimated at 3 million, how many of them come from the Abbasid, Fatimid, or Ayyubid periods, with the exception of Qurans? Here too, undoubtedly, political events entailed looting which caused destruction of material.

¹³ For previous presentations of Muslim documents in general, see Claude Cahen, "Du Moyen Âge aux temps modernes," in *Les Arabes par leurs archives*, ed. Jacques Berque and Dominique Chevallier (Paris, 1976), 9–15; Humphreys, *Islamic History*, 40–49, 170–72, 217–21, 261–65. As for Egypt in particular, see Hans Robert Roemer, "Über Urkunden zur Geschichte Ägyptens und Persiens in islamischen Zeit," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 107 (1957): 519–38; idem, "Documents et archives de l'Égypte islamique," *Mélanges de l'Institut dominicain d'études orientales du Caire* 5 (1958): 237–52. Regarding the Mamluk period, see Little, "The Use of Documents," 1–13.



and original documents held in different institutions in various countries, mostly in Europe, North America, and the Middle East. None of these categories are sufficient due to the limited number of documents, but placing them side by side and examining them does allow the raising of questions, and even the verification of their respective value. From this starting point, a more detailed investigation will be carried out, which will lead to broader conclusions.

SOURCES

The literary and historical sources from the Mamluk period are renowned to be, if not comprehensive, at least plentiful in comparison with other periods of Muslim history. It is one of the features that has attracted many of us to Mamluk studies. Critical editions of important sources are becoming more available, even if some gaps remain, as Li Guo noted in his state of the art article on historical sources.¹⁴ It is a well-known fact that some of them have preserved in one form or another copies of official or private documents and it is easily understandable why these have been the source of numerous studies on treaties concluded with other Muslim rulers or Christian rulers. However, we must insist on the fact that historical and literary sources be used with the greatest caution. They raise numerous problems, particularly that of authenticity. The historian must always bear in mind that what he has in hand is only what the author wanted to transmit, adding to this the problems of the accuracy of the copy, and sometimes of falsification. When several authors quote a document from different sources, it is possible to establish the discrepancies between the versions,¹⁵ and this calls once more for caution. Generally speaking, we must keep in mind that these copies are important for their content. As for diplomatics, it realizes little benefit from this kind of source because most of the authors systematically disregard the less interesting parts, in their eyes; yet elements such as preamble formulas, customary expressions of the various bureaux of the chancery, dates, names of persons, mottos, as well as paper sizes, may be crucial in terms of diplomatics.

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

Confronted with the apparent scarcity of archives from the Mamluk period, historians first settled for documents quoted in the narrative sources. Their works mainly dealt with the edition, translation, and analysis of the correspondence exchanged between the Mamluk sultans and their counterparts or others. The result is a quite detailed knowledge of the nature of the relations between the Mamluk sultanate

¹⁴Li Guo, "Mamluk Historiographic Studies: The State of the Art," *MSR* 1 (1997): 15–43.

¹⁵A clear example of this is to be found in William M. Brinner, "Some Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Documents from Non-Archival Sources," *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 117–43.



and other states and how this was expressed in diplomatic terms. The copies of these documents have been retrieved from sources the nature of which may vary greatly. They may be classified as follows:

I. Historical and Literary Works

Among the most widely-used sources of this type are the *Tashrīf al-Ayyām wa-al-‘Uṣūr fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Manṣūr* by Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir,¹⁶ *Al-Faḍl al-Ma’thūr min Sīrat al-Sulṭān al-Malik al-Manṣūr* by Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī,¹⁷ *Zubdat al-Fikrah* by Baybars al-Manṣūrī,¹⁸ all three of them dealing with Qalāwūn’s reign; and finally Ibn al-Furāt’s *Tārīkh al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk*¹⁹ for the other periods. As we will see, documents are sometimes found in European archives in translation and this allows a comparison with the Arabic versions. The stage of inventory and study of these texts is well advanced and it can be said that no surprises are awaiting us, even if some sources are still available only in manuscript form. Among these studies, P. M. Holt’s are particularly noteworthy. These are devoted to the treaties concluded with Christian states,²⁰ and his pioneering book on those concluded

¹⁶Edited by Murād Kāmil (Cairo, 1961).

¹⁷Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī’s *Biography of the Mamluk Sultan Qalāwūn*, ed. Paulina B. Lewicka, *Orientalia Polona*, no. 2 (Warsaw, 2000).

¹⁸*Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah*, ed. Donald S. Richards, *Bibliotheca Islamica*, no. 42 (Beirut, 1998).

¹⁹Vols. 7–9, ed. Quṣṭanṭīn Zurayq and Najlā ‘Izz al-Dīn, [American University of Beirut] Publications of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Oriental Series, nos. 9, 10, 14, 17 (Beirut, 1936–42).

²⁰“Baybars’s Treaty with the Lady of Beirut in 667/1269,” in *Crusade and Settlement: Papers Read at the First Conference of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East and Presented to R. C. Smail*, ed. P. W. Edbury (Cardiff, 1985), 242–50; “The Mamluk Sultanate and Aragon: The Treaties of 689/1290 and 692/1293,” *Tārīḥ* 2 (1992): 105–18; “Mamluk-Frankish Diplomatic Relations in the Reign of Baybars (658–76/1260–77),” *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 32 (1988): 180–195; “Mamluk-Frankish Diplomatic Relations in the Reign of Qalāwūn (678–89/1279–90),” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1989): 278–89; “Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad’s Letter to a Spanish Ruler in 699/1300,” *Al-Masāq* 3 (1990): 23–29; “Qalāwūn’s Treaty with Acre in 1283,” *English Historical Review* 91 (1976): 802–12; “Qalāwūn’s Treaty with Genoa in 1290,” *Der Islam* 57 (1980): 101–8; “Qalāwūn’s Treaty with the Latin Kingdom (682/1283): Negotiation and Abrogation,” in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, vol. 1, *Proceedings of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd International Colloquium Organized at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in May 1992, 1993 and 1994*, ed. U. Vermeulen and D. de Smet, *Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta*, no. 73 (Leuven, 1995), 324–34; “The Treaties of the Early Mamluk Sultans with the Frankish States,” *BSOAS* 43 (1980): 67–76; “Treaties between the Mamluk Sultans and the Frankish Authorities,” in *XIX. Deutscher Orientalistentag*, ed. Wolfgang Voigt, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Supplement III (Wiesbaden, 1977), 474–84.



mainly with Crusader states has remained unsurpassed.²¹ He translated them and made an historical and diplomatic commentary, comparing them with other sources, in particular Christian ones. The Muslim sources to which he traced these treaties are Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, Ibn al-Furāt, and al-Qalqashandī. Beside Holt, other studies are useful, such as the one carried out by Daoulatli²² on an exchange of letters between Qalāwūn and rulers of Ifrīqīyah on the basis of Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s text. It is this same source which recently gave Reuven Amitai-Preiss the opportunity to examine the correspondence between the Mongol ruler Abagha and Baybars.²³ Despite the numerous articles published on the subject, some sources have been neglected, particularly the *Tārīkh Bayrūt* by Ṣāliḥ ibn Yaḥyá (fl. 1424–37). He was a member of a family of amirs in Lebanon (the Buhturids) and his text was available to scholars as early as 1898,²⁴ although a more accurate edition, by Francis Hours and Kamal Salibi, appeared in 1969.²⁵ This is a special case in the category of historical sources because the author reproduced archival documents of his family, such as nomination documents to the rank of amir. This is not

Michele Amari also studied a peace treaty preserved in Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s *Tashrīf al-Ayyām* regarding the King of Aragon and the King of Sicily: Michele Amari, *Bibliotheca arabo-sicula ossia raccolta di testi arabici che toccano la geografia, la storia, le biografie e la bibliografia della Sicilia* (Lipsia, 1857), 342–52. See also Francesco Gabrieli, “Trattato di Qalawūn coi Templari di Tortosa,” in *Storici Arabi delle Crociate*, ed. idem, *Scrittori di storia*, no. 6 (Turin, 1957), 305–12, 314–21.

²¹Early Mamluk Diplomacy (1260–1290): *Treaties of Baybars and Qalāwūn with Christian Rulers*, Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts, no. 12 (Leiden-New York-Cologne, 1995).

²²Abdelaziz Daoulatli, “Les relations entre le sultan Qala’un et l’Ifriqiya d’après deux documents égyptiens (680 Hg/1281 J.C.-689 Hg/1290 J.C.),” *Revue de l’Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* 17 (1974): 43–62.

²³Reuven Amitai-Preiss, “An Exchange of Letters in Arabic between Abayā Īlkḥān and Sultan Baybars (A.H. 667/A.D. 1268–69),” *Central Asiatic Journal* 38 (1994): 11–33. Very early, de Sacy published a similar letter exchange between Baybars and Timur’s son on the basis of the evidence found in Khalīl al-Zāhirī’s *Zubdat Kashf al-Mamālik*: “Lettre du Sultan Mēlic-alaschraf Barsēbaī, à Mirza Schahrokh, fils de Timour,” in *Chrestomathie arabe* (Paris, 1826; repr. Osnabrück, 1973), 2:71–87 and Arabic text, 11–17. Furthermore, documents regarding private affairs may also be found in this kind of source, as demonstrated by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, “Marsūm mamlūkī šarīf bi-mukhālafat ‘aḳīdat Ibn Taymīyah,” *Majallat al-Majma’ al-‘Ilmī al-‘Arabī/Revue de l’Académie arabe de Damas* 33 (1958): 259–69 (document found in Ibn al-Dawādārī’s *Al-Durar al-Fākhira*).

²⁴*Tārīkh Bayrūt wa-Akhbār al-Umarā’ al-Buḥturīyīn min Banī al-Gharb*, ed. Louis Cheikho as *Histoire de Beyrouth et des Bohtor émirs d’al-Gharb par Salih ibn Yahya* (Beirut, 1902). First appeared in several fascicles of *Al-Mashriq* 1 (1898).

²⁵*Tārīkh Bayrūt: Akhbār al-Salaf min Dhurriyat Buḥtur ibn ‘Alī, Amīr al-Gharb bi-Bayrūt*, ed. Francis Hours and Kamal Salibi, *Recherches publiées sous la direction de l’Institut de lettres orientales de Beyrouth*, série 4: *Histoire et sociologie du Proche-Orient*, no. 35 (Beirut, 1969).



exceptional, but what makes it valuable is that in this particular case he indicated in great detail all the elements appearing on the documents, which were commonly disregarded by others, and if we now have a good knowledge of which motto was used by which sultan, it is largely thanks to his work.

Besides Egyptian sources, it must be kept in mind that other sources may be useful. Although copies of Mamluk correspondence are rarely found in the works of Andalusian historians, in one instance they are (al-Maqqarī, d. 1632).²⁶ Christian sources may also prove interesting and reliable in this respect as was demonstrated by Marius Canard,²⁷ who found a copy of a letter sent by al-Nāṣir Ḥasan to the Byzantine emperor John VI Cantacuzene (dated 1349), a document which gives valuable information on the fate of Christians in the Mamluk sultanate, events about which Mamluk chronicles remain silent. The letter was found in the chronicle written by the emperor himself at the end of his life, and although it is preserved only in its Greek translation, it undoubtedly reflects the Arabic original as Canard was able to prove by a comparison of the epithets reserved for the Byzantine emperors according to Muslim chancery manuals.

II. Chancery Encyclopedias and Manuals

Among all the sources, this kind of work is one of the most useful in tracing the evolution of diplomatics, particularly in the Egyptian context. Written by several authors at various periods, they offer the possibility to recreate the functioning of the Egyptian chancery over several centuries. The most famous of these manuals is unquestionably al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā fī Ṣinā'at al-Inshā'*. Available in a rather good edition with an index,²⁸ its value has been quickly recognized and it is no surprise if we find it frequently utilized in the studies published so far. Its major shortcoming lies in the fact that it is not practical to use, even with the indexes, and Björkman is to be commended for having given a clear account of its contents,²⁹ although he failed to supply the required diplomatic commentary. Since that time, several parts of the *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā* have been translated, the most recent

²⁶Marius Canard, "Les relations entre les Mérinides et les Mamelouks au XIVe siècle," *Annales de l'Institut d'études orientales* (Algiers) 5 (1939–41): 41–48.

²⁷Marius Canard, "Une lettre du Sultan Malik Nāṣir Ḥasan à Jean VI Cantacuzène (750/1349)," *Annales de l'Institut d'études orientales* (Algiers) 3 (1937): 27–52.

²⁸Cairo, 1913–20, repr. 1963. Muḥammad Qindīl al-Baqlī, *Fahāris Kitāb Ṣubḥ al-A'shā fī Ṣinā'at al-Inshā'* (Cairo, 1970).

²⁹Walther Björkman, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Staatskanzlei im islamischen Ägypten*, Abhandlungen aus dem Gebiet der Auslandskunde, vol. 28, Reihe B: Völkerkunde, Kulturgeschichte und Sprachen, vol. 16 (Hamburg, 1928).



being Maria Pia Pedani's book on the *dār al-ṣulḥ*,³⁰ where the section dealing with truces (sing. *hudnah*) is translated into Italian. The *Ṣubḥ* is renowned for the great number of documents it has preserved, and these have been the subject of various articles. In addition to Holt's studies already mentioned, the articles of Canard on the relations with the Merinids in the fourteenth century and with the Byzantines³¹ are important, and also those of Urbain Vermeulen concerning the correspondence exchanged between the Crusaders and the Mongols.³² Unfortunately, most of these lack a diplomatic commentary.

Besides al-Qalqashandī, other works, some of which he used extensively, have been made available in critical editions. Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-'Umarī's *Al-Ta'rīf bi-al-Muṣṭalaḥ al-Sharīf*,³³ Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh's *Tathqīf al-Ta'rīf bi-al-Muṣṭalaḥ al-Sharīf*,³⁴ and al-Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab* are now completely

³⁰Maria Pia Pedani, *La dimora della pace: Considerazioni sulle capitolazioni tra i paesi islamici e l'Europa*, Quaderni di Studi Arabi, Studi e testi, no. 2 (Rome, 1996).

³¹"Les relations entre les Mérinides et les Mamelouks au XIVe siècle," *Annales de l'Institut d'études orientales* (Algiers) 5 (1939–41): 41–81; "Le traité de 1281 entre Michel Paléologue et le Sultan Qalā'ūn," *Byzantion* 10 (1935): 669–80; "Un traité entre Byzance et l'Égypte au XIIIe siècle et les relations diplomatiques de Michel VIII Paléologue avec les Sultans Mamlûks Baibars et Qalā'ūn," in *Mélanges Gaudefroy-Demombynes* (Cairo, 1935–45), 197–224. On this subject, see also Franz Dölger, "Der Vertrag des Sultans Qalā'ūn von Ägypten mit dem Kaiser Michael VIII. Palaiologos (1281)," in *Byzantinische Diplomatie* (Ettal, 1956), 225–44; also published in *Serta Monacensia: Franz Babinger zum 15. Januar 1951 als Festgruss dargebracht*, ed. Hans Joachim Kissling and Alois Schmaus (Leiden, 1952), 60–79. On the relations between Byzantium and Mamluk Egypt, see now Mohamed Tahar Mansouri, *Recherches sur les relations entre Byzance et l'Égypte (1259–1453) d'après les sources arabes*, Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de la Manouba, Série Histoire, no. 1 (Tunis, 1992); and Dimitri A. Korobeinikov, "Diplomatic Correspondence between Byzantium and the Mamluk Sultanate in the Fourteenth Century," *Al-Masāq* 16 (2004): 53–74.

³²Urbain Vermeulen, "Le traité d'armistice entre le sultan Baybars et les Hospitaliers de Ḥiṣn al-Akrād et al-Marqab (4 Ramadan 665 A.H./29 mai 1267)," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 19 (1988): 189–95; "Le traité d'armistice relatif à al-Marqab conclu entre Baybars et les Hospitaliers (1 Ramadan 669/13 avril 1271)," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 8 (1990): 123–31; "Timur Lang en Syrie: la correspondance entre le Mamlûk Farāğ et le Mérinide Abū Sa'īd," in *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, vol. 2, *Proceedings of the 4th and 5th International Colloquium Organized at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in May 1995 and 1996*, ed. U. Vermeulen and D. de Smet, *Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta*, no. 83 (Leuven, 1998), 303–11. Add to these William Brinner's study already quoted. See also Henri Lammens, "Correspondances diplomatiques entre les Sultans Mamlouks d'Égypte et les puissances chrétiennes," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 9 (1904): 151–87 and 359–92; idem, "Relations officielles entre la Cour Romaine et les sultans mamlouks d'Égypte," *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 8 (1903): 101–10.

³³Ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shams al-Dīn (Beirut, 1988); ed. Samīr al-Durūbī (al-Karak, 1992).

³⁴Ed. Rudolf Veselý, *Textes arabes et études islamiques*, no. 27 (Cairo, 1987).



published.³⁵ Other minor works may still prove useful for specific subjects, as is shown by Rudolf Veselý, who published a short treatise by the same Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmārī: the *ʿUrf al-Taʿrīf*, one of the sources used by al-Qalqashandī, which was considered lost, and of which he discovered a unique copy in the Chester Beatty Library (no. 3849). He provided an edition of this notable work on official letters to which he added the text of another treatise ascribed to the same author and dealing with the same subject,³⁶ providing an essential supplement to the references available on this subject.

III. *Munshaʾāt*

Compared to the manuals which have a wider aim, these anthologies of models are more restricted. Their authors had a different aim, that is collecting various models of documents issued by the chancery, so that they could be used by uninspired clerks. Once again, caution is required for the use made of them. Few of them are available in published form, although manuscripts have been identified for a long time. A quick glance in catalogues of manuscripts arranged according to themes will inform students of the work that remains to be done. Among the most valuable, let us note the Paris Ms. 4439, entitled *ʿAl-Maqṣid al-Rafīʿ*.³⁷ Already described by Max van Berchem at the beginning of the last century,³⁸ its interest has diminished since most of its sources (al-Qalqashandī, Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmārī, Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh) have been published. However, it remains important for the documents issued under the last sultans. Another manuscript, held by the same institution under shelfmark 4440, is also noteworthy.³⁹ Anonymous and with no title recorded, it is divided into two parts: one containing examples of letters written by high government officials, and another preserving samples of letters addressed by the Mamluk sultans to other Muslim rulers. The manuscript is undated, but the most recent document goes back to 1468. Despite its value, since it supplements previous sources for the correspondence exchanged with other Muslim powers, it has not been thoroughly studied. Colin studied five letters among which

³⁵ Cairo, 1964–97.

³⁶ Rudolf Veselý, "Zwei *Opera Cancellaria Minora* des Šihābuddīn Aḥmad b. Faḍlullāh al-ʿUmārī," *Archiv Orientalní* 70 (2002): 513–57.

³⁷ William MacGuckin Baron de Slane, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes de la Bibliothèque Nationale* (Paris, 1883–95), 708.

³⁸ Max van Berchem, *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum: Égypte* (Cairo, 1894–1903), 441–53.

³⁹ Baron de Slane, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes*.



one had been issued by Baybars,⁴⁰ while Darrāj published two letters exchanged with the Indian sultanate of Malwa⁴¹ (one was issued by Qāyṭbāy's chancery).

Less known but nonetheless significant, the *Qahwat al-Inshā'* of Ibn Ḥijjah al-Ḥamawī (lived beginning fifteenth century) is preserved in several manuscripts. It deals with another kind of model (writs of investiture) and Veselý called our attention to its value in 1991.⁴² As early as 1967, Rose di Meglio studied a copy held by the Naples library. She published one of these deeds dealing with the governorship of Tripoli under the rule of Khushqadam (866), confirming that in this case too the chancery rules as prescribed in manuals had been applied.⁴³

Other texts of this kind are still waiting to be discovered and studied. Recently, Veselý published⁴⁴ new data about a Leiden manuscript whose title ("Zumrat al-Nāzirīn wa-Nuzhat al-Nādirīn") reveals nothing about its contents. After having examined the whole manuscript, which contains more than 100 documents and letters all connected to the Qaramanid princes of Larende, he was able to demonstrate that these were original documents, not models, and that the volume was a copy of documents found in the Qaramanid archives by a professional clerk. As for the Mamluk period, 31 letters regarding international affairs (letters exchanged with Barqūq about Timur's threat) as well as private matters (e.g., demand for the return of a young kidnapped boy) complete our knowledge of the relations established between these two powers. It is to be hoped that Veselý will complete an edition of this important text in the near future.

⁴⁰ Georges S. Colin, "Contribution à l'étude des relations diplomatiques entre les Musulmans d'Occident et l'Égypte au XVe siècle," in *Mélanges Maspero*, vol. 3, *Orient islamique*, Mémoires publiés par les membres de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, no. 68 (Cairo, 1935–40), 197–206. At the same time another article dealing with a similar subject was published: Ḥabīb Zayyāt, "Athar Unuf: Nuskhat Qiṣṣah Waradat ilā al-Abwāb al-Sharīfah al-Sulṭānīyah al-Malakīyah Ināl min al-Muslimīn al-Qāṭi'īn Lishbūnah," *Al-Machriq* 35 (1937): 13–22.

⁴¹ Aḥmad Darrāj, "Risālatān bayna Sulṭān Mālwah wa-al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy," *Majallat Ma'had al-Makḥṭūṭāt al-'Arabīyah/Revue de l'Institut des manuscrits arabes* 4 (1958/1377): 97–123.

⁴² Rudolf Veselý, "Eine neue Quelle zur Geschichte Ägyptens im 9./15. Jahrhundert," in XXV. *Deutscher Orientalistentag*, ed. Cornelia Wunsch, Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, Supplement X (Stuttgart, 1994), 136–43; idem, "Eine Stilkunstschrift oder eine Urkundensammlung? Das *Qahwat al-inshā'* des Abū Bakr ibn Ḥidjdja al-Ḥamawī," in *Threefold Wisdom: Islam, the Arab World and Africa: Papers in Honour of Ivan Hrbek*, ed. Otakar Hulec and Miloš Mendel (Prague, 1993), 237–47. He is currently preparing a critical edition of this work which will be published by the German Institute in Beirut in the "Bibliotheca islamica" series.

⁴³ Rita Rose di Meglio, "Un decreto di nomina alla *niyāba* di Tripoli di Siria al tempo del Sultano mamelucco Khushqadam (10 Sha'bān 866 Eg.)," *Rivista degli studi orientali* 42 (1967): 229–40 + pl. I–II.

⁴⁴ "Ein Briefwechsel zwischen Ägypten und den Qaramaniden im 14. Jahrhundert," *Asian and African Studies* (Bratislava) 9 (2000): 36–44.



PRIVATE DOCUMENTS

As for private documents, Muslim scholars devoted various works to their composition. The most important ones for our purpose are those dealing with the judicial formularies (*shurūt*), whose main aim was to provide judges with models of legal documents so that their own could withstand scrutiny and legal challenges. Donald Little has shown, on several occasions, that a serious study of legal documents cannot be undertaken without the help of these works, which provide indispensable help in the deciphering of technical terms. The restriction put forward regarding documents found in historical sources and chancery manuals is confirmed for this kind of source: these manuals offer to the reader models where the scholar finds interesting information on the formularies used in a great variety of circumstances illuminating judicial and *a fortiori* social life, but no genuine documents.⁴⁵ Some of these valuable texts have been published, mainly for periods preceding the Mamluk sultanate. For this period, Mamlukists have had at their disposal, for a long time, al-Asyūṭī's treatise,⁴⁶ one of the most important in this genre. There is still new material which requires study and publication. To this end, Gabriela Linda Guellil published in 1985 a study of al-Ṭarsūsī's *Kitāb al-I'lām*, an important *shurūt* work for the judicial system of Damascus in the fourteenth century.⁴⁷

Private documents may also be found in historical sources, as Carl Petry has shown.⁴⁸ He discovered an account of a divorce case mentioned in al-Ṣayrafī's *Inbā' al-Ḥaṣr bi-Abnā' al-Aṣr*. In his capacity as deputy judge, al-Ṣayrafī used to record the proceedings of the court, and it is on these notes that he relied to report this case, giving quite a detailed account of it, and in particular the text of the petition. The value of this example lies mainly in the information it provides on the status of women in medieval Egypt and their rights in marriage. Another significant source of this type of data lies in the many collections of judicial

⁴⁵On the discrepancies noted between these theoretical treatises and the surviving evidence, see Monika Gronke, "La Rédaction des actes privés dans le monde musulman médiéval: théorie et pratique," *Studia Islamica* 59 (1984): 159–74; Wael B. Hallaq, "Model *shurūt* Works and the Dialectic of Doctrine and Practice," *Islamic Law and Society* 2 (1995): 109–34.

⁴⁶Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Minhājī al-Asyūṭī (*adhuc viv.* 889/1484), *Jawāhir al-'Uqūd wa-Mu'īn al-Quḍāt wa-al-Muwaqqi'īn wa-al-Shuhūd*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥ. al-Fiqqī (Cairo, 1374/1955).

⁴⁷Gabriela Linda Guellil, *Damaszener Akten des 8./14. Jahrhunderts nach al-Ṭarsūsīs "Kitāb al-I'lām": eine Studie zum arabischen Justizwesen*, Islamwissenschaftliche Quellen und Texte aus deutschen Bibliotheken, no. 2 (Bamberg, 1985).

⁴⁸Carl F. Petry, "Conjugal Rights Versus Class Prerogatives: A Divorce Case in Mamlūk Cairo," in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety*, ed. Gavin R. G. Hambly, The New Middle Ages, no. 6 (Basingstoke, 1998), 227–40.



decisions (*fatāwī*), very numerous for the period under consideration. They allow us to get a glimpse of various social strata in their disparate circumstances.⁴⁹

DOCUMENTS

NON-MUSLIM COUNTRIES

I. Archival Collections

Dozens of documents from the Mamluk period are preserved in the archives of the contemporary Latin states (mainly Venice, Genoa, Pisa, Florence, Ragusa, and Barcelona).⁵⁰ This figure is however less than what one might expect in view of the close relations between some of these states over the centuries and even more so when one takes into account that European institutions kept well-organized archives. This is partly explained by the fact that Arabic documents, as well as others in foreign, exotic languages, were translated and their content transcribed into the official records (*Libri commemoriali*, *Libri iurium*). Some of them, however, have survived despite this practice. As expected, these collections contain above all else documents regarding diplomacy, and they throw some light on the nature of the relations that two states, one being Muslim, could establish. Despite this, it is not surprising to discover documents of a private nature, such as those regarding European merchants in the Levant. But here again, these deliver more information on the conditions of *dhimmīs* in the Muslim country than on the country itself. A Mamlukist might therefore believe that their benefit is less than other documents, but he must keep in mind that thanks to them we know how the Mamluks treated citizens from the *Dār al-Ṣulḥ* or the *Dār al-Ḥarb*. Moreover, if these documents have been preserved in their original form, they permit us to see how these chancery or private documents issued for foreign non-Muslim countries looked and how the chancery operated.

The majority of these documents may be classified in two categories: one comprising original documents, and the other translations (into Latin, Italian, or Spanish) of Arabic documents. The historian of the Mediterranean world must be able to handle both types, because those of the second type turn out to be helpful,

⁴⁹See for instance Aziz Suryal Atiya, "An Unpublished XIVth Century *Fatwā* on the Status of Foreigners in Mamlūk Egypt and Syria," in *Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Nahen und Fernen Ostens: Paul Kahle zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. W. Heffening and W. Kirfel (Leiden, 1935), 55–68 (includes edition and translation of a judicial decision dated to 754 A.H. and found in British Library MS Or. 9509, fols. 1–4); Benjamin O'Keeffe, "Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya: *Mas'alat al-kanā'is* (The Question of the Churches)," *Islamochristiana* 22 (1996): 53–78.

⁵⁰A general assessment of this kind of source was proposed in the following article, which was however too brief to be useful: Aḥmad Darrāj, "Les documents arabes sur l'Égypte islamique dans les archives européennes," in *Colloque international sur l'histoire du Caire/Al-Nadwah al-Duwalīyah li-Tārīkh al-Qāhirah*, Cairo 27 March–5 April 1969, ed. André Raymond et al. (Cairo, n.d.), 131.



above all when the translation is faithful to the original (rather than a paraphrase, as in most cases). Comparisons with other preserved documents of the same sort (either original or copies in manuals) afford us the opportunity to complete their study. Finally, the bulk of preserved archives regarding merchants and their business illuminates their trading practices in the Levant, and correspondingly commercial activities under Mamluk rule. The last example is eloquent: Georges Jehel's study of the Genoan trade in the eastern Mediterranean is based exclusively on such documents.⁵¹

Under the influence of Occidental diplomatics, the study of documents preserved in these countries, in particular Italy, began as early as the nineteenth century. The great Arabist de Sacy took an interest in these kinds of documents and published some of them.⁵² However, it was Amari, above all, who should be considered the founder of the study of Arabic documents preserved in Europe, which were the basis of several of his works.⁵³ A summary work, always valuable, is that of L. de Mas Latrie, who gathered in a thick volume all the peace and commercial treaties concluded by Latin states with the Muslim countries of North Africa (Egypt included).⁵⁴ The majority of the documents he gathered had already been the subject of studies by other scholars, but it would be erroneous to believe that their work does not call for revision. Firstly, the diplomatic commentary is frequently defective or obsolete. On the other hand, for the period we are considering, reproductions are rarely provided. These remarks are based on personal experience, although others, like John Wansbrough, had already noticed it. Recently, I have been charged with the task to reexamine in the light of recent research documents

⁵¹*Les Génois en Méditerranée occidentale (fin XIème-début XIVème siècle): Ébauche d'une stratégie pour un empire* (Amiens, 1993). For the Mamluk field, such studies as the following were based on both types of material: Subhi Y. Labib, *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens im Spätmittelalter (1171-1517)*, Vierteljahresschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Beihefte, no. 46 (Wiesbaden, 1965); Eliyahu Ashtor, *Levant Trade in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1983).

⁵²A. I. Silvestre de Sacy, "Pièces diplomatiques provenant des Archives de Gênes," *Notices et extraits des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale* 11 (1827): 1-96.

⁵³Michele Amari, *I diplomi arabi del R. Archivio fiorentino* (Florence, 1863); idem, *I diplomi arabi del R. Archivio fiorentino: Appendice* (Florence, 1867); idem, "De' titoli che usava la cancelleria de' Sultani di Egitto nel XIV secolo scrivendo ai reggitori di alcuni stati italiani," in *Atti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, 3rd ser., 12 (1884-85): 194-224; idem, "Il trattato stipulato da Giacomo II d'Aragona col sultano d'Egitto il 29 gennaio 1293," in *Atti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, 3rd ser., 11 (1883): 423-44.

⁵⁴*Traité de paix et de commerce et documents divers concernant les relations des Chrétiens avec les Arabes de l'Afrique septentrionale au moyen âge: Introduction historique* (Paris, 1865), *Documents* (Paris, 1868), *Supplément et tables* (Paris, 1872). De Mas Latrie reproduced documents in their original language, when it was an Occidental one, and only the translation of the Arabic documents.



published by Amari.⁵⁵ These documents consist of two peace treaties concluded between the Banū Ghāniyah amirs of Majorca (one dated to 1181 and the other to 1188) and Genoa.⁵⁶ Along with another one issued in favor of Pisa,⁵⁷ these are rare witnesses, almost unique, of the existence and functioning of the Almoravid chancery in these islands which were to be conquered a couple of decades later by the Christians. This work allowed some corrections to Amari's readings, but more essentially the reinterpretation of the texts in the light of the latest developments in the field. Anxious to compare both documents with the only other surviving example of this chancery bureau (the document issued in favor of Pisa), I was soon disappointed to learn that the original had been destroyed during the World War II bombing of Naples in 1944, where the document had been sent for an exhibition. No facsimile or photograph is known for this document and this means that the unique third witness of the activity of Almoravid chancery practice in Majorca has definitely been lost.

Among the most important archives from the Mamluk period in European countries, the collection of Venice is undoubtedly the one that holds the most value for Egypt and Syria. Almost 20 commercial treaties were concluded and are preserved in the State Archives. Most of them are in Latin or Venetian, which is explained by the fact that original documents were commonly held by the Signoria in Alexandria while the translations were sent to Venice. The whole collection was published by Tafel and Thomas in the nineteenth century.⁵⁸ However, Wansbrough, who devoted his Ph.D. thesis to the commercial relations between the Italian states and Egypt in the Mamluk period,⁵⁹ discovered several Arabic documents from the Circassian period that he published in several articles (a letter

⁵⁵ Michele Amari, "Nuovi ricordi arabici su la storia di Genova," *Atti della Società Ligure di Storia Patria* 5 (1867): 549–635 + 1–39 (Arabic).

⁵⁶ Frédéric Bauden, "Due trattati di pace conclusi tra i Banū Ġāniya, signori delle isole Baleari, e il comune di Genova nel dodicesimo secolo," in *I trattati del comune di Genova in età consolare*, ed. Maddalena Giordano, Frédéric Bauden, and D. Russo, *Fonti per la storia della Liguria* (Genoa, forthcoming).

⁵⁷ Amari, *I diplomi arabi del R. Archivio fiorentino*, 230–36, 274–75.

⁵⁸ G. L. F. Tafel and G. M. Thomas, *Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig, mit besonderer Beziehung auf Byzanz und die Levante*, pt. 2: 1205–1255 (docs. CLXI–CCCXXX) (Vienna, 1856), pt. 3: 1256–1299 (docs. CCCXXXI–CCCXCII) (Vienna, 1857; repr. Amsterdam, 1964). See also G. M. Thomas and R. Predelli, *Diplomatarium veneto-levantinum* (Venice, 1880–99); and more recently Maria Pia Pedani Fabris, "Gli ultimi accordi tra i sultani mamelucchi d'Egitto e la Repubblica di Venezia," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 12 (1994): 49–64.

⁵⁹ John Wansbrough, "Documents for the History of Commercial Relations between Egypt and Venice, 1442–1512," Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1961.



of Qāyṭbāy dated 1473 and a study of the embassy of Taghrībirdī in 1507).⁶⁰ More recently, Rossi studied Venetian documents regarding an embassy sent to the Mamluk sultan in 1490,⁶¹ even if in this case they are less important for our field. But more documents are to be discovered. Thus, Benjamin Arbel has discovered, in a manuscript held by the Marciana library, a copy of an Italian translation of a letter written by the *dawādār*, who was in 1473 at the head of an expeditionary force in Northern Syria, directed to the Venetian authorities.⁶² This document, although it has been preserved only in a translation, is important in that it bears witness to the fact that official correspondence was exchanged between functionaries other than rulers.

Moreover, some time ago, Maria Pia Pedani,⁶³ Professor at the University of Venice, who probably knows better than anyone else the Arabic and Turkish documents preserved at the State Archives as she worked there as an archivist for many years, brought to my attention the existence of 15 Arabic documents pertaining to the Mamluk period. A first examination reveals that we are dealing with documents of a private nature (lease contracts, purchase deeds, sworn declarations, etc.)⁶⁴ as well as official documents concerning the Venetian community in Alexandria. They owe their preservation to the fact that they were found in the archives of a former Venetian consul in the harbor city and were sent to Venice with the rest of his estate.

⁶⁰ John Wansbrough, "A Mamluk Ambassador to Venice in 913/1507," *BSOAS* 26 (1963): 503–30; idem, "A Mamluk Letter of 877/1473," *BSOAS* 24 (1961): 200–13 (also studied by Subhi Labib, "Ein Brief des Mamluken Sultans Qā'itbey an den Dogen von Venedig aus dem Jahre 1473," *Der Islam* 37 (1957): 324–29); and also published by Francis Hours, "Fraude commerciale et politique internationale: Les relations entre l'Égypte et Venise d'après une lettre de Qayt Bay (1472–1473)," *BEO* 25 (1972): 173–83; idem, "Venice and Florence in the Mamluk Commercial Privileges," *BSOAS* 28 (1965): 483–523.

⁶¹ *Ambasciata straordinaria al sultano d'Egitto (1489–1490)*, ed. Franco Rossi, *Fonti per la storia di Venezia*, Sez. 1, Archivi pubblici (Venice, 1988).

⁶² Benjamin Arbel, "Levantine Power Struggles in an Unpublished Mamluk Letter of 877 AH/1473 CE," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 7 (1992): 92–100.

⁶³ Maria Pia Pedani Fabris, "The Oath of a Venetian Consul in Egypt (1284)," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 14 (1996): 215–22.

⁶⁴ Labib, *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens*, 501–3 (with several mistakes in the identification, dates, and location); Maria Pia Pedani, "The Mamluk Documents of the Venetian State Archives: Historical Survey," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 20–21 (2002–3): 133–46; Frédéric Bauden, "The Mamluk Documents of the Venetian State Archives: Handlist," *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 20–21 (2002–3): 147–56; idem, "The Role of Interpreters in Alexandria in the Light of an Oath (*qasāma*) Taken in the Year 822 A.H./1419 A.D." (forthcoming); idem, "L'achat d'esclaves et la rédemption des captifs à Alexandrie d'après deux documents arabes d'époque mamelouke conservés aux Archives de l'Etat à Venise (ASVe)," in *Mélanges à la mémoire de Louis Pouzet, Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 58 (2005) (forthcoming).



Documents are also held in Florence, Pisa, and Genoa. They were the subject of two books published by Amari in the nineteenth century, scarcely available for consultation these days.⁶⁵ The main critique to be made with regard to these studies concerns the fact that almost no reproduction of the documents is provided. Their reconsideration by modern scholars has revealed that part of the work must be revised in light of the most recent research. Wansbrough republished in 1971 a safe-conduct granted by Qānṣūh to the Republic of Florence in 1507,⁶⁶ adding to his edition and translation a complete study of *amāns* in Islam, and particularly those issued by the Mamluk chancery. He also discovered unpublished material in Arabic in Florence at the Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana consisting of Mamluk treaties dated 1489⁶⁷ and 1497.⁶⁸

These were the main Republic cities in Italy, but the less important Republic of Ragusa, competitor of Venice in the late Middle Ages, also had contacts with other Mediterranean powers and it is not surprising to find within the holdings of the State Archives of this city (now Dubrovnik) three Mamluk documents, all of which have been published.⁶⁹

Closing this panorama of the main archives collections in Europe, a word must be said about the Archives of Castilla and Aragon (Barcelona). Mamluk documents preserved in this collection reveal the extent of the relations established between the Mamluk state and the West. These consist of nine treaties concluded with the King of Castilla and Aragon. Some of them were examined by Atiya for his study on the relations between Aragon and Egypt during the second and third

⁶⁵ Amari, *I diplomi arabi del R. Archivio fiorentino*; idem, "Nuovi ricordi arabici su la storia di Genova"; Joseph Karabacek, "Arabische Beiträge zur genuesischen Geschichte," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 1 (1887): 33–56. See also Charles Clermont-Ganneau, "Explication d'un passage du traité conclu entre le sultan Qelaoun et les Génois," in idem, *Recueil d'archéologie orientale*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1888), 219–23.

⁶⁶ John Wansbrough, "The Safe-Conduct in Muslim Chancery Practice," *BSOAS* 34 (1971): 20–35.

⁶⁷ John Wansbrough, "A Mamlūk Commercial Treaty Concluded with the Republic of Florence 894/1489," in *Documents from Islamic Chanceries*, ed. S. M. Stern (Oxford, 1965), 39–79, pl. XX–XXIX.

⁶⁸ John Wansbrough, "Venice and Florence in the Mamluk Commercial Privileges," *BSOAS* 28 (1965): 483–523.

⁶⁹ Gliša Elezović, *Turski spomenici* (Belgrade, 1952), 1:2:168, 175–76; Besim Korkut, *Arapski dokumenti u državnom arhivu u Dubrovniku* (Al-Wathā'iq al-'arabīyah fī Dār al-Mahfūzāt bi-madīnat Dūbrūwnīk), vol. 1, pt. 3, *Osnivanje Dubrovačkog Konsulata u Aleksandriji*, Posebna Izdanja (Orijentalni Institut u Sarajevu) no. 3 (Sarajevo, 1969).



reigns of Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn,⁷⁰ but not without mistakes in the dating and reading, as has been demonstrated.⁷¹ Later, these documents were published extensively in a general catalogue of the archives collection.⁷²

II. Library Collections

Besides these archival collections where the documents have been kept since their issue, there exist other small collections in Europe, particularly in libraries, where important collections of papyri are preserved.⁷³ The most important collection of Arabic papyri outside Egypt is the Erzherzog Rainer Sammlung at the National Library in Vienna. Here, 235 documents on paper have been discovered and studied by Werner Diem in three different catalogues according to their subject (business letters, private letters, and state letters).⁷⁴ A few of them are dated, but most are not and pose a problem since their identification as belonging to the Mamluk period must rely mainly on paleographical elements and philological

⁷⁰Aziz Suryal Atiya, *Egypt and Aragon: Embassies and Diplomatic Correspondence between A.D. 1300 and 1330*, Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, 23:7 (Leipzig, 1938). See also Amari, "Il trattato stipulato da Giacomo II d'Aragona;" Peter M. Holt, "The Mamluk Sultanate and Aragon: The Treaties of 689/1290 and 692/1293," *Tārīḥ* 2 (1992): 105–18 (reprinted in his *Early Mamluk Diplomacy*).

⁷¹Peter M. Holt, "Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's Letter to a Spanish Ruler in 699/1300," *Al-Masāq* 3 (1990): 23–29.

⁷²*Los documentos árabes diplomáticos del Archivo de la Corona de Aragón*, ed. and trans. Maximiliano A. Alarcón y Santón and Ramón García de Linares, Publicaciones de las escuelas de estudios árabes de Madrid y Granada, series C., no. 1 (Madrid, 1940). The following publication is now useless: Antonio de Capmany y de Montpalau, *Antiguos tratados de paces y alianzas entre algunos reyes de Aragón y diferentes príncipes infieles de Asia y África, desde el siglo XIII hasta el XV* (Madrid, 1786).

⁷³For an overview of the collections and their contents, with specific references to the published material, see Adolf Grohmann, *Einführung und Chrestomathie zur arabischen Papyrskunde*, vol. 1, *Einführung*, Monografie Archiv Orientalní, vol. 13 (Prague, 1954); *Chrestomathie de papyrologie arabe*, ed. Adolf Grohmann and Raif Georges Khoury, Handbuch der Orientalistik (Leiden, 1993).

⁷⁴Werner Diem, *Arabische Geschäftsbriefe des 10. bis 14. Jahrhunderts aus der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien*, Documenta Arabica antiqua, no. 1 (Wiesbaden, 1995); idem, *Arabische Privatbriefe des 9. bis 15. Jahrhunderts aus der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien*, Documenta Arabica antiqua, no. 2 (Wiesbaden, 1996); idem, *Arabische amtliche Briefe des 10. bis 16. Jahrhunderts aus der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien*, Documenta Arabica antiqua, no. 3 (Wiesbaden, 1996); idem, "Dringende Bitte aus dem bedrängten Aleppo um Truppen: Anmerkungen zur Form des mamlūkischen Dienstschreibens," in *Urkunden und Urkundenformulare im klassischen Altertum und in den orientalischen Kulturen*, ed. Raif Georges Khoury (Heidelberg, 1999), 143–45 (study of doc. 37 already published in his *Arabische amtliche Briefe*); idem, "Vier arabische Rechtsurkunden aus dem Ägypten des 14. und 15. Jahrhunderts," *Der Islam* 72 (1995): 193–257.



analysis. Diem has been criticized for his working method by Yūsuf Rāḡib, as too hasty. Rāḡib's critiques⁷⁵ may be accepted to a certain extent, but there is no doubt that what is involved here is a settling of scores which goes beyond scientific work. Diem may be criticized for his classification (some documents that appear in a given volume are not really of this nature), his readings, and/or his translations,⁷⁶ but he must be commended for having published each time a volume of plates which illustrates all the documents, giving the reader the opportunity to verify his results. Hasty as he may have been, his work has the merit of putting at the disposal of scholars the majority of the Mamluk documents held in Vienna in a relatively short time.

The Cambridge University Library is known for its large collection of Geniza documents. Besides this, it also holds the Michaelides collection of papyri and papers. It was among these that Richards discovered a scroll acquired from Christie's in 1971, the origin of which is unknown. The document is the product of a series of court procedures in Damascus with various acts stretching over a period of one hundred eighty years from 1366 to 1546. As Richards has shown in his study,⁷⁷ it deals essentially with a *waqf* in favor of the Yūnusīyah Sufi order in Damascus, the terms of which were confirmed during this long period. Later on, he published an article about a rare type of document issued by the army bureau⁷⁸ (called *murabba'*: square decree) of which only nine examples were attested in the Ḥaram collection.

Undoubtedly, some documents, small in number, must have found their way into other library collections. Even the Cyril and Methodus Library in Sofia, which preserves several hundred Arabic and Turkish documents dating to the Ottoman period, owns a copy of a *daftar* regarding *waqf* properties in Beirut, stretching over a period of 250 years (1274–1544).⁷⁹ Ottoman copies of documents pertaining to the Mamluk period are as such significant and cannot be disregarded on the basis of chronology.

⁷⁵ *Bulletin critique des Annales islamologiques* 14 (1997): 171–79; *ibid.*, 15 (1998): 194–97; *ibid.*, 16 (2000): 185–86.

⁷⁶ To state that a reading and the translation offered, whoever did them, are never definitive is probably depressing for young students, yet unavoidable.

⁷⁷ Donald S. Richards, "A Damascus Scroll Relating to a Waqf for the Yūnusiyya," *JRAS* (1990): 267–81.

⁷⁸ Donald S. Richards, "A Mamlūk Emir's 'Square' Decree," *BSOAS* 54 (1991): 63–67.

⁷⁹ Doc. F.278, a.u. 1. See Stoyanka Kenderova, *Opis na dokumentite na arabski ezik, zapazeni u orientalskiya otdel na narodnata biblioteka 'Kiril i Metodii' u Sofiya XIII–XX v.* (Fihris al-wathā'iq bi-al-lughah al-'arabīyah al-mahfūzah fī al-qism al-sharqī ladā al-maktabah al-waṭanīyah "Kīrīl wa-Mītūdī"—Šūfyā: al-qarn al-thālith 'ashar–al-qarn al-'ishrīn) (Sofia, 1984). It was studied by Vera Mutafchieva, "On the problem of landowning in Syria in the XIV–XVI c.," *Vizantijski vremennik* 26 (1965): 58–66.



III. Museum Collections

Museum collections undoubtedly hold Mamluk documents. However, they are seldom catalogued and known (Louvre, British Museum, etc.).⁸⁰ Recently, D. S. Richards learned of the existence of a scroll preserved at the Oriental Institute Museum of Chicago, which obtained it in 1929 from Bernhard Moritz.⁸¹ His study has shown that it deals with Frankish commercial practice at Tripoli in 1513. It is quite a rare chancery document as it was addressed to a Muslim official. Another document, still unpublished (OIM 13789), was issued in the reign of Ṭūmān Bāy (dated to 12 Muḥarram 922/17 February 1516) and regards the trade of the Venetians in Alexandria and other ports.⁸²

The University of Pennsylvania Museum is also worthy of mention as it holds four letters written by Mamluk officers. These are scattered in the middle of a collection of Arabic papyri catalogued by Levi della Vida.⁸³ The author provided in an appendix a reproduction of one of these letters, which served as the basis for an edition by Diem.⁸⁴ However, the remaining three still await study.

IV. Private Collections

Some documents find their way into private hands. To get a clear idea of these is almost impossible. If one surfaces, it is always by chance and depends on the collector's good will. Most of the time, the collection has to be sold and bought by an official institution to get an exact accounting of its contents. One example of the first reality is illustrated by Denise Rémondon, who owned a Mamluk document. This was fortunately published by Cahen, who got a photograph from the owner before her death.⁸⁵ The document is interesting as it deals with a short news item of a type rarely reported by the chronicles regarding the murder of three persons

⁸⁰In addition to the census of libraries and museum collections of papyri surveyed by Grohmann and Khoury (*Chrestomathie de papyrologie arabe*), consult now for the U.S.A. Petra M. Sijpesteijn, "North American Papyrus Collections Revisited," *Al-Bardiyyat, Newsletter of the International Society of Arabic Papyrology* 1 (2002–3): 11–19, where references to documents on paper, some of them from the Mamluk period, are found.

⁸¹Donald S. Richards, "A Late Mamluk Document Concerning Frankish Commercial Practice at Tripoli," *BSOAS* 62 (1999): 21–35.

⁸²Gladys Frantz-Murphy, who shared this information with me, intends to publish the document in question.

⁸³Giorgio Levi Della Vida, *Arabic Papyri in the University Museum in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania)*, Atti della Accademia nazionale dei Lincei, no. 378 (Rome, 1981).

⁸⁴Werner Diem, "Ein mamlūkischer Brief aus der Sammlung des University Museum in Philadelphia," *Le Muséon* 99 (1986): 131–43.

⁸⁵Claude Cahen et al., "Un fait divers au temps des Mamluks," *Arabica* 25 (1978): 198–202.



in the countryside of Egypt. An order is given to arrest the perpetrators and bring them to Cairo, but the accused prefer to pay blood money instead. Since the death of its owner it has been impossible to discover what has become of this document.

MUSLIM COUNTRIES

I. Non-Muslim Collections and Archives

A. Egypt

1. Geniza (Ben Ezra Synagogue, Cairo)

The word *geniza* designates in Hebrew a repository of discarded writings. It was a common feature among certain Jewish communities not to discard papers where the name of God was written. This explains why, for centuries, the Jewish community of Old Cairo gathered all the documents considered obsolete in a particular repository. These consist of religious manuscripts as well as private documents regarding merchants, although some official documents from the chancery were also recovered among them.⁸⁶ This huge trove was packed into a room (Geniza) during a period that stretches from the tenth to the fifteenth century (mainly to the thirteenth century). After this time, its existence was forgotten until 1890, when it was rediscovered. It gave an extraordinary impetus to Jewish studies in general, not only for Egypt, but also for all the Mediterranean area and even Asia (India). Almost half a million scraps of papers and manuscripts, sometimes almost complete, were retrieved from this room.⁸⁷ The majority are written in Hebrew or in Judaeo-Arabic. However, some 10,000 scraps of paper are in Arabic characters. Unfortunately for researchers (or fortunately, because who knows what would have happened to these documents otherwise?), most of them were bought by private collectors who gave them, or bequeathed them, to libraries in Europe and North America. Among these, two took the lion's share: the Firkovitch collection (St. Petersburg), which is not relevant for our topic, and the Taylor-Schechter collection in Cambridge (Cambridge University Library).⁸⁸ This dispersal does not facilitate their consultation as well as the fact that, being mostly scraps of paper, the cataloguing work is still in progress. Be that as it may, study has begun and to date has thrown new light on the religious, economic, and social life of the

⁸⁶For this last category, it remains questionable how they found their way into private hands, in this case Jewish. A convincing answer would be the reason invoked in the Introduction, pp. 17–18.

⁸⁷Shlomo Dov Goitein, "The Documents of the Cairo Geniza as a Source for Mediterranean Social History," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 80 (1960): 91–100.

⁸⁸For a good introduction to the Cambridge collection of Genizah papers, see now Stefan C. Reif, *A Jewish Archive from Old Cairo: The History of Cambridge University's Genizah Collection* (Richmond, 2000), and idem, "A Centennial Assessment of Genizah Studies," in *The Cambridge Genizah Collections: Their Contents and Significance*, ed. idem and Shulamit Reif, Cambridge University Library Genizah Series, no. 1 (Cambridge, 2002), 1–35.



medieval Jews in the Orient, and more particularly on the middle class which is rarely mentioned in the contemporary chronicles.⁸⁹ Some dated, or datable, documents go back to the Mamluk period, as has been demonstrated by S. D. Goitein in an article published in 1972, which has remained little known because it is in Hebrew.⁹⁰ Undoubtedly, Goitein is the scholar most familiar with these Geniza documents of a private nature, and his masterly study in several volumes is a prerequisite for anyone working on the Mediterranean societies in the Middle Ages (mainly eleventh–thirteenth centuries).⁹¹ This work is essential reading, even for Mamlukists, as the author makes reference here and there to documents from this period.⁹² A similar assessment can be made of Ashtor's book on the evolution of prices.⁹³ Unfortunately, most of the documents relevant for us are still awaiting publication and are not easily available for consultation. A list of these documents would be most welcome. Meanwhile, the researcher has at his disposal bibliographies

⁸⁹Besides the essential study of S. D. Goitein (see below), the most recent results are to be found in David Marmer, "Patrilocal Residence and Jewish Court Documents in Medieval Cairo," in *Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, Communication and Interaction: Essays in Honor of William M. Brinner*, ed. Benjamin H. Hary et al., Brill's Series in Jewish Studies, no. 27 (Leiden, 2000), 67–82; Judith Olszowy-Schlanger, *Karaite Marriage Documents from the Cairo Geniza: Legal Tradition and Community Life in Mediaeval Egypt and Palestine*, Etudes sur le judaïsme médiéval, no. 20 (Leiden, 1998).

⁹⁰Shlomo Dov Goitein, "Geniza Documents from the Mamluk Period" (in Hebrew; English summary), *Tarbiz* 41 (1972): 59–81. For a more recent, but general, assessment of the Arabic documents for all periods in the Geniza collection, see Geoffrey Khan, "Arabic Documents in the Cairo Genizah," *Bulletin of the Israeli Academic Center in Cairo* 21 (1997): 23–25.

⁹¹Shlomo Dov Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: the Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* (Berkeley, 1967–93); Werner Diem and Hans-Peter Radenberg, *A Dictionary of the Arabic Material of S. D. Goitein's "A Mediterranean Society"* (Wiesbaden, 1994).

⁹²See also Shlomo Dov Goitein, "The Exchange Rate of Gold and Silver Money in Fatimid and Ayyubid Times: A Preliminary Study of the Relevant Geniza Material," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 8 (1965): 1–46, where, despite the chronological span indicated in the title, nine documents from the Mamluk period are studied.

⁹³Eliyahu Ashtor, *Histoire des prix et des salaires dans l'Orient médiéval*, Monnaie, prix, conjoncture, no. 8 (Paris, 1969). See also idem, *History of the Jews in Egypt and Syria under the Rule of the Mamluks*, vol. 3 (Jerusalem, 1970), which studies 74 documents that are undated, but that Ashtor was able to date to the Mamluk period due to exchange rates between dinars and dirhams; and more recently, Avraham L. Udovitch, "L'énigme d'Alexandrie: sa position au moyen âge d'après les documents de la Geniza du Caire," *Revue de l'Occident musulman et de la Méditerranée* 46 (1987): 71–79; idem, "Medieval Alexandria: Some Evidence from the Cairo Genizah Documents," in *Alexandria and Alexandrianism: Papers Delivered at a Symposium Organized by the J. Paul Getty Museum and the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities and held at the Museum, April 22–25, 1993* (Malibu, 1996), 273–84.



published regularly for the Cambridge collections (the most recent was published by Reif in 1988 and covers the period stretching from 1896 to 1980),⁹⁴ albeit the main criticism I would make is that the material is arranged according to the shelfmark of the documents studied. This means that it allows one to know whether a document has been published or not, but it presupposes that one knows what one is searching for. It is thus like squaring the circle. Fortunately, in 1993, Geoffrey Khan published a book devoted to the study of 159 administrative and legal documents in Arabic in the Cambridge collection.⁹⁵ Among them, some are dated or datable to the Mamluk period (business and personal correspondence, wills, contracts of all kinds, bills of account, etc.), the most recent one being dated to 697/1298. The only criticism to be made, for which the author must surely not be blamed, rather the commercial editor, regards the small number (22) of documents reproduced, which does not facilitate further study by other scholars. Other documents from the Mamluk period are still awaiting publication.

2. Monastery of Saint Catherine (Mount Sinai)

This is an old story, too, in the sense that the discovery of the treasures it holds goes back to the nineteenth century. In fact, the first who paid attention to it was a traveller, Konstantin Tischendorf. During his travels in the East in 1844 and 1859, he visited the monastery, where he was shown a manuscript which was to revolutionize the field of Biblical studies, and was to be known later on as the *codex sinaiticus* (Greek translation of the Bible dated to the fourth century A.D.). Afterwards, a Prussian mission was sent in 1914 under the direction of Carl Schmidt and Bernhard Moritz. Photographs were taken not only of manuscripts, but also of documents in Arabic and Turkish. Unfortunately, despite the publication of the results of this mission,⁹⁶ all the photographs were destroyed in St. Petersburg during the First World War. The treasures of the monastery had to await an American mission in 1950 which resulted in the microfilming and measuring of all the manuscripts and documents which were presented to the staff by the librarian, some of them being discovered by A. S. Atiya. Atiya published a handlist

⁹⁴ *Published Material from the Cambridge Genizah Collections: A Bibliography, 1896–1980*, ed. Stefan C. Reif et al. (Cambridge-New York, 1988).

⁹⁵ Geoffrey Khan, *Arabic Legal and Administrative Documents in the Cambridge Genizah Collections* (Cambridge, 1993).

⁹⁶ See particularly B. Moritz, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Sinaiklosters im Mittelalter nach arabischen Quellen*, Abhandlungen der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, no. 4 (Berlin, 1918).



(this is not the only one⁹⁷) in 1955 where 1,072 Arabic documents (from the Fatimid down to the Ottoman period) are mentioned, which makes it the most important collection of chancery documents for Islam.

However, there is a caveat, since these documents deal exclusively with the affairs of the monastery, meaning that they were issued for the benefit of non-Muslims by the successive chanceries. Nevertheless, this is a remarkable group of different kinds of official and private documents for the dynasties which succeeded each other in Egypt. Fortunately, in this case, the whole collection has been made widely available to researchers as various sets of the microfilms were distributed (Egypt, North America, and Europe). On the other hand, scholars drew attention to the importance of this collection very early, like Hans R. Roemer, who wrote at least four articles on this topic from 1957 to 1981.⁹⁸ He also succeeded in convincing some of his students to prepare Ph.D. theses on various aspects (Ayyubid and Ottoman documents in Arabic and Turkish⁹⁹). What immediately attracted scholars were the decrees issued by the chancery bureau in answer to petitions sent by the monks to the sultan regarding problems they faced with the local authorities or populations. Their interest lies in the fact that some of the petitions have been preserved as the decree was sometimes written on the back of it. Decrees of the Mamluk period are particularly significant in this collection since they were issued

⁹⁷ Aziz Suryal Atiya, *The Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai: A Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts and Scrolls Microfilmed in the Library of the Monastery of St. Catherine, Mount Sinai* (Baltimore, 1955); Kenneth W. Clark, *Checklist of Manuscripts in St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, Microfilmed for the Library of Congress, 1950* (Washington, D.C., 1952); Kamil Murad, *Catalogue of All Manuscripts in the Monastery of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai* (Wiesbaden, 1970). See further Aḥmad Muḥammad 'Īsā, "Makhtūṭāt wa-Wathā'iq Dayr Sānt Kātarīn," *Majallat al-Jam'iyyah al-Miṣrīyah lil-Dirāsāt al-Tārikhiyah* 5 (1956): 105–24, where reproductions of several of the sultans' mottos ('alāmah) are provided, completing those published by Atiya, *Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai*.

⁹⁸ Roemer, "The Sinai Documents," 381–91; idem, "Sinai-Urkunden zur Geschichte der islamischen Welt: Aufgaben und Stand der Forschung," in *Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Vorderen Orients: Festschrift für Bertold Spuler zum siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. idem and Albrecht Noth (Leiden, 1981), 321–36; idem, "Über Urkunden zur Geschichte Ägyptens und Persiens in islamischen Zeit," *ZDMG* 107 (1957): 519–38; idem, "Documents et archives de l'Égypte islamique"; idem, "Christliche Klosterarchive in der islamischen Welt," in *Der Orient in der Forschung: Festschrift für Otto Spies zum 5. April 1966*, ed. Wilhelm Hoenerbach (Wiesbaden, 1967), 543–56.

⁹⁹ Horst-Adolf Hein, *Beiträge zur ayyubidischen Diplomatie*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, no. 8 (Freiburg, 1971); Klaus Schwarz, *Osmanische Sultansurkunden des Sinai-Klosters in türkischer Sprache*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, no. 7 (Freiburg, 1970); Robert Humbsch, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des osmanischen Ägyptens nach arabischen Sultans- und Statthalterurkunden des Sinai-Klosters*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, no. 39 (Freiburg, 1976); and also Elias Khedoori, "Charters and Privileges granted by the Fāṭimids and Mamlūks to St. Catherine's Monastery of Tūr Sinai (ca. 500 to 900 A.H.)," M.A. thesis, University of Manchester, 1958.



under the rule of no less than 20 sultans and cover quite comprehensively the whole period, with only a few small gaps. This gives us the opportunity to follow how a particular kind of document evolved over time through the different Egyptian dynasties. Thanks to this, the system of *mazālim* in Egypt during the three periods (Fatimid, Ayyubid, and Mamluk) is better understood.¹⁰⁰ S. M. Stern's pioneering work on the study of this kind of document, within a broad context which took into account other periods and countries, especially for the diplomatic commentaries, has led the way.¹⁰¹ The decrees from the Mamluk period were studied by Hans Ernst in his Ph.D. thesis, published in 1960. He edited and translated all the decrees of the given period he had knowledge about, basing himself on Atiya's catalogue (although, as already mentioned, others exist).¹⁰² However, in some cases, Atiya misread the dates of documents, which means that some of them were not considered by Ernst. Qāsim al-Sāmarrā'ī published in 1990 an article on one of these neglected decrees which was in fact issued by the first Mamluk sultan, Aybak!¹⁰³ Besides this, Ernst's book has been the object of criticism mainly for his meagre diplomatic commentary, due to the fact that he was unable to read most of the confirmation formulas of the various bureaux, and for the lack of reproductions (this last is less fair as Ernst had to publish his thesis at his own expense before presenting it). His work must be read in the light of Stern's review article,¹⁰⁴ where he carefully studied three of the petitions and gave a full diplomatic commentary. Since Stern's premature death, other scholars, like D.

¹⁰⁰Jørgen S. Nielsen, *Secular Justice in an Islamic State: Mazālim under the Bahrī Mamlūks, 662/1264–789/1387*, Uitgaven van het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te İstanbul, no. 55 (Leiden, 1985).

¹⁰¹Samuel Miklos Stern, "Two Ayyūbid Decrees from Sinai," in *Documents from Islamic Chanceries*, ed. idem, Oriental Studies, no. 3 (Oxford, 1965), 9–38 + pl. I–XIX; idem, *Fāṭimid Decrees: Original Documents from the Fāṭimid Chancery* (London, 1964).

¹⁰²Hans Ernst, *Die mamlukischen Sultansurkunden des Sinai-Klosters* (Wiesbaden, 1960). Doc. XXI was also published later by Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, "Marsūm al-Sulṭān Barqūq ilā Ruḥbān Dayr Sānt Kātārīn bi-Sīnā': Dirāsah wa-Nashr wa-Taḥqīq," *Majallat Jāmi'at al-Qāhirah bi-al-Kharṭūm* 5 (1974): 83–113. A comparison with Ernst's reading of the decree shows that Amīn's work is not trustworthy, although it was published fourteen years later.

¹⁰³Qāsim al-Sāmarrā'ī, "A Unique Mamluk Document of al-Malik al-Mu'izz Aybak al-Turkumānī al-Šālīḥī, the first Mamluk Sultan of Egypt, from the Monastery of Sinai," *Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica* 21 (1990): 195–211 + pl. IV–VII. The document was dated by Atiya (*The Arabic Manuscripts of Mount Sinai*, no. 29) to 701 instead of [6]51. According to al-Sāmarrā'ī, no. 964 in Atiya's handlist (dated to 861 instead of 860) is also missing in Ernst's book.

¹⁰⁴Samuel Miklos Stern, "Petitions from the Mamlūk Period (Notes on the Mamlūk Documents from Sinai)," *BSOAS* 29 (1966): 233–76; reprinted in idem, *Coins and Documents from the Medieval Middle East*, Collected Studies, no. 238 (London, 1986).



S. Richards and Geoffrey Khan, have followed in his footsteps and have shed new light on the system of petitions.¹⁰⁵

This aspect of the royal chancery (*dīwān al-inshā'*) has thus been revealed, even if our knowledge of it is based only on *dhimmī* petitions. The functioning of other bureaux, less prestigious than the chancery, remains less known as documents issued by them have rarely survived. This is the case, for instance, for the *dīwān al-jaysh*, the army bureau, which was responsible for the granting of fiefs (*iqṭā'āt*) and their control. But here, documents of the monastery can provide some relevant information. Richards studied a petition regarding a problem encountered by the monks with the beneficiary of a fief.¹⁰⁶ On the back of it, he found a report from the army bureau connected to the fief in question where previous attributions of it are mentioned. This significant document shows that the clerks updated their records regularly and that accurate records were available when required.

The Saint Catherine Monastery documents are probably the best studied so far. The significance of these studies for the history of the Mamluk sultanate is limited, as they essentially give us important historical and economic information on the monks (relations with the surrounding populations, the bedouins, and also their properties elsewhere, like Cairo). However, unlike the Geniza documents, they are an invaluable source of chancery practice and provide us with a unique opportunity to study the diplomatics of the Egyptian *dīwān al-inshā'*. Nonetheless, much remains to be done. Private documents have so far received little attention. Only recently, Richards has studied three of them (Muslim and Christian documents), two dating from the Mamluk period.¹⁰⁷ They are related to a *waqf* made in favor of

¹⁰⁵Donald S. Richards, "A Fāṭimid Petition and 'Small Decree' from Sinai," *Israel Oriental Studies* 3 (1973): 140–58; Geoffrey Khan, "The Historical Development of the Structure of Medieval Arabic Petitions," *BSOAS* 53 (1990): 8–30, where a comparison with papyri held at Cambridge is provided.

¹⁰⁶Donald S. Richards, "A Mamlūk Petition and a Report from the *Dīwān al-Jaysh*," *BSOAS* 40 (1977): 1–14.

¹⁰⁷Donald S. Richards, "Some Muslim and Christian Documents from Sinai Concerning Christian Property," in *Law, Christianity and Modernism in Islamic Society: Proceedings of the Eighteenth Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants Held at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (September 3–September 9, 1996)*, ed. U. Vermeulen and J. M. F. Van Reeth, *Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta*, no. 86 (Leuven, 1998), 161–70. Similar documents regarding properties of the monastery located mainly in Cairo, but also in Alexandria, Gaza, and Siryāqūs, have been studied by the same scholar: "Documents from Sinai Concerning Mainly Cairene Property," *JESHO* 28 (1985): 225–93.



the monastery and they enabled him to demonstrate that the Christians followed the Muslim legal system for the redaction of documents of this nature.¹⁰⁸

Beside the private documents, official ones, the decrees, as I said, were not all studied by Ernst and still await publication. More worrisome is the fact that probably not all the documents were microfilmed. This is evidenced by the fact that Atiya catalogued 17 decrees from the time of Qāyṭbāy although Schmidt and Moritz described more than 20 during the 1914 mission.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, new discoveries have been made since the American mission of 1950. In 1976, cases were discovered by the librarian and their contents were placed in 47 boxes. The material consisted of papyri, parchment, and scraps of paper and was described as being mainly of a liturgical nature, but it remains unknown whether Arabic documents are among them.¹¹⁰

3. Karaite Community (Cairo)

The Karaite community in Cairo holds a small collection of Arabic documents preserved in their old synagogue, situated in the old Fatimid city (Shāri‘ Khurunfish). As early as 1904, these drew the attention of Gottheil, who published (1908) a Fatimid decree issued under the Caliph al-Zāhir (415/1024) and a Mamluk document (*ḥukm tanfīdhī* = order confirming previous documents) dated 860/1456, which deals with the permission to lawfully repair the synagogue which had been damaged in the course of recent riots.¹¹¹ In 1969, D. S. Richards had the opportunity to study the entire collection and he presented the results of his researches carried

¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, see for a study of two juridical documents (purchase deeds) from this collection ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Ibrāhīm, “Min Wathā’iq Dayr Sānt Kātrīn: Thalāth Wathā’iq Fiqhīyah,” *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts (Cairo University)* 25 (1963): 95–133 + 4 pl.

¹⁰⁹ It is essential to mention here that Moritz sold a private collection of manuscripts and documents to various institutions around the world, and particularly to the University of Chicago. Surprisingly, some of these documents may originate from the Monastery of Saint Catherine and the question must be raised how he got them (see above, p. 34). Other documents were found in Istanbul, Cairo, and even in the Ägyptisches Museum in Berlin. See Stefan Heidemann, Christian Müller, and Yūsuf Rāḡib, “Un décret d’al-Malik al-‘Ādil en 571/1176 relatif aux moines du Mont Sināi,” *Annales islamologiques* 31 (1997): 81–107, particularly 81.

¹¹⁰ Roemer, “The Sinai Documents,” 381.

¹¹¹ Richard J. H. Gottheil, “Dhimmi and Moslems in Egypt,” in *Old Testament and Semitic Studies in Memory of William Rainey Harper*, ed. Robert Francis Harper, Francis Brown, and George Foot Moore (Chicago, 1908), 2:353–414. He also published another document from the fifteenth century which was at that time in the possession of the Cattaoui Brothers: see idem, “A Document of the Fifteenth Century Concerning Two Synagogues of the Jews in Old Cairo,” in *Jewish Quarterly Review* 18 (1927–28): 131–52.



out on the spot in an article published in 1972.¹¹² This detailed catalogue describes the contents of 27 documents running from the early eleventh century to the mid-nineteenth century, all of which focus on the Karaite community. With the exception of the Fatimid decree just mentioned, they are all of a private nature (deeds of conveyance, grants of ownership, deeds of *waqf*, sworn declarations, etc.). Among them, 18 pertain to the Mamluk period. Working on such collections often requires that the researcher, after having received permission to study the documents, must still bring with him all the necessary tools (camera, rule) so as to be in a position to study them properly. One should not be surprised that Richards could not measure all the documents nor photograph them completely. While he intended to return to several issues in connection with these documents, and to fully publish the texts with facsimiles, to my knowledge such a study has never appeared, so that they still await complete publication.¹¹³

4. Orthodox Coptic Patriarchate (Cairo)

This institution in Cairo holds several *waqf* documents concerned with Copts. They were catalogued by Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn and will be dealt with together with the archives collections in Cairo.¹¹⁴

5. Centre of Oriental Studies/Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land (Cairo)

Our knowledge of the documents preserved in this center relies completely on articles published in 1956, where 69 items are described.¹¹⁵ According to the first of these, only one document pertains to the Mamluk period (dated 914 A.H.).

B. Palestine

1. Franciscan Monastery of the Custody of the Holy Land (Jerusalem)

The Franciscan Monastery of the Custodia di Terra Santa (Mount Zion) in Jerusalem, like the Saint Catherine Monastery, is another important repository of documents,

¹¹²Donald S. Richards, "Arabic Documents from the Karaite Community in Cairo," *JESHO* 15 (1972): 105–62.

¹¹³With the following exception: Donald S. Richards, "Dhimmi Problems in Fifteenth Century Cairo: Reconsideration of a Court Document," *Studies in Muslim-Jewish Relations* 1 (1993): 127–63.

¹¹⁴See below, pp. 44–45.

¹¹⁵E. Boers, "Arabische Documenten in het Archief van het Studiecentrum in Muski," *Studia Orientalia* (Cairo) 1 (1956): 177–79. Martiniano Roncaglia, "Catalogus documentorum Muski," *Studia Orientalia* (Cairo) 1 (1956): 165–75, presents the contents of a manuscript which consists of a catalog of Arabic and Turkish documents held by the Center ("Manoscritto degli Archivi del Centro di Studi Orientali del Muski"). They are all dated after the Mamluk period (the oldest is from 942 A.H.) and are thus irrelevant for our purposes.



although in this case too we are speaking of documents issued for Christians. The whole collection amounts to 2,644 documents dated from 1219 to 1902. Among them, 83 pertain to the Mamluk period, consisting mainly of decrees and legal documents (court records). As one would expect, the majority belong to the last period of the Mamluk sultanate (43 from 1427 to 1513). A study of 12 of them (dated 1309 to 1472) was published by Pourrière as early as 1898,¹¹⁶ but it was not until 1922 that a general catalogue, by Eutimio Castellani, appeared.¹¹⁷ This catalogue, published by the Franciscan monastery and printed in Jerusalem, was not put on the market and is as inaccessible as the documents themselves. In 1936, another Franciscan, Norberto Risciani, published a book¹¹⁸ where he studied 28 Mamluk documents (21 decrees and 7 court records), all belonging to the Circassian period. This is a landmark study, due to the nature of the documents, the quality of the analysis, and the facsimiles provided, but is unfortunately as unobtainable as the preceding one. Produced under the same conditions, it even seems that the copies preserved in very fortunate libraries lack the title page, which does not facilitate research. Allusions to these studies are seldom found in the scientific literature, except from those who are fortunate enough to own a copy (Stern and Little, who made reference to some of the documents published by Risciani) or to have access to it in a library (Richards).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶Leone Pourrière, "Appendice I: Firmani e documenti arabi inediti estratti dall'Archivio della procura di T. S. in Gerusalemme colla traduzione italiana," in Girolamo Golubovich, *Serie cronologica dei reverendissimi superiori di Terra Santa: ossia dei provinciali custodi e presidenti della medesima già Commissari Apostolici dell'Oriente e sino al 1847 in ufficio di Gran Maestri del S. Militare Ordine del SS. Sepolcro attuali prelati mitrati, provinciali e custodi di T.S. guardiani del S. Monte Sion e del SS. Sepolcro del N.S.G.C. ecc.* (Jerusalem, 1898), 123–87 (12 documents dated from 1309 to 1472 published).

¹¹⁷Eutimio Castellani, *Catalogo dei Firmani ed altri documenti legali emanati in lingua araba e turca concernenti i Santuari, le proprietà, i diritti della Custodia di Terra Santa conservati nell'Archivio della stessa Custodia di Gerusalemme* (Jerusalem, 1922) (docs. 1–83 dated from 1247 to 1523).

¹¹⁸Norberto Risciani, *Documenti e firmani* (Jerusalem, 1936). See also *Custodia di Terra Santa, 1342–1942*, ed. Virgilio Corbo (Jerusalem, 1951), 82 (regarding doc. VI in Risciani = decree issued by Barqūq in 1396).

¹¹⁹The Library of the University of Leiden (the Netherlands) is particularly fortunate to possess two original copies of this work. Aḥmad Darrāj, *Wathā'iq Dayr Ṣahyūn bi-al-Quds al-Sharīf* (Cairo, 1968), is the only work so far in which the documents held by the Franciscan monastery are extensively studied on the basis of the above-mentioned catalogs. Its main focus is on Mamluk-Christian relations in Jerusalem during the period covered by these documents, with the help of other kinds of documents preserved in other places (historical sources, epigraphy).



2. Greek Orthodox Patriarchate (Jerusalem)

Jerusalem seems to be a good place for Mamlukists interested in documents. This is due to the numerous Christian institutions which were developed over time and which were eager to maintain good relations with the Muslim authorities by negotiating treaties. Until a few years ago, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate was not particularly known for the collection it inherited from the Monastery of the Holy Cross at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Recently, Johannes Pahlitzsch was fortunate enough to gain access to it and discovered several documents, some of which date to the Mamluk period.¹²⁰ Among these is a missive addressed by Baybars to one of his amirs (665/1266), which sheds light on his relations with the Georgians.¹²¹ The remaining items will be published progressively in chronological order. The arduous circumstances in which he had to study the documents is also symptomatic of the difficulties met with by researchers: lengthy negotiations with the Franciscan authorities, lack of adequate tools on the spot (camera, rule), etc.

II. Muslim Collections

A. Egypt

1. Archives Collections (Cairo)

What is meant by the Cairo archives are the National Archives of the Citadel¹²² which, if my information is accurate, are now held by the Dār al-Wathā'iq, close to the Dār al-Kutub, the Ministry of *Waqf* (*Daftarkhānah*), the Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmīyah, and finally the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate. Consisting of private legal documents (court records, deeds of *waqf*, contracts on subjects of all kinds [marriage, sale, partnership, lease, etc.]), they were estimated at 2,000 by a pioneering scholar in this field, 'Abd al-Laṭīf Ibrāhīm 'Alī. Dating mainly from the thirteenth century to the sixteenth century, their importance has

¹²⁰For a provisory evaluation of these, see Johannes Pahlitzsch, "Georgians and Greeks in Jerusalem from the End of the 11th to the Early 14th Century," in *East and West in the Crusader States: Context, Contacts, Confrontations: Acta of the Congress Held at Hernen Castle in September 2000*, ed. Krijnie N. Ciggaar and Herman Teule, Orientalia Lovaniensia analecta, no. 125 (Leuven, 2003), 35–51.

¹²¹Delivered at the conference *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society* organized by Tel Aviv and Haifa Universities in May 2000. The article will be published in a forthcoming issue of *Arabica*.

¹²²Maḥkamah Shar'īyah, which became Maḥkamat al-Aḥwāl al-Shakhṣīyah wa-al-Wilāyah 'alā al-Nafs.



been quickly recognized,¹²³ and Daniel Crecelius and Carl Petry¹²⁴ have drawn the attention of Mamlukists to these documents *in tempore non suspecto*, before the publication of Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn's catalogue.¹²⁵ This catalogue, published in 1981, gave for the first time a clear overview of all these documents held by the various institutions mentioned above. It inventories 888 numbers, but documents are more numerous as one number may contain more than one document. Among these, I would like to call attention to one in particular that is identified as a chancery document. This is in fact a *manshūr iqtā'ī* (grant of a fief) dated to the reign of Qānshūh.¹²⁶ Many studies have dealt with the feudal system of Egypt,¹²⁷ but they lacked original documents of this kind. The survival of this almost unique (see Unsuspected Places, below) witness provides the opportunity to compare its structure to the models in chancery manuals like al-Qalqashandī's, written a century before, and to study the evolution which it underwent.

Yet the most impressive, no doubt, of these documents are clearly the several endowment deeds that have survived. In a rather provocatively entitled article,¹²⁸ Carl Petry has emphasized the various issues that can be addressed thanks to the Cairene *waqf* documents. *Waqf* documents offer the greatest challenge for future study, and the recently announced foundation of a journal devoted entirely to this topic reinforces this impression.¹²⁹ The recently published article "Wakf" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*¹³⁰ and the bibliography to be found in it relieve me from

¹²³Leo A. Mayer, *The Buildings of Qaitbay as Described in His Endowment Deed* (London, 1938). Endowment deeds may also be found in historical sources. For a good example taken from ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir's work, see Axel Moberg, "Zwei ägyptische Waqf-Urkunden aus dem Jahre 691/1292 (nebst Bemerkungen zur mittelalterlichen Topographie Kairos)," *Le Monde Oriental* 12 (1918): 1–61 + 3 pl.

¹²⁴Daniel Crecelius, "The Organization of *Waqf* Documents in Cairo," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 2 (1971): 266–77; Carl F. Petry, "Medieval *Waqf* Documents in Cairo: Their Role as Historical Sources," *American Research Center in Egypt Newsletter* 118 (1982): 28–33; idem, "Research on Medieval *Waqf* Documents: Preliminary Report from the Field," *ARCE Newsletter* 133 (1986): 11–14.

¹²⁵Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, *Catalogue des documents d'archives du Caire de 239/853 à 922/1516*, Textes arabes et études islamiques, no. 16 (Cairo, 1981).

¹²⁶Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, "Manshūr bi-Manḥ Iqtā' min 'Aṣr al-Sultān al-Ghūrī," *AI* 19 (1983): 2–23.

¹²⁷Hassanein Rabie, *The Financial System of Egypt A.H. 564–741/A.D. 1169–1341*, London Oriental Series, vol. 25 (London, 1972); Tsugitaka Sato, *State and Rural Society in Medieval Islam: Sultans, Muqta's and Fallahun*, Islamic History and Civilizations, Studies and Texts, no. 17 (Leiden, 1997).

¹²⁸Carl F. Petry, "A Geniza for Mamluk Studies? Charitable Trust (*Waqf*) Documents as a Source for Economic and Social History," *MSR* 2 (1998): 51–60.

¹²⁹*Waqf: An Annual Journal for the Study of Islamic Endowments and Charitable Foundations*.

¹³⁰Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Wakf," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 11:63–69.



giving a complete list of all the publications regarding Egyptian *waqf* documents, save for the latest of them. Undoubtedly, endowment deeds provide answers to a lot of questions and this has been understood by scholars. So far, the main studies carried out on this material have dealt with architectural,¹³¹ social,¹³² and economic issues.¹³³ I am quite confident that things will proceed smoothly and that the state of research in this matter is far from giving cause for concern. My main concern is that we need more text editions.¹³⁴ It is in this sense that I would like to mention an important project of the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (IFAO) in Cairo. This project, under the direction of Mustafa Taher, Sylvie Denoix, and Michel Tuchscherer, aims at cataloguing all the microfilmed archival documents of Cairo (thus not only the endowment deeds, but also the sale contracts, court records, etc.), as well as those of the Saint Catherine Monastery, so as to provide researchers with a catalogue, to be published on the Internet or on CD-ROM, which would foster further research on this material, particularly editions and studies of technical terms (legal, and not just architectural). So far, since the work began in 1995, 88 reels out of 129 have been analyzed.¹³⁵

2. Museum Collections

We have seen that European and American museums hold in their collections some Mamluk documents and we would expect the same for Muslim countries.

¹³¹Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn and Laylā Ibrāhīm, *Al-Muṣṭalaḥāt al-Mi'māriyah fī al-Wathā'iq al-Mamlūkīyah* (Cairo, 1990).

¹³²Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, *Al-Awqāf wa-al-Ḥayāh al-Ijtimā'īyah fī Miṣr, 648–923/1250–1517: Dirāsah Tārīkhīyah Wathā'iqīyah* (Cairo, 1980); Ulrich Haarmann, "Mamluk Endowment Deeds as a Source for the History of Education in Late Medieval Egypt," *Al-Abḥāth* 28 (1980): 31–47; Adam Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt, 1250–1517* (Cambridge, 2000); Jonathan P. Berkey, *Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education* (Princeton, 1992).

¹³³Jean-Claude Garcin and Muṣṭafā A. Taher, "Enquête sur le financement d'un *waqf* égyptien du XVe siècle: les comptes de Jawhar al-Lala," *JESHO* 38 (1995): 262–304.

¹³⁴This seems to have been understood only recently. See particularly *The Waqf Document of Sultan Al-Nāṣir Ḥasan b. Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn for his Complex in Al-Rumaila*, ed. Howayda N. al-Harithy, *Bibliotheca Islamica*, vol. 45 (Beirut and Berlin, 2001) (with Julien Loiseau's critique, however, in *Bulletin critique des Annales islamologiques* 19 (2003): 129–31); and Stephan Conermann and Suad Saghbini, "Awlād al-Nās as Founders of Pious Endowments: The *Waqfīyah* of Yahyā ibn Ṭūghān al-Ḥasanī of the Year 870/1465," *MSR* 6 (2002): 21–50.

¹³⁵See Bernard Matheu, "Rapport d'activités," *Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire* 102 (2002): 536. The database created is already searchable and accessible to students and scholars visiting this institution.



a) Maṭḥaf al-Fann al-Islāmī (Cairo)

The museum seems to hold several documents from the Mamluk period, although it is not possible to obtain a complete census of the holdings at this time. I have had to rely on the published material to determine approximately what one can find in this museum. I found an article published in 1964 by Āmāl al-‘Umarī where she wrote about a collection of 27 documents dealing with the purchase and sale of horses and fabrics. She only published those contracts related to the horses,¹³⁶ announcing her intention to study the remaining items (I may have missed some Arabic publications, but I have not found anything for the latter documents). There are 15 published contracts which date back to the very end of the Circassian period.

Besides these, the museum also has preserved an important group of marriage contracts written on cotton. Most of them are available to researchers through the study carried out by Su‘ād Māhir,¹³⁷ a book hitherto rather neglected. It was generally thought that all the contracts had been published by her, but this was a false impression. Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Rāziq studied one of these regarding the marriage of two slaves in 1343.¹³⁸ These documents are important as far as social and economic history is concerned because they shed light on the nature of the dowry, and in this particular case on the conditions applied to slaves. Other contracts are still unpublished.

The above documents reached the museum under obscure circumstances, as is often the case. But material pertaining to the Islamic period unearthed during excavations is presented to the museum. This is the case with the material found on the site of Quṣayr al-Qadīm. Located on the Red Sea coast, approximately 100 km. from Qūṣ, this ancient seaport, in which activity is attested since the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, was still active in the Ayyubid period and began to lose its importance under the Mamluk sultans with the emerging port of ‘Aydḥāb as the main departure point for travel to Jedda. Digs were carried out by a team from the University of Chicago under the direction of Donald Whitcomb and Janet Johnson in 1978, 1980, and 1982. Besides the archeological discoveries, some 500 scraps

¹³⁶ Āmāl al-‘Umarī, “Dirāsah li-Ba‘ḍ Wathā’iq Tata‘allaq bi-Bay‘ wa-Shirā’ Khuyūl min al-‘Aṣr al-Mamlūkī,” *Majallat Ma‘had al-Makhṭū‘āt al-‘Arabīyah/Revue de l’Institut des manuscrits arabes* 10 (1964): 223–72.

¹³⁷ ‘Uqūd al-Zawāj ‘alā al-Mansūjāt al-Atharīyah (Cairo, n.d.).

¹³⁸ Ahmad ‘Abd al-Rāziq, “Un document concernant le mariage des esclaves au temps des Mamlūks,” *JESHO* 13 (1970): 309–14. It is unknown whether the two marriage contracts concluded in Aswan and studied in the following article are part of this collection or of another, as no information is given by the author: ‘Abd Allāh Mukhlīṣ, “‘Aqdā Nikāḥ Kutibā fī Awāsiṭ al-Qarn al-Thāmin,” *Majallat al-Majma‘ al-‘Ilmī al-‘Arabī* 21 (1946): 419–26. Both were written on silk and are dated to 734/1334 and 740/1339 respectively.



of paper were found, most of them undated. Those which were dated go back to the beginning of the thirteenth century, thus clearly Ayyubid, while numismatic evidence has shown that the remaining fragments must be from the same period. These documents consist of business and private letters, all coming from a merchant's house, and are important in this respect and will no doubt throw light on trade in this remote region. Studied by Thayer in the context of her thesis,¹³⁹ they were not classified or catalogued prior to the works of Li Guo, who has devoted his attention to them.¹⁴⁰ Since these documents have now been clearly identified as Ayyubid they are not relevant to our subject. But since 1999, new expeditions by the University of Southampton under the direction of David Peacock and Lucy Blue have taken place. The site excavated is somewhat different. Among medieval rubbish and in the Muslim necropolis, they brought to light 300 paper fragments stretching from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. They also consist of business and private letters, but the period is clearly Mamluk. On the other hand, the funerary context has revealed a hitherto unknown practice: Arabic inscriptions on ostrich eggs. The whole material discovered during these campaigns will now be studied in the framework of a project called "Reconstructing the Quseiri Arabic Documents."¹⁴¹ Edition, translation, analysis, and interpretation of all the documents within their context will be done by a recently constituted team made up of Arabists and computer specialists. There is no doubt that this project will elicit important new data on the commercial and religious activities of this peripheral community of merchants.

b) Egyptian Museum (Cairo)

This renowned institution for Egyptology has received excavated material, mainly going back to antiquity. Nonetheless, useful discoveries for our field can be made

¹³⁹Jennifer Thayer, "Land Politics and Power Networks in Mamluk Egypt," Ph. D. diss., New York University, 1993; idem, "In Testimony to a Market Economy in Mamlūk Egypt: The Qusayr Documents," *Al-Masāq* 8 (1995): 45–55.

¹⁴⁰Li Guo, "Arabic Documents from the Red Sea Port of Quseir in the Seventh/Thirteenth Century: Part 1: Business Letters," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 58 (1999): 161–90; idem, "Arabic Documents from the Red Sea Port of Quseir in the Seventh/Thirteenth Century: Part 2: Shipping Notes and Account Records," *JNES* 60 (2001): 81–116. Li Guo has just published a detailed study of all the fragments unearthed by the Chicago team: *Commerce, Culture, and Community in a Red Sea Port in the Thirteenth Century: The Arabic Documents from Quseir*, Islamic History and Civilization, 52 (Leiden, 2004).

¹⁴¹See <http://www.rqad.leeds.ac.uk>. For a preliminary presentation of these documents, announcing a thorough study to come, see Anne Regourd, "Trade on the Red Sea during the Ayyubid and Mamluk Periods: The Quseir Paper Manuscript Collection 1999–2003, First Data," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 34 (2004): 277–92.



among its holdings. Two private letters on paper, discovered by specialists in Greek papyri, were brought to the attention of Diem, who studied them in an article published in 1993.¹⁴² One of these letters, consisting of an invitation to a meal, has been dated by this scholar as being from the fourteenth century, and improves the knowledge we have of private letters in the period under consideration.

In an old study, Charles Bachatly brought to the attention of scholars the existence of a particular document held by the then Société Royale de Géographie (Cairo). This specimen concerns an Egyptian pilgrim who made an agreement with a camel dealer.¹⁴³

B. Palestine

1. Islamic Museum (al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf, Jerusalem)

This is the latest significant and sizeable discovery that has been made in the last decades, and shows that we must be optimistic regarding future finds. The story is well known. Discovered, as often happens, more or less by accident, by the curator Amal Abul-Hajj, in 1974 and 1976, these 883 documents from the Mamluk period could have returned to their dusty cupboards if she had not enlisted the help of one of Donald Little's students, Linda Northrup. This demonstrates once more the need for international cooperation in regard to archival research. Announced in 1979 in an international journal,¹⁴⁴ the discovery received a cool, or at least indifferent, reception in the scientific world, as Donald Little noticed in 1980.¹⁴⁵ But things were to change with the publication of his catalogue in 1984.¹⁴⁶ The documents had been measured and photographed during a mission and it is on this basis that he could prepare his work. The classification revealed that the majority of the documents were of a private nature and consisted of the papers of a judge, Ibn Ghānim, who died at the end of the fourteenth century, which makes

¹⁴²Werner Diem, "Zwei arabische Privatbriefe aus dem Ägyptischen Museum in Kairo," *Zeitschrift für arabische Linguistik* 25 (1993): 148–53.

¹⁴³Charles Bachatly, "Document sur un pèlerinage à la Mecque au début du Xe siècle de l'hégire (907/1501)," *Bulletin de la Société Royale de Géographie d'Égypte* 21 (1943): 23–27.

¹⁴⁴Linda S. Northrup and Amal A. Abul-Hajj, "A Collection of Medieval Arabic Documents in the Islamic Museum at the Ḥaram al-Šarīf," *Arabica* 25 (1978): 282–91.

¹⁴⁵Donald P. Little, "The Significance of the Ḥaram Documents for the Study of Medieval Islamic History," *Der Islam* 57 (1980): 189–219; and also idem, "The Judicial Documents from al-Ḥaram al-Sharīf as Sources for the History of Palestine under the Mamluks," in *The Third International Conference on Bilad al-Sham: Palestine, 19–24 April 1980*, vol. 1, Jerusalem (Amman, 1983), 117–25.

¹⁴⁶Donald P. Little, *A Catalogue of the Islamic Documents from al-Ḥaram aš-Šarīf in Jerusalem*, Beirut Texts and Studies, no. 29 (Beirut, 1984). See more recently Robert Schick, "Arabic Studies of Mamluk Jerusalem: A Review Article," *MSR* 5 (2001): 159–68.



the discovery even more crucial. It had previously been maintained by Ottomanists that the Ottoman judges were the first to institute the principle of the *dīwān al-qāḍī* (*sijill* as they call it), on the basis that Ottoman *sijills* alone had been preserved. Wael Hallaq has recently tackled this question¹⁴⁷ and demonstrated that the *dīwān al-qāḍī* truly existed in earlier Islamic times and that the qadī had to keep his records up to date. The Ḥaram documents provide another proof for this, showing that it is nonsensical to believe that an administration was not full of red tape only because the documents have not survived.¹⁴⁸

This material has given scholars the opportunity to study various issues. This has been the case for some official documents, as some of them are clearly unique items: the square decrees (*murabba'āt*, documents issued by the army bureau), have been dealt with by Richards¹⁴⁹ and the petitions and their associated decrees have been addressed by Little.¹⁵⁰

Yet the private documents obviously present the greatest challenges. They are of an incomparable richness for the history of Jerusalem and its environs during the given period, although it must be kept in mind that it is a short period of time. This richness is particularly noted for social and economic life. This is due to the fact that they include a great variety of deeds, the main category being represented by estate inventories (almost half of the collection) and court records. Thus, unsurprisingly, this kind of document has received first attention. An initial attempt to publish several of them in their context and to draw more general lines was provided by Kāmil Jamīl al-'Asalī in a three-volume work.¹⁵¹ Later on, Huda Lutfi based her study¹⁵² on them, trying to draw conclusions on a statistical basis for the social history of the city. Later, Little published a study devoted to three of these

¹⁴⁷Wael B. Hallaq, "The *qāḍī*'s *dīwān* (*sijill*) before the Ottomans," *BSOAS* 60 (1997): 415–36.

¹⁴⁸The Ḥaram documents have recently been appraised at their true value for the understanding of the *qāḍī*'s role in Jerusalem during the Mamluk period. See Muḥammad Ḥusayn 'Alī Abū Ḥāmid, "Quḍāt al-Quds fī al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī," M.A. thesis, Jāmi'at al-Qiddīs Yūsuf, 1998.

¹⁴⁹Richards, "A Mamlūk Emir's 'Square' Decree."

¹⁵⁰Donald P. Little, "Five Petitions and Consequential Decrees from Late Fourteenth Century Jerusalem," *Arab Journal for the Humanities* 54 (1996): 34–94.

¹⁵¹Kāmil Jamīl al-'Asalī, *Wathā'iq Maqdisīyah Tārīkhīyah: Ma'a Muqaddimah ḥawla Ba'd al-Maṣādir al-Awwaliyah li-Tārīkh al-Quds* (Jerusalem historical documents), vol. 1 (Amman, 1983) (edition of 44 documents pertaining to the Mamluk period among 60); vol. 2 (s. l., 1985) (edition of 61 documents from the Mamluk period among 104); vol. 3 (Amman, 1989) (of the 156 documents edited, 1 is from the Mamluk period).

¹⁵²Huda Lutfi, *Al-Quds al-Mamlūkiyya: A History of Mamlūk Jerusalem Based on the Ḥaram Documents*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, no. 113 (Berlin, 1985). See also idem, "A Documentary Source for the Study of Material Life: A Specimen of the Ḥaram Estate Inventories from al-Quds in 1393 A.D.," *ZDMG* 135 (1985): 213–26.



inventories,¹⁵³ and more recently, Müller has published one of these to illustrate how the record of an estate was drawn up by the qadi's court.¹⁵⁴ His study fits into the framework of a larger project dealing with the functioning of the judicial system in Jerusalem in the fourteenth century.¹⁵⁵

As far as the court records are concerned, Little gave an overview of their contents¹⁵⁶ and has lately published two of them.¹⁵⁷ In this study as well as in previous ones, he has followed the way paved by Stern for official documents, which consists of comparing the private documents to models as they are preserved in *shurūt* manuals, showing that there is a correspondence between the principles prescribed there and the documents.¹⁵⁸

Attention has been paid to other categories of documents, although in a less systematic manner. Contracts were the subject of one of Little's articles in 1981 devoted to the question of slaves.¹⁵⁹ Richards, in 1990,¹⁶⁰ has been able to define more precisely a particular kind of document called *qasāmah* (sworn declaration) and to study the evolution of the term from Fatimid times until the early Ottoman period, proving its persistence through the successive chanceries. More recently, he studied two pieces (a statement of account and an order) related to a *maktab* in charge of the education of children.¹⁶¹ This unique document offers the possibility

¹⁵³ Donald P. Little, "Ḥaram Documents Related to the Jews of Late Fourteenth Century Jerusalem," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 30 (1985): 227–64, 368–70. See also idem, "Documents related to the Estates of a Merchant and His Wife in Late Fourteenth Century Jerusalem," *MSR* 2 (1998): 93–193.

¹⁵⁴ Christian Müller, "Contrats d'héritages dans la Jérusalem mamelouke: les témoins du cadi dans un document inédit du Ḥaram al-Šarīf," *AI* 35 (2001): 291–319. Recently Donald S. Richards published a study on fourteen of them, with special emphasis on two of this group with edition and translation. See Donald S. Richards, "Glimpses of Provincial Mamluk Society from the Documents of the Ḥaram al-Sharīf in Jerusalem," in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, ed. Michael Winter and Amalia Levanoni, The Medieval Mediterranean, no. 51 (Leiden, 2004), 45–57.

¹⁵⁵ See also Rūsī ibn Zā'id al-'Azīzī, "Min Tawṣiyāt wa-Mawāthīq al-Mamālīk lil-Ruhbān fī al-Quds wa-Ḍawāḥihā," *Al-Dārah* 7 (1981): 208–32.

¹⁵⁶ Donald P. Little, "Two Fourteenth Century Court Records from Jerusalem Concerning the Disposition of Slaves by Minors," *Arabica* 29 (1982): 16–49.

¹⁵⁷ Donald P. Little, "Two Petitions and Consequential Court Records from the Ḥaram Collection," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 25 (2001): 171–94.

¹⁵⁸ See now Hallaq, "Model *shurūt* Works."

¹⁵⁹ Donald P. Little, "Six Fourteenth Century Purchase Deeds for Slaves from Al-Ḥaram Aš-Šarīf," *ZDMG* 131 (1981): 297–337.

¹⁶⁰ Donald S. Richards, "The *qasāma* in Mamlūk Society: Some Documents from the Ḥaram Collection in Jerusalem," *AI* 25 (1990): 245–84.

¹⁶¹ Donald S. Richards, "Primary Education under the Mamlūks: Two Documents from the Ḥaram in Jerusalem," in *Proceedings of the 20th Congress of the Union Européenne des Arabisants et*



of examining how a modest provincial foundation such as this one could exist. Legal depositions (*iqrār*) have also been the subject of detailed study.¹⁶²

Account records may also reveal unexpected results as in the study of Richards¹⁶³ which shed new light on the Mamluk postal service, particularly in Jerusalem, some years before the collapse of the whole system after Tamerlane's invasion.

A less-expected aspect of these documents is the philological one. As is generally done for papyrological studies, Diem has recently done a thorough study of philological notes based on the various editions provided by Little, Richards, and others.¹⁶⁴

Significant as they are in themselves, all these documents provide further revealing data on Mamluk society, specifically lower levels neglected by historical sources, in Jerusalem and its surroundings. These aspects have been emphasized in the various studies on individual documents as well as in broader perspectives.¹⁶⁵

To conclude with this part, the Ḥaram documents have clearly received greater attention since the publication of the catalogue. Various issues have been approached and answered. Various types of legal documents have been systematically examined together with the functioning of the judicial system connected to them. Nevertheless, many documents still await editing, translation, and analysis.¹⁶⁶

Islamisants, part 1, *Linguistics, Literature, History*, ed. Kinga Dévényi, *The Arabist: Budapest Studies in Arabic*, nos. 24–25 (Budapest, 2002), 223–32.

¹⁶²Huda Lutfi, "A Study of Six Fourteenth Century *Iqrār*s from al-Quds Relating to Muslim Women," *JESHO* 26 (1983): 246–94; idem and Donald P. Little, "Iqrār's from al-Quds: Emendations," *JESHO* 28 (1985): 326–30.

¹⁶³Donald S. Richards, "The Mamluk *Barīd*: Some Evidence from the *Haram* Documents," in *Studies in the History and Archeology of Jordan*, vol. 3, ed. Adnan Hadidi (Amman, 1987), 205–9.

¹⁶⁴Werner Diem, "Philologisches zu den mamlūkischen Erlassen, Eingaben und Dienstschriften des Jerusalemer al-Ḥaram aš-šarīf," *Zeitschrift für arabische Linguistik* 33 (1997): 7–67. In this article, Diem also edited, translated, and analyzed documents on the basis of the reproductions provided by D. Little in his catalogue.

¹⁶⁵Donald P. Little, "Relations between Jerusalem and Egypt during the Mamluk Period According to Literary and Documentary Sources," in *Egypt and Palestine: a Millennium of Association (868–1948)*, ed. Amnon Cohen and Gabriel Baer (Jerusalem-New York, 1984), 73–93; idem, "The Ḥaram Documents as Sources for the Arts and Architecture of the Mamlūk Period," *Muqarnas* 2 (1984): 61–72; Donald S. Richards, "Saladin's Hospital in Jerusalem: Its Foundation and Some Later Archival Material," in *The Frankish Wars and Their Influence on Palestine: Selected Papers Presented at Birzeit University's International Academic Conference Held in Jerusalem, March 13–15, 1992*, ed. Khalil Athaminah and Roger Heacock (Birzeit, 1994), 70–83.

¹⁶⁶In an oral communication, Donald Little informed me that other Mamluk documents, probably originating from the same collection, are being offered for sale by a private owner. This evidence proves, if necessary, that other such documents have survived.



C. Syria

1. Umayyad Mosque of Damascus (Istanbul)

Mosques commonly owned libraries containing manuscripts, and not exclusively of the Quran. Some of them are even renowned for the antiquity of their collections (Qarawīyīn/Fez, Qayrawān/Tunisia). It would have been surprising if the Great Mosque of Damascus, one of the oldest in the Muslim world, had not been in the same position. In fact, this was the case, but unfortunately it suffered from several fires which destroyed most of its original structure. The last one happened in 1893 and at that time the Ottoman authorities decided to transfer to Istanbul all the manuscripts that had survived, even incompletely. They were installed in the collections of the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts where a rough handlist was drawn up (Şamdan gelen evrak: Damascene papers). Nobody studied them until 1963 when the Sourdels heard of their existence. They were presented with thousands of fragments of manuscripts and documents written on parchment or paper, most of which had been damaged by the fire or water. Going through them, they soon realized that they mainly consisted of religious works, but surprisingly some archival material of a private nature was noticed. They soon published the results of their discovery in two articles describing the contents of the collection.¹⁶⁷

If the Quranic fragments, some of which go back to the first centuries of Islam, were examined quite quickly, the other documents have not so far been fully considered. The Sourdels published some of them, mainly dealing with the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods.¹⁶⁸ Two of their articles dealt with three documents going back to the beginning of the thirteenth century.¹⁶⁹ One example concerns a particular kind attested from the Fatimid period: the certificates of pilgrimage by proxy. These have been the subject of several articles by the Sourdels covering different periods,¹⁷⁰ and recently the documents pertaining to the Mamluk period were

¹⁶⁷ Janine Sourdél-Thomine and Dominique Sourdél, "Nouveaux documents sur l'histoire religieuse et sociale de Damas au Moyen Âge," *Revue des études islamiques* 32 (1964): 1–25; idem, "A propos des documents de la Grande Mosquée de Damas conservés à Istanbul: Résultats de la seconde enquête," *REI* 33 (1965): 73–85.

¹⁶⁸ Janine Sourdél-Thomine and Dominique Sourdél, "Biens fonciers constitués waqf en Syrie fatimide pour une famille de šarīfs damascains," *JESHO* 15 (1972): 269–96; idem, "Trois actes de vente damascains du début du IVe/Xe siècle," *JESHO* 8 (1965): 164–85.

¹⁶⁹ Janine Sourdél-Thomine and Dominique Sourdél, "Un acte de vente arabe portant sur la région d'Ahlāt au VIIe/XIIIe siècle," *Tarih araştırmaları dergisi* 6 (1968): 51–60; Dominique Sourdél, "Deux documents relatifs à la communauté hanbalite de Damas," *BEO* 25 (1972): 141–49.

¹⁷⁰ Janine Sourdél-Thomine and Dominique Sourdél, "Une collection médiévale de certificats de pèlerinage à la Mekke, conservés à Istanbul: Les actes de la période seljoukide et bouride (jusqu'à 549/1154)," in *Etudes médiévales et patrimoine turc* (Paris, 1983), 167–93; idem, "Une collection médiévale de certificats de pèlerinage à la Mekke: II: Les actes de la période zengide et ayyoubide" (forthcoming).



studied.¹⁷¹ This article focuses on 21 of the certificates that have survived. Some of them are dated, others are not but can be dated quite precisely thanks to the study of the stylistic evolution noticed by the Sourdels. They all go back to the Qipchak period (the oldest dated 1282, the most recent 1304–5). Written on the same kind of scroll used by the chancery (the longer measures 1.60 m., but was originally bigger [2 m.]), these certificates were displayed by their owners. These documents might seem anecdotal as they give little historical information (rather religious formulas, few names, except that of the beneficiary). However, once more, it is the study of the evolution of this kind of document over the centuries that is more meaningful for history. Indeed, the Sourdels demonstrated that a comparison with other periods clearly indicates that in the Mamluk period this kind of document was no longer produced for prominent figures of Damascene society (princes, etc.), but rather only for other classes. This could indicate that during the Mamluk period, the military aristocracy of governors and officers who succeeded one another at a frenetic pace had little concern for their local reputations, since the role of capital city had been transferred from Damascus to Cairo. The ruling amirs in Damascus had no incentive to make a show for the local population of the importance that the pilgrimage to Mecca held for them.

2. Maktabat al-Asad (Damascus)

The recent publication of a book gives me the opportunity to speak about a kind of document rarely mentioned by the sources: reading certificates. This is perhaps due to the fact that this kind of document is only found in manuscripts, yet these certificates are authentic documents, important in many respects. It was Georges Vajda who first studied the collection of manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Nationale, the result of which was published in book form.¹⁷² Others of his articles were devoted to manuscripts held in Damascus (the then *Zāhirīyah*) and Tunis.¹⁷³ The *Zāhirīyah* library (now at the al-Asad Library) was known to have rich holdings of this sort of document, given that an important part of its manuscripts came from the library of an influential Hanbali family, the Maqdisīs, who were originally

¹⁷¹Janine Sourdél-Thomine and Dominique Sourdél, "Certificats de pèlerinage par procuration à l'époque mamlouke," *JSAI* 25 (2001): 212–33.

¹⁷²Georges Vajda, *Les certificats de lecture et de transmission dans les manuscrits arabes de la Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris*, Publications de l'Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes, no. 6 (Paris, 1956).

¹⁷³Georges Vajda, *Le Dictionnaire des Autorités (Mu'ğam aš-Šuyūh) de 'Abd al-Mu'min ad-Dimyātī*, Publications de l'Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes: documents, études et répertoires, no. 7 (Paris, 1962); idem, "La mašyaḥa d'Ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb al-Rāzī: Contribution à l'histoire du sunnisme en Egypte fātimide," *BEO* 23 (1970): 21–99.



from Jerusalem and settled in Damascus in the twelfth century.¹⁷⁴ Most of these manuscripts were read during recitation sessions and the names of all the participants were written at the end of the work read on that occasion. The structure of the reading certificate is invariably the same: it provides the names of the participants, the shaykh who listens (*musmi'*), the reader (*qāri'*), the writer of the certificate (*kātib*), the date, and finally the place. These certificates are thus significant documents for social history: they provide us with precious information on the way texts were transmitted, the education system, the biographies of scholars, the culture of Damascene inhabitants, the families, their occupations, the toponyms, and last but not least the role played by women in this particular case. This important collection has finally been studied at length by Stefan Leder with the help of other researchers.¹⁷⁵ They went through 86 manuscripts collecting 1,350 certificates that appear on 524 folios and date from 1155 to 1349. The results are impressive: more than 10,000 names and 250 toponyms listed. The work is to be commended given the difficulties presented by the discouraging scripts, but also because a volume of facsimiles for all the certificates was published subsequently.¹⁷⁶ There is no doubt that such a book will foster further research on the ulama in Damascus, and in this sense it is to be hoped that other studies will be published for the remaining certificates held in the Maktabat al-Asad, as well as elsewhere in Cairo, Istanbul, India, and in European and North American libraries.

3. Private collections

Private collections which hold family archives must exist in the Middle East. Most of them date from the Ottoman period, though even in this case they can still be useful for Mamlukists as some of them consist of copies made during the Ottoman period of earlier specimens. An interesting example of this was recently studied by Marco Salati,¹⁷⁷ who edited and studied a document dated 1066/1656, but dealing with matters of the Mamluk period, preserved in the private archives

¹⁷⁴Stefan Leder, "Charismatic Scripturalism: the Ḥanbalī Maqdisīs of Damascus," *Der Islam* 74 (1997): 279–304.

¹⁷⁵Stefan Leder, Yāsīn Muḥammad al-Sawwās, and Ma'mūn al-Ṣāgharjī, *Mu'jam al-Samā'āt al-Dimashqīyah: al-Muntakhabah min Sanat 550 ilā 750 H./1155 ilā 1349 M.* (Damascus, 1996). See also Stefan Leder, "Hörerzertifikate als Dokumente für die islamische Lehrkultur des Mittelalters," in *Urkunden und Urkundenformulare*, 147–66.

¹⁷⁶Stefan Leder, Yāsīn Muḥammad al-Sawwās, and Ma'mūn al-Ṣāgharjī, *Mu'jam al-Samā'āt al-Dimashqīyah: Ṣuwar al-Makhṭūṭāt: al-Muntakhabah min Sanat 550 ilā 750 H./1155 ilā 1349 M.* (Damascus, 2000).

¹⁷⁷Marco Salati, "Un documento di epoca mamelucca sul *waqf* di 'Izz al-Dīn Abū l-Makārim, Ḥamza b. Zuhra al-Ḥusaynī al-Iṣḥāqī al-Ḥalabī (ca. 707/1307)," *Annali della Facoltà di Lingue e Letterature Straniere di Ca' Foscari* 33 (Serie Orientale 25) (1994), 97–137.



of the Kawākibī family in Aleppo. Such discoveries will probably be made in the future, depending on the good relations established by a scholar with a local family.

UNSUSPECTED PLACES

I will finish this census with an account of the most recent and challenging discovery in terms of Mamluk documents. These have been found in what might be called an unsuspected place. As early as the nineteenth century, it was known that Islamic documents could have been recycled as new writing material in Europe, at a time when paper was still rare in this part of the world. A unique example of this reuse was published at that time by Michele Amari.¹⁷⁸ In this case, the fragments were found in the notarial records of Giovanni Scriba of Genoa, where contracts dating from 1154 to 1166 constitute a *terminus ante quem* for the reuse of these fragments of an Arabic document. In Amari's eyes, it could be nothing other than an official document from the Fatimid period, though the surviving parts of it did not allow a reconstruction of a coherent text or precise date.

This example makes us wonder if such reuse of old documents was not also prevalent in Islam for the same reason (scarcity of paper).¹⁷⁹ I have answered this question with the discovery of an unpublished autograph manuscript of al-Maqrīzī.¹⁸⁰ One of the main features of this notebook is that it was partly written on Mamluk chancery documents (scrolls) that were cut into pieces at a given period due to the high cost of paper. Put together to form quires, they were used by this historian as scratch paper for his drafts and notebooks. The greatest challenge was to develop a technique that would allow a coherent reconstruction of the original documents, hoping that they could be dated quite accurately. Fortunately, this was the case, and among the five documents reconstructed, I was able to precisely date three of them from 1344, demonstrating, thanks to the sources, that these were grants of fiefs (sing. *manshūr iqtāʿ*).¹⁸¹ This sort of document was previously attested only by a unique example from the reign of Qānṣūh.¹⁸²

While the document discovered by Amari was of no great interest, the fragments preserved in al-Maqrīzī's autograph manuscripts are undoubtedly valuable and

¹⁷⁸ Amari, "Nuovi ricordi arabici," 633–34 and plates II–IV.

¹⁷⁹ See above, pp. 17–18.

¹⁸⁰ Frédéric Bauden, "Maqriziana I: Discovery of an Autograph MS of al-Maqrīzī: Towards a Better Understanding of His Working Method: Description: Section 1," *MSR* 7, no. 2 (2003): 21–68.

¹⁸¹ Bauden, "The Recovery of Mamlūk Chancery Documents," 59–76.

¹⁸² Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn, "Manshūr bi-Manḥ Iqtāʿ," 2–23.



current research should be directed to the other autograph manuscripts of al-Maqrīzī, where more than 400 leaves have been identified as recycled documents.

CONCLUSION AND PROSPECTS

We may conclude that the situation of documents for the Mamluk period is not as disastrous as it has generally been presented. An approximate figure would be meaningless given that, as we have seen, several collections still remain to be studied. Compared to other periods and areas in Islam, Mamluk documents offer the researcher more than expected at first sight. Rather than lamenting our situation, research should proceed in various ways: edition with translation and diplomatic commentary, thematic studies, and searching for new documents.

The first of these issues should receive more attention: the temptation to study large sets of documents rather than editing, translating, and commenting on individual documents prevails in some cases. One should keep in mind that published documents, besides the fact that they enlarge the corpus and offer new elements for the comparison of formularies, provide not only data for further research on a subject, but also for related topics like diplomatics, paleography, the history of paper, and other matters unsuspected by the editor.

In this sense, the following *vade mecum* should be observed step by step by any person wishing to publish a document:

(1) physical description: description of the support material and of the physical appearance. Paper is preeminent for documents from the Mamluk period. Our knowledge of the paper of this period, and of Arabic paper in general, limits itself to a few certitudes. For sure, codicology and all related topics are still in their infancy and will not grow without detailed analysis of individual items. Careful description of the paper found in Mamluk documents will make it possible to distinguish it from paper used in manuscripts of this period.¹⁸³ If possible,¹⁸⁴ paper should be described in detail, indicating its color, the presence of chain lines (number, assembled or not, distance between groups) and laid lines (thickness, space occupied by 20 of them). Furthermore, the physical appearance provides a mass of information on the nature of the document itself, especially in the case of chancery documents where strict rules prevailed. The document should be accurately

¹⁸³For a first attempt to study this kind of paper, see Geneviève Humbert, "Le manuscrit arabe et ses papiers," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 99–100 (2002): 55–77, particularly 68–74 for papers used by the chancery.

¹⁸⁴It is true that most scholars studying Arabic documents usually work with a reproduction (photograph, microfilm) which does not allow this kind of analysis.



measured¹⁸⁵ and different measurements taken into consideration (width of the space between two lines of text and between introducing and concluding formulas, width of the right and upper margins).

(2) paleographical description: Arabic paleography has also been quite neglected although Greek, Latin, and Western scripts have been categorized for a long time. The editor should not forget to mention all the peculiarities of the script as well as orthographical features.

(3) grammatical commentary: all the inconsistencies noted in comparison with the standard rules of Arabic grammar. Philological notes will help future editors to understand some seemingly incoherent readings, as well as linguists working on the various levels of Arabic in the Middle Ages.

(4) diplomatic commentary: due to the lack of a manual of diplomatics for the Mamluk period, this kind of commentary is a must and should not be neglected. Comparison with the sources (manuals and chancery anthologies) and evidence preserved from all periods, due to the relative continuity of formularies through the various dynasties, allow an improved knowledge of the features of diplomatics in Islam.

(5) historical commentary: the editor must consider all the data provided or not by the document itself (identification of persons, places, explanation of technical terms, study of the context, of what is implied by the document, etc.).

(6) reproduction: Reproduction is essential for many reasons. A reproduced document will be available to all and for centuries. Furthermore, all the descriptions made and the readings proposed by the editor can be checked by anyone else wishing to study the document for another purpose. Several systems have been developed, some being preferable to others. The best solution, I believe, is to be found in Risciani's book,¹⁸⁶ where the document is reproduced in the left margin with the proposed reading in the other part of the page, respecting the spacing between lines, the disposition of words (horizontally and vertically), and even the size of characters noticeable in some parts of the document.

Besides this, there are urgent requirements which must be met. It remains true that few students are interested in the study of Arabic documents. Perhaps the difficult handwriting commonly used by careless clerks¹⁸⁷ discourages them. Courses devoted to paleography are not to be found in the curricula of most universities. In

¹⁸⁵In the case of scrolls, the approximate measurements of a single sheet should be indicated as well as the width of the glued part.

¹⁸⁶Risciani, *Documenti e firmani*.

¹⁸⁷As quoted by Richards, "The qasāma in Mamlūk Society," 251, "al-Asyūfī strongly recommended that clerks, especially the clerk of the court, should write well and not curtail letter shapes nor run



this respect, the project of the Arabic Papyrological School¹⁸⁸ could help as a first step to attract students, but a more profound reflection on the necessity of reintroducing this discipline in the programs of universities is required.¹⁸⁹

There is a pressing need for a microfilming project for various reasons. Firstly, it allays the danger of destruction of documents. Secondly, we can see that once a collection is put at the disposal of the scientific community (via printed catalogues, microfilms, or photographs), the documents are studied by a wide range of scholars and research moves forward quickly. The foundation of an institute for Arabic archives, similar to the Institute of Arabic Manuscripts in Cairo, would be most welcome. Before this ever happens, an easy way to foster research would be the use of the Internet. Collections that have already been microfilmed could easily be made available to the scientific community through this medium (at least those already published).

An intermediate measure would be the publication of an analytic bibliography classified according to the different kinds of documents published with mention of the place of conservation, date of the document, content, and type. What we need is something similar to what Roemer did in 1966 for the Mamluk official documents,¹⁹⁰ a work which has to be reexamined in view of the new discoveries made since that date.

Finally, there is an urgent need for a manual of diplomatics for the Mamluk period. In 1966, Hans Roemer already stressed this lacuna in these words: ". . . die Diplomatik der Kanzleien des islamischen Orients den Kinderschuhen noch nicht entwachsen ist."¹⁹¹ It is not at all scientifically acceptable that this matter has been dealt with for other periods and areas for which fewer or an equal number of documents have been preserved.¹⁹² Since that statement, substantial contributions to the field of diplomatics have been made, but always on specific types of

them one into another, all of which produces error. He recalls that a certain Qadi in Egypt chastised careless clerks, with the result that legal documents of all sorts in his time were written accurately and clearly."

¹⁸⁸ <http://www.ori.unizh.ch/aps/>

¹⁸⁹ Good introductions to the study of documents were proposed by Muḥammad Aḥmad Ḥusayn, *Al-Wathā'iq al-Tārīkhīyah* (Cairo, 1954); 'Abbās Maḥmūd Ḥammūdah, *Al-Madkhal ilā Dirāsāt al-Wathā'iq al-'Arabīyah* (Cairo, 1984).

¹⁹⁰ Hans Robert Roemer, "Arabische Herrscherurkunden aus Ägypten," *Orientalische Literatur Zeitung* 61 (1966), columns 325–43.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, column 343.

¹⁹² Heribert Busse, *Untersuchungen zum islamischen Kanzleiwesen: an Hand türkmenischer und safawidischer Urkunden* (Cairo, 1959); M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, *Osmanlı paleografya ve diplomatik ilmi* (Istanbul, 1979); Valeri Stojanow, *Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der osmanisch-türkischen Paläographie und Diplomatik*, *Islamkundliche Untersuchungen*, vol. 76 (Berlin, 1983).



documents and in scattered publications.¹⁹³ Thus, a major contribution which would embrace the various issues implied by this field would be most welcome by both scholars and students. Let us hope that this call will be heard.

¹⁹³First attempts to foster research in this direction will be found in Claude Cahen, "Notes de diplomatie arabo-musulmane," *Journal asiatique* 251 (1963): 311–25; to which must be added the following bibliography: Martiniano Pellegrino Roncaglia, *Essai bibliographique de diplomatie islamique (arabe-persane-ottomane)*, Subsidia Bibliographica Historica, no. 1 (Beirut, 1979). In addition to Stern's and Khan's publications on the petition already quoted, see also Walther Björkman, "Die Bittschriften im *dīwān al-inšā*," *Der Islam* 18 (1929): 207–12; Jørgen S. Nielsen, "A Note on the Origin of the *Ṭurra* in Early Mamlūk Chancery Practice," *Der Islam* 57 (1980): 288–92. For the nomination deeds of amirs, see Annemarie Schimmel, "Einsetzungsurkunden mamlukischer Emire," *Die Welt des Orients* 1, no. 4 (1949): 302–6 (based on al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā*). The following reference on the *dīwān al-inshā* is too general to be taken into consideration: S. Imamuddin, "*Diwān al-inshā* (Chancery in Later Medieval Egypt), (with Special Reference to Later Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Decrees Dated 528–894 H/1134–1489 A.C.)," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 28 (1980): 63–77. On private documents, see more specifically Rudolf Veselý, "Die Hauptprobleme der Diplomatie arabischer Privaturkunden aus dem spätmittelalterlichen Ägypten," *Archiv Orientalni* 40 (1972): 312–43; idem, "Die richterlichen Beglaubigungsmittel: ein Beitrag zur Diplomatie arabischer Gerichtsurkunden," *Orientalia Pragensia* 8 (1971): 7–23, 10 (1977): 99–122; Claude Cahen, "A propos des *shuhūd*," *SI* 31 (1970): 71–79.



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The Conquest of Arsūf by Baybars: Political and Military Aspects*

A modern-day visitor to Arsūf¹ cannot help but be struck by the neatly arranged piles of stones from siege machines found at the site. This ordering, of course, represents the labors of contemporary archeologists and their assistants to gather the numerous but scattered stones. Yet, in spite of the recent nature of this "installation," these heaps are clear, if mute, evidence of the great efforts of the Mamluks led by Sultan Baybars (1260–77) to conquer the fortified city from the Franks in 1265. This conquest, as well as its political background and its aftermath, will be the subjects of the present article, which can also be seen as a case-study of Mamluk siege warfare.

The immediate backdrop to the Mamluk attack against Arsūf was the events of the preceding weeks. At the end of 1264, while Baybars was hunting in the Egyptian countryside, he received reports that the Mongols were heading in force for the Mamluk border fortress of al-Bīrah along the Euphrates, today in south-eastern Turkey. The sultan quickly returned to Cairo, and ordered the immediate dispatch of advanced light forces, which were followed by a more organized, but still relatively small, force under the command of the senior amir (officer) Ughan Samm al-Mawt ("the Elixir of Death"), and then by a third corps, together with

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*I would like to thank Prof. Israel Roll of Tel Aviv University, who conducted the excavations at the site, and was most helpful when he showed us the site. He also kindly gave permission to reproduce maps and illustrations. The assistance of the archeologist Mr. Haggi Yonatan, the manager of the newly-established national park at Arsūf, is gratefully acknowledged. I am very thankful to my colleague Dr. Roni Ellenblum (Hebrew University), who has been my main interlocutor on Muslim-Frankish warfare for almost two decades, and with whom I discussed many of the matters that arise in this article. Finally, I would like to record my appreciation to my student, Ms. Kate Raphael, who coauthored the article which follows this one, and brought some of the archeological evidence to my attention.

¹Grid reference for the entire site in maps of the Survey of Israel: 1317–1325/1775–1783. During classical times, the city here was known as Apollonia. Today, the site falls within the municipal boundaries of Herzliyya. Some 500 meters to the south is the important Maqām Sīdnā (<Sayyidunā) 'Alī, about which see below. For recent archeological work on the pre-Islamic periods, see *Apollonia-Arsuf: Final Report of the Excavations*, vol. 1, *The Persian and Hellenistic Periods*, ed. Oren Tal and Israel Roll (Tel Aviv, 1996). A general survey of the Crusading period is found in I. Roll, H. Yonatan, Y. Tepper and T. Harpak, "Apollonia-Arsuf in the Crusader Period in Light of Recent Discoveries," *Qadmoniot* 33, no. 1 (1999): 18–31 (in Hebrew).



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important officers. Orders were also dispatched to Syria so that the governor of Aleppo and the Ayyubid prince of Ḥamāh would join the expeditionary force, together with the troops of Damascus. Finally, the bedouins of northern Syria, under the command of their leader (ʿĪsā ibn Muḥannā) were ordered to cross the desert so as to raid Ḥarrān, apparently to act as a diversion.² It should be noted that according to Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, Baybars' privy secretary and the main source for these and the following events, the sultan also received intelligence that unspecified Franks had informed the Mongols that at this time the Mamluk army was split up throughout the country for the (annual) grazing of their horses, and thus it was an appropriate time to launch a raid on the northern frontiers of the sultan's realm.³

Throughout the month of January 1265, Baybars busied himself with preparing the lion's share of his army for the campaign. He left Cairo on 27 January and arrived at Gaza thirteen days later. Initial reports from al-Bīrah indicated that this was a large-scale Mongol raid, perhaps the beginnings of a serious offensive into Syria. The sultan wrote, ordering Ughan to make haste, although he himself elected to remain in Palestine. It appears that Baybars thought it prudent to wait upon developments before committing his forces to the north. He devoted himself to hunting in the region. Subsequently at his camp near Yabnā (Ibelin), he received a report that the Mongols—facing concerted opposition from the garrison at al-Bīrah and learning of the approach of the relieving force—had withdrawn.⁴ Baybars received this happy news on 26 Rabīʿ II 663/15 February 1265, four days after the Mongols' retreat, a clear indication of the efficiency of the Mamluks' communication network, based on a pigeon-post and horse relays. The commanders of the expeditionary force received orders to remain in the area of al-Bīrah to assist *inter alia* in the repair of the fortress. A large share of the army, then, would not be participating in the events in Palestine of the next few weeks, although the sultan still had a significant force with him.⁵

The danger from the Mongols having been averted for the time being, the sultan now turned his attention to the local Franks. First, he organized a hunting expedition in the forests of Arsūf, interestingly enough to hunt lions (*al-sibāʿ*). It is clear that the sultan's goals were more than just sport: he was able "under cover"

²For these events, see Peter Thorau, *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century*, tr. P. M. Holt (London and New York, 1992), 158–59; Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhānīd War, 1260–1281* (Cambridge, 1995), 111–12.

³Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Khuwayṭir (Riyadh, 1396/1976), 222.

⁴It is also possible that news had reached the besiegers that Hülegü Ilkhan had just died. See the discussion in Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 113 and note 29.

⁵Ibid., 112–14; Thorau, *Lion of Egypt*, 112.



to gather intelligence about the nearby fortifications; the large-scale hunt was also an opportunity to put the troops through maneuvers.⁶ Thereupon, he made a quick jaunt to Arsūf and Caesarea (Qayṣariyah) to check them out before returning to his camp, now at the Awjā' or Yarkon River. From there he ordered the construction of unspecified siege machines (*manjanīqāt*) from locally gathered wood: four large ones were built, besides numerous small machines. Orders were sent out to unnamed castles to assemble more siege machines, as well as skilled workers and stonemasons (*al-ṣunnā' wa-al-ḥajjārīn*). Meanwhile, the already present troops were ordered to build ladders, probably also from locally-collected wood. From Awjā' the sultan moved with his troops to 'Uyūn al-Asāwir. Al-Maqrīzī writes that this location was in Wādī 'Ārah and 'Ar'arah.⁷ Although this is not in his apparent source (Ibn al-Furāt), al-Maqrīzī appears to have acquired reliable information, either from an independent source or from his own geographical knowledge.⁸ In Sheet XII of the maps of the *Survey of Western Palestine* (ca. 1880), I have found a site called 'Uyūn al-Asāwir, but it is in the Jordan Valley, near Wādī al-Mālīḥ, about 50 kms southeast of Caesarea. This is clearly not a candidate for the location in question. But in Sheet VIII, one finds immediately south of the entrance of Wādī 'Ārah a location called Tall al-Asāwir.⁹ This surely must be the location referred to by the sources, and is about 15 kms in a straight line from Caesarea. Although it may have taken Baybars a bit out of his way, it is not illogical for him to have gone there: this may have been a feint, and in any event he could make sure that no Frankish forces were going to surprise him from the north, via one of the main routes through the Carmel range. From there the sultan moved to the coast: on 9 Jumādā I 663/27 February he appeared suddenly at Caesarea.¹⁰ I can do no better than quote Peter Thorau's biography of Baybars at this point:

⁶This is similar in intent, if not in scope, to the hunting circles organized by the Mongols; see David Morgan, *The Mongols* (Oxford, 1986), 84–85; S. Jagchid and Paul Hyer, *Mongolia's Culture and Society* (Boulder and Folkestone, 1979), 27–37. This evidence leads me to revise a statement in *Mongols and Mamluks*, 218, that the Mamluks did not conduct cavalry exercises *cum* hunting expeditions.

⁷Wādī 'Ārah (in Hebrew: Nahal 'Īrōn) cuts across the Carmel range from the southwest to the northeast; the northern entrance is near Megiddo, while its southern opening is about 15 km as the crow flies to the east of Caesarea. 'Ar'arah is a village some five miles to the north of the southern entrance of Wādī 'Ārah. Following the modern roads, it is about a 25 km march from this village to Caesarea.

⁸Al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma'rīfat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyādah et al. (Cairo, 1934–74), 1:526. On his reliance for these events on Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk*, who in turn cites by name Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, see below.

⁹C. R. Conder and H. H. Kitchener, *Maps of Western Palestine* (London, 1880), sheets VIII and XII.

¹⁰This summary is based on Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 229–30.



[Caesarea] was immediately encircled and stormed by the Muslim army. Taken by surprise, the defenders gave up the gates and walls after a short resistance, and withdrew into the citadel, while the attackers stormed into the town. Now began the struggle for the citadel. It lay on a peninsula, which, without naval support, could in practice be attacked from the town on one side only. . . . [T]he citadel was the target of stones and Greek fire from the catapults, and its defenders were overwhelmed by a shower of arrows from the siege-towers. . . . When a siege-tower was successfully brought up to the wall, the sultan himself joined in the fighting, and satisfied himself of [*sic*] the siege operations. . . . On 15 Jumādā I/5 March the defenders in Caesarea surrendered the citadel, withdrew to ships . . . and sailed to Acre. Baybars ordered the town and citadel to be razed, probably in order to prevent once and for all Caesarea ever again being used as a bridgehead for a Crusading army.¹¹

During the siege, Baybars had dispatched small forces to raid in various directions: Syrian troops went off to Baysān, while nomads—bedouins and Turcomans—harried the region of Acre.¹² No doubt these raids were aimed at both gathering intelligence and keeping the Franks off balance and thus unable to extend assistance to their brethren in Caesarea. In the aftermath of the conquest, while the majority of the army was busy dismantling Caesarea, Baybars himself raided the outskirts of ‘Athlith, before succeeding in taking Haifa, which was also destroyed.¹³ He thereupon returned to Caesarea, where the destructive work continued. There a Frankish delegation of unknown provenance was warmly received. Meanwhile, more siege machines arrived from al-Ṣubaybah in the Golan, and Baybars was ready for his next goal, which he kept secret for the time being. On 29 Jumādā/19 March he left Caesarea; two days later he took up position at Arsūf.¹⁴

Before proceeding to the description of the actual siege of Arsūf, I would like to make two points. The first is of a historiographical nature. Virtually all of our information on the conduct of the siege, as well as the preceding events and

¹¹Thorau, *Lion of Egypt*, 160–61.

¹²Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 231.

¹³Ibid., 234, who also describes the dispatch of a force which destroyed a castle (*qal‘ah*) called al-Mulūḥah, whose location is unclear. See Thorau, *Lion of Egypt*, 180, note 11. Haifa was later recovered by the Franks, and it was finally occupied by the Mamluks after the fall of Acre in 1291 (“Hayfā,” *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 3:325.)

¹⁴Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 234–35.



subsequent developments, is derived from the Arabic sources, although some details can be gleaned from the Frankish sources. As is well known, Mamluk historiography is extremely rich and voluminous. At times, however, this gives a mistaken impression of a surfeit of different accounts, when really all we have is the same account repeated or summarized, usually more or less faithfully, by a series of writers. (Although, it should be noted, that even in this case, all versions should be checked, since occasionally a later author introduces significant information from a different source, even one which is not extant, and which may not have come down to us otherwise.) Such is the case in the present circumstances. All the usual Arabic sources for the modern studies of these events—al-Nuwayrī,¹⁵ Ibn al-Furāt,¹⁶ and al-Maqrīzī¹⁷ are the most prominent—are derived directly or otherwise from the account of Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir’s biography of Baybars, *Al-Rawḍ al-Zāhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Ẓāhir*. In fact, al-Maqrīzī’s account in his chronicle *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma‘rifat Duwal al-Mulūk*, the mainstay of much scholarship on Mamluk-Frankish relations at this time due to its availability in Quatremère’s translation,¹⁸ is a somewhat shortened version—and not always an accurate one—of that related by Ibn al-Furāt in his *Tārīkh al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk*.¹⁹ As usual, the latter does a credible job of relating Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir’s narrative, and even adds to it from another source.²⁰ Yet in spite of the very good edition of the relevant portion by U. and M. C. Lyons, and their fine translation, the following discussion will be based on the “real thing,” as given by Ibn ‘Abd al-Ẓāhir, who besides his access to the sultan and at least some of his secrets has the added

¹⁵ Al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab* (Cairo, 1923–97), 30:268–72.

¹⁶ Ibn al-Furāt, “Tārīkh al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk,” Staatsbibliothek (Vienna) MS 814, fols. 69b–72b; most of this section is found in the partial edition published as *Ayyubids, Mamlukes and Crusaders: Selections from the Tārīkh al-Duwal wa’l-Mulūk of Ibn al-Furāt*, ed. and trans. U. and M. C. Lyons, with introduction and notes by J. S. C. Riley-Smith (Cambridge, 1971), 1:91–97; Arabic text, 2:73–78.

¹⁷ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 1:528–32. As mentioned above, this author does provide one interesting original, and apparently correct, additional tidbit of geographical information.

¹⁸ M. Quatremère, *Histoire des sultans mamlouks de l’Égypte* (Paris, 1837–42); this translation only runs up to 708/1308–9.

¹⁹ The relationship between the two works is discussed in R. Amitai, “Al-Maqrīzī as a Historian of the Early Mamluk Sultanate (or: Is al-Maqrīzī an Unrecognized Historiographical Villain?),” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 7, no. 2 (2003): 99–118; one of the examples adduced in that article is the siege of Arsūf.

²⁰ This is the passage with which he opens the entire section on the siege, taken from Ibn Shaddād al-Ḥalabī’s historical-geographical work *Al-A’lāq al-Khaṭīrah fī Dhikr Umarā’ al-Shām wa-al-Jazīrah*, vol. 2, pt. 2, *Tārīkh Lubnān wa-al-Urdunn wa-Filasṭīn*, ed. S. Dahhān (Damascus, 1963), 253–54.



advantage of having been present on this campaign.²¹ This author has his disadvantages, not the least of which is that he was not a military man, and also his penchant for hyperbole and pro-Baybars panegyric. These, together with some lacunae, can be at least partially rectified by the use of some critical sense, and a look at the physical remnants of the city and the battle.

The second point demands a longer discussion: why is it that Baybars had decided to commence the conquest of Frankish territory in general, and why at this time? The sultan's relations with the Franks of Palestine had hitherto not been a bed of roses but they did not differ dramatically from those of his Ayyubid predecessors in Syria. True, raiders had set out from Acre in the winter of 1260, evidently hoping to take advantage of the confused state of the country; these, however, were trounced in the Golan by local Muslim troops.²² But in September of the following year, the sultan had reached a *modus vivendi* with John of Ibelin, ruler of Jaffa. This was of some importance, as Baybars around this time used that harbor to import grain from Egypt to Syria to help relieve famine in the latter country. By the early fall of this same year, Baybars concluded a treaty with the Franks of Acre, based on one concluded several years before with the last Ayyubid ruler of Damascus, al-Nāṣir Yūsuf; this recognized the status quo and stipulated the exchange of prisoners. This latter provision, however, was not fully carried out, because of Frankish dithering.²³

²¹See Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 237, for proof that this writer was present at the siege. Some early Mamluk authors—such as Ibn al-Dawādārī (*Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmi' al-Ghurar*, vol. 8, ed. U. Haarmann [Cairo, 1971], 107), al-Yūnīnī (*Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān* [Hyderabad, 1954–61], 2:318–19), Baybars al-Mansūrī al-Dawādār (*Zubdat al-Fikrah fī Tārīkh al-Hijrah: History of the Early Mamluk Period*, ed. D. S. Richards [Beirut, 1998], 96)—give accounts independent of Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, but these are so short that they have little if any value; the last mentioned, however, notes that he himself participated in the campaign. J. Prawer, *Histoire du royaume latin de Jérusalem* (2nd ed., Paris, 1975), 2:467, note 41, remarks on the problematic—if not confused—nature of al-Maqrīzī's account, and the superiority of Ibn al-Furāt's report, but did not notice that the former is derived from the latter. At the time of his writing, Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir's text had not been published, let alone translated, and therefore it is understandable that Prawer would not have known of its importance. The annals for the early years of the reign of Baybars are missing in the biography by 'Izz al-Dīn ibn Shaddād al-Ḥalabī, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir (Die Geschichte des Sultan Baibars)*, ed. A. Ḥuṭayṭ (Wiesbaden, 1983), and thus there is no description of the siege there. The last mentioned writer's *A'lāq*, 254, gives a very terse account. Shāfi' ibn 'Alī, *Ḥusn al-Manāqib al-Sirrīyah al-Muntaza'ah min al-Sīrah al-Zāhirīyah*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Khuwayṭir (Riyadh, 1976), 89–90, only gives a summary of Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir's account, and adds nothing new.

²²Peter Jackson, "The Crisis in the Holy Land in 1260," *English Historical Review* 95 (1980), 509 and note 4.

²³See Thorau, *Lion of Egypt*, 143–44; Prawer, *Histoire*, 2:442–47.



In 1263, when Baybars was in Syria dealing with various matters, he launched a series of raids in Palestine, whose targets included the Church of St. Mary in Nazareth and the environs of Acre, where he reached as far as the gates of the city. The sultan's large army camped at Mt. Tabor and his belligerent rhetoric convinced the Hospitallers to abandon the site without a fight. In the aftermath of these actions, the Franks of Palestine concluded agreements with Mamluk governors in the area to cease hostilities (December 1263). In spite of this, a month later Templars and Hospitallers raided in the area of al-Lajjūn (Megiddo). In the early spring of 1264, Mamluk troops raided Ramla, while in June the Franks launched a foray against Ascalon. Baybars retaliated by ordering his governor in the area to raid Caesarea and 'Athlīth, laying waste to the territory between them. The Franks of Acre, reinforced by the arrival of Oliver of Termes, attacked Baysān in November of this year, causing some damage.²⁴

There is little here to signal a departure from the decades-long policy adopted by local Muslim rulers, although Baybars' actions were certainly on the militant side, reflecting perhaps his growing self-confidence as he gained control over all Muslim Syria. Why, then, the apparent sudden change *vis-à-vis* the Franks around 1265, and the adoption of a much more belligerent mien? I think that the explanation is tied to Baybars' perception of the growing Frankish-Mongol relationships and the attempts to formulate a common policy against the Muslims.²⁵ The name Frank here can refer to both local Franks and their mentors across the sea. Yet with regard to the latter, the first explicit evidence that the sultan knew that the Ilkhans of Iran were maintaining diplomatic contact with Latin rulers to arrange a joint campaign against the Mamluks is only from 1267, when Jaime I of Spain launched an ill-fated crusade after corresponding with Abagha Ilkhan. There are, however, indirect indications that Baybars may have learned from Manfred of Hohenstaufen, ruler of Sicily and southern Italy, that Hülegü had been trying to contact Louis IX of France for the same purpose.²⁶ On the other hand, Mamluk sources give clear evidence that Syrian Franks, and not just those in Antioch—who were known for their pro-Mongol attitudes—were already passing on intelligence to the Mongols. In early 1261, unnamed Franks in Acre had notified Mongol raiders near Aleppo that a Mamluk force was on its way to attack them.²⁷ More to

²⁴Thorau, *Lion of Egypt*, 143–50; Prawer, *Histoire*, 2:460; Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 53–54. Towards the Franks of Antioch, Baybars adopted a much more truculent policy at an early date, surely caused by the unequivocally pro-Mongol policy of its prince, Bohemond VI; see *ibid.*, 54.

²⁵The following is based on the argument in my article "Mamluk Perceptions of the Mongol-Frankish Rapprochement," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 7 (1992): 50–65.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 52–53; a mistaken date appears on p. 53: it should read 664/1265–66 and not 644/1264–65.

²⁷Ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar*, 8:71–72; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1:439, 2:93.



the point in the present context, as mentioned above, Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir reports that one of the reasons why the Mongols had chosen to attack al-Bīrah at this time was that Franks of unknown provenance had informed them that the Mamluks were split up and that their horses were out to pasture. After the Mongols had withdrawn, Baybars is said to have complained to the Castellan of Jaffa about the Frankish leaders: “Those people have committed many wrongs against me, such as their writing to the Mongols to attack my territories.”²⁸

I am suggesting, therefore, that besides an upgrade of anti-Frankish feeling, albeit within the parameters of traditional policy towards them, a new element had been introduced by the Mamluks under Baybars by the mid-1260s. This was the increasing realization that Frankish leaders in Syria were in contact with the Mongols, assisting them with intelligence, encouraging them to attack the Muslims, and possibly even planning a joint campaign with them (although this is not stated explicitly). In any case, it was becoming increasingly clear to the Mamluk leadership that the Frankish neutrality of 1260, so well analyzed by Peter Jackson in his 1980 article “The Crisis in the Holy Land in 1260,” had been replaced by an ever stronger pro-Mongol tilt. It may be that one contributory factor in Baybars’ growing truculence towards the Franks in the Levant, including the adoption of a strategy of conquest, was the desire to nip the problem in the bud. Even the initial execution of such a strategy would have weakened the local Franks; reduced territory would have meant less of a beachhead for a new crusade if the Franks from across the sea decided to launch an attack in cahoots with the Mongols.

Before getting on with the description of the siege, I will make two more short remarks regarding Arsūf. Firstly, in 1263 Baybars had exchanged letters with Hugh Revel, grandmaster of the Hospitallers. In his letter, Baybars complained that the fortifications of Arsūf had been strengthened in contradiction to a previous agreement.²⁹ Secondly, in spite of this complaint, around this time Baybars warmly received envoys from Yaffa and Arsūf. The sultan, having received gifts from them, assured both parties that they would not be attacked.³⁰ As will be seen, neither the improved fortifications nor the sultan’s assurances were to avail the defenders of Arsūf even in the short run.

The siege and conquest of Arsūf have been studied in some detail in previous works.³¹ These studies have much value, but a number of difficulties remain,

²⁸ Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī, *Husn al-Manāqib*, 87–88; translation in P. M. Holt, “Some Studies on Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī’s Biography of Baybars,” *Journal of Semitic Studies* 29 (1984): 127.

²⁹ See Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 153, who writes that the Hospitallers built a suburb (*rabaḍ*); cf. Shāfi‘ ibn ‘Alī, *Husn al-Manāqib*, 57, who writes that they constructed a wall around the *rabaḍ*, which seems more logical. This is an interesting example of Shāfi‘ improving on his source.

³⁰ Thorau, *Lion of Egypt*, 154, note 21.

³¹ See M. Benvenisti, *The Crusaders in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem, 1970), 132–33; Prawer, *Histoire*,



which I will raise in the following discussion. The beginning of the story is simple enough: Baybars arrived at the city on 1 Jumādā II/21 March. He immediately ordered the construction of “covers” (*satā’ir*), possibly mantlets (mobile shields).³² This makes perfect sense, given the ready supply of wood, and a large garrison with its own fire-power.

The next stage, however, is not completely clear. According to Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir’s account, the sultan ordered that two tunnels (*sarābayn*)³³ were to be dug from “the moat (*khandaq*) of the city to the moat of the citadel.” These tunnels were roofed (*suqqifat*), i.e., reinforced, with wood. Each tunnel was entrusted to several senior officers along with lesser commanders. Thereupon, “a way (*ṭarīq*) was made from the moat to the citadel.”³⁴ The language is clear enough: mines reinforced by wood had been dug up to the inner moat, and from there some type of path had been made up to the citadel. What is really going on can be inferred from continued reading of the source and looking at the map.

At this stage there was a Frankish sortie, which attempted “to ignite the wood” (more about this below). The Mamluks, led by Qalāwūn—one of the previously mentioned senior commanders—succeeded, however, in dousing the flames. Here, Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir tells us that at this point, “. . . the barrier of wood in the moat was completed . . .” (. . . *takāmala radm al-aḥṭāb bi-al-khandaq* . . .).³⁵ The key word here is *radm*, which Lane translates *inter alia* as: “. . . an obstruction; a barrier . . . a rampart, or a fortified barrier . . .”³⁶ It seems, then, that we have some type of wood covering which was found inside the citadel moat, which abutted the exit of at least one of the mines and led at least to the foot of the citadel. This was the “way” (*ṭarīq*) to the citadel described above, and it was intended to provide

2:467–69; Steven Runciman, *The History of the Crusades* (Cambridge, 1951–54), 3:318–19.

³² Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 235 (=Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 1:91 [tr. 2:73]; mantlets is given in this translation).

³³ This word as written causes some problems. E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Dictionary* (London, 1863–93, rept., Cambridge, 1984), 1:1341–42, gives the following meaning for *sarab* (with no long vowel over the second *a*): “A subterranean excavation . . . a habitation of a wild animal . . . in, . . . or beneath . . . the earth, or ground . . . [A] secret or hidden place of passage; or . . . it means a road, or way . . . And *sarab ṭarīq* means [a] way, or road, in which people follow one another continuously.” The form *sarāb* exists, but it describes a mirage “or the semblance of water.” This is obviously not the case here. It seems rather that in this particular context, in spite of the slightly different (and probably mistaken) spelling, the first meaning is clearly meant, and we are dealing with two underground tunnels or mines. It should be noted that subsequently Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir (*Rawḍ*, 236) uses the form *sarab* to refer to the same tunnel. D. Ayalon, in his article “Ḥiṣār, iv.-The Mamlūk Sultanate,” *IEJ*², 3:473, notes that mines were usually known as *naqb/nuqūb*, but occasionally the term *sirb/asrāb* or *surūb* is found.

³⁴ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 235–36 (=Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 1:91–92 [tr. 2:73–74]).

³⁵ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 236 (=Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 1:92 [tr. 2:74]).



cover for advancing Mamluk troops, who would either try scaling the walls at the foot of the citadel or begin mining underneath it.

Since the distance between the moat of the city and the moat of the citadel was quite short on the north, it makes sense that at least one of the mines described above was dug from that direction. It may be, as will be soon seen, that another mine may have run east to west, more or less across from the gate of the citadel; at this point, the distance between the two moats was also not great, although it was longer than on the north. Given that the distance between the southern wall of the city was quite far from the citadel, it seems highly unlikely that tunnels were dug from that direction. Thus the suggestion by M. Benvenisti that the attack on the city commenced from the south is not convincing.³⁷

One might ask how the Mamluk soldiers could construct the *radm* in the inner moat, when on both sides—the citadel and the city—Franks would be raining upon them arrows, stones, and other objects. It may be possible that the north and northeast of the city, which—as noted above—were very narrow at this part, may have been partially or completely abandoned at this point, perhaps due to the slightly higher lay of the land to the north of the city, which gave a certain advantage to the Mamluk archers and artillery. It may be that these sections of the city suffered from heavy fire from both arrows and siege engines, and thus were abandoned—perhaps only temporarily—by the inhabitants, even if the walls there were still at least partially manned. The Mamluks tunneling under this part of the city and then erupting into the inner moat would have therefore been undisturbed from one side. This is all admittedly speculative, but I cannot do better at this point.

The Franks in the citadel, however, were not ready to just sit and watch the Mamluks advance. According to Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, “The Franks used a stratagem when they dug a mine (*naqabū*) from inside the citadel until they arrived underneath the barrier [in the moat]; they pierced the earth up to the wood.” The Franks thereupon lit barrels of grease and fat, and whipped up the flames with bellows in the tunnels (*nuqūb*). This indeed was a well-planned action, showing the sophistication and determination of the Hospitallers, and caught the Mamluks completely off guard. All attempts to quench the fire were unsuccessful.³⁸

It should be noted that a tunnel about 70 meters long, most probably of Frankish construction, has been discovered underneath some of the citadel. One end was to the southwest of the citadel, below the moat; the earth here has

³⁶ Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1:1069.

³⁷ Benvenisti, *Crusaders in the Holy Land*, 133. Raphael and Tepper reach the same conclusion as expressed here by me through examining the archeological evidence, as seen in the accompanying article.



collapsed into the sea below, and thus the tunnel is entered further in than originally planned (it can be reached at the present time by descending a hanging ladder on a cliff). As the enclosed map shows, the tunnel, which is well built, ran along the south wall, and in one spot—towards the middle—continued under the southern barbican. It appears that the planned second entrance was in the moat, just beyond the entrance to the citadel. At the same time, there is a second branch of the tunnel, about 10 meters in length, which branched off close to this latter opening. This branch has the appearance of being hastily dug. Both of these latter openings are today blocked. The fact that the majority of the tunnel is well and carefully constructed, and given its location and length, leads to the conclusion that we are dealing with a Frankish tunnel that was prepared before the siege. The branch, however, may have been dug during the siege itself, and it may have been the means by which the Franks were able to launch their sortie which led to the destruction of the Mamluk wooden barrier in the moat. It hints that perhaps one of the Mamluk tunnels came in from the east, and abutted the inner moat more or less across from the gate of the citadel.

At about this time, Baybars probably came to the conclusion that these underground probes into the city were not going to bring about the capture of the citadel, and it would thus be pointless to continue the above-described tactic. To successfully attack the citadel across the wide moat, first the entire city had to be taken. To achieve this goal, the sultan ordered a massive engineering project under the direction of two senior amirs. The first, Sunqur al-Rūmī, was to lead a significant part of the officers and troops, and dig a trench (*ḥafr*), “along the border of the [city] moat” (*min ḥāfāt khandaq*), from the mouth of one of the above-described tunnels (here referred to as *sarab*, without the long vowel over the second *a*) to the sea. The second amir, Qalāwūn al-Alfī, with the remainder of the troops, was to do the same thing from the other tunnel, running along the wall in the other direction to the sea. The trenches were to be hidden by the “wall” (*ḥāʾit*) of the moat of the city, referring, it would seem, to the outside wall of the moat. In this wall, openings (*abwāb*) were to be dug, and the earth from these was to be dispersed (literally “thrown from” [*wa-yurmā al-turāb minhā*]). The trench was to be as deep as the moat. An officer known as Aybeg al-Fakhrī, one of the Atabeg Aybeg al-Mustaʾrib’s men, was placed in charge, and he in turn brought in the construction experts to execute this work.³⁹

³⁸Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 236 (=Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 1:92 [tr. 2:74]).

³⁹Ibn ʿAbd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 236–37 (=Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 1:92–93 [tr. 2:74]). The translation of Ibn al-Furāt is a bit confusing: “Openings were to be dug in this wall from which soil could be thrown down into the ditch until the earth reached the level of that in the moat.” I have translated *muhandisīn* as “construction experts,” since engineers here might be anachronistic. On this matter, see R. Amitai, “An Arabic Inscription at al-Ṣubayba (Qalʿat Namrūd) from the



This description is not completely clear. This fuzzy account may be due to the fact that Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir was not a military man. It seems, however, that we can reconstruct the project as follows: parallel to most of the outside perimeter of the city’s moat, a large and deep trench was excavated at some distance, but not too far (as implied by the text, which has the trench “hidden” by the wall of the moat). From the trench, short connecting ditches were dug to the wall, in which openings were made (to enable passage of attackers directly into the moat). The dirt extracted from the excavation was piled up, thereby providing some more protection for the Mamluk soldiers and sappers. It would appear that much of the external wall of the city was abandoned or poorly manned, since otherwise the Mamluks would have encountered difficulty executing the project. No archeological evidence of this massive project has been found yet, but this is not surprising: to the north and south of the city walls, roads and deep drainage trenches have been dug in recent decades (with complete disregard for the archeology of the site, it might be added), and the eastern wall has yet to be excavated.

The above-described excavation work continued for some time, during which the bombardment by the siege machines was kept up. The sultan participated in both activities as well as constant inspections and lobbing off of arrows. Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir takes care to emphasize Baybars’ frenetic yet heroic activities, during which he was often endangered.⁴⁰ That this is more than panegyric or a topos is seen by the numerous examples from the sources attesting to Baybars’ bravery and energy during and between his many campaigns. While standing at a firing post, the sultan was confronted by a Frankish *chevauchée*. Together with some senior amirs, including Sunqur al-Rūmī (who was wounded) and his trusted mamluk and viceroy Bilik al-Khaznadār, he beat back the Franks.⁴¹

In the case of the siege of Arsūf, we have few details about the nature and size of the artillery actually used, called here by the generic terms *majānīq* or *manjanīqāt*. But before the attack on Caesarea—as noted above—when Baybars was laying the groundwork for this campaign, he had some *manjanīqāt* constructed from local wood (four large ones and other small ones), and others were brought from

Reign of Sultan Baybars,” in M. Hartal, *The al-Ṣubayba (Nimrod) Fortress, Towers 11 and 9*, Israel Antiquities Authority Reports, no. 11 (Jerusalem, 2001), 116; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, “Muhandis, Shād, Mu‘allam—Note on the Building Craft in the Mamluk Period,” *Der Islam* 72 (1995): 293–309. The amir Aybeg al-Fakhrī subsequently was one of the officers who received an entire village in the environs of the city as private property, surely in recognition of his work in the siege. See R. Amitai-Preiss, “The Mamluk Officer Class during the Reign of Sultan Baybars,” in *War and Society in the Eastern Mediterranean, 7th–15th Centuries*, ed. Yaakov Lev (Leiden, 1997), 298 (no. 45). The information from the siege cited above clears up any question about his private name and his affiliation.

⁴⁰See the appreciation of his deeds and personality in Thorau, *Lion of Egypt*, 251–55.



fortresses, probably transported disassembled and then rebuilt on the site. These included the timber for Maghrabi and Frankish-type *majānīq*, or counterweight trebuchets.⁴² During the actual attack on Arsūf, additional, unspecified machines arrived from Damascus. The exact types of artillery used in the campaign are also not specified. There is here no mention of Maghrabi or Frankish machines, although it seems that they would have been in the area, and there is no reason not to have used them. On the other hand, from the extant stones found in and around the citadel,⁴³ it appears that mainly artillery of somewhat modest size and power was employed; one wonders about the whereabouts of the large stones that would have been thrown by the counterweight trebuchets. There is, however, some evidence that traction machines were used. Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir reports that Baybars joined the soldiers in pulling the siege machine (*fī jarr al-manjanīqāt*; also *yajurru fī majānīq*), meaning that the sultan participated in the all-important slinging of the stones, by pulling on the rope which propelled the beam that in turn slung the stones.⁴⁴ While this may have been important for morale, and his image as a fighting sultan, no less significant was his constant inspection of the machines. One notable piece of artillery was built by Geremün Agha,⁴⁵ whose device was able to shoot seven bolts at one time; one large “arrowhead” has been discovered at the site which might be from a bolt of this type.⁴⁶ The commander of the artillery, Aybeg al-Afram, is commended for his diligence in his work.⁴⁷

It was, however, not all work and fighting for the sultan and his troops. The army was accompanied by “pious people, ascetics, legal scholars, and indigent Sufis” (*al-‘ubbāb wa-al-zuhhād wa-al-fuqahā’ wa-al-fuqarā’*) and others. How

⁴¹ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 237–38 (=Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 1:93–94 [tr. 2:74–75]).

⁴² Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 230 (=Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 1:85 [tr. 2:69]). For these types of trebuchet, see Paul E. Chevedden, “The Hybrid Trebuchet,” in *On the Social Origins of Medieval Institutions*, ed. D. Kagay and T. Vann (Leiden, 1998), 179–200.

⁴³ See the accompanying article by Raphael and Tepper.

⁴⁴ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 237 (=Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 1:94 [tr. 2:75], which gives a paraphrase).

⁴⁵ On this officer, an important Mongol who had fled to the Sultanate several years before and received a high rank in the Mamluk army, see Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks*, 108–9.

⁴⁶ See the article by Raphael and Tepper. For this type of trebuchet, see Paul Chevedden, “Black Camels and Blazing Bolts: The Bolt-Projecting Trebuchet in the Mamluk Army,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 8, no. 1 (2004): 227–77.

⁴⁷ Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 238 (=Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 1:95 [tr. 2:76]). Aybeg al-Afram, a member of the Šāhiliyah (i.e., the unit from which Baybars himself hailed) known as *amīr jāndār*, was a senior officer who received part of a village as freehold in the aftermath of the campaign. See Amitai-Preiss, “The Mamluk Officer Class,” 296 (no. 29). This amir can probably be identified with ‘Izz al-Dīn Amīr Jāndār, who had brought the wood for the siege machines early in the campaign; Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 230 (=Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 1:85 [tr.



many of each category were actually present at the siege is unclear: the importance of rhyme in this list cannot be denied. In any event, three Sufi shaykhs who were present are named: ‘Alī al-Majnūn (“the crazy one”), Ilyās, and ‘Alī al-Bakkā’ (“the weeper”), who all enjoyed the sultan’s largess. Although the Mamluk army was basically a professional army of cavalymen, and non-professionals and militiamen had been pretty much pushed to the side in these major campaigns (and the Mamluk army in general),⁴⁸ a large crowd of religious figures, with an emphasis on Sufis of various ilks, was deemed desirable so as to encourage the fighters in their efforts for the sake of jihad. During the campaign, Baybars took time off to visit the nearby tomb of Shaykh ‘Alī ibn ‘Alīm, known as Sīdnā ‘Alī. It was particularly convenient to have a Muslim saint just “down the block,” especially one whose tomb could not be defiled by the Franks, try as they had.⁴⁹

The siege machines, reinforced by new ones brought from Damascus, kept up their pounding of the walls and city, and began to have an effect. When the trenches (here called, to confuse us, *sarābāt*; N.B. the long vowel over the second *a*) along the moat were completed, the gates referred to were opened into the moat. The assault was commenced on Monday, 8 Rajab/26 April, i.e., some five weeks after the investment had begun. Unfortunately, Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir gives us no details beyond the fact that the city was taken that very day.⁵⁰ We can imagine that the Mamluk fighters rushed across the moat of the city, threw up ladders, and scaled the walls, while being covered by missiles launched from bows and heavier weapons.

Having taken the city, it can be assumed that the Mamluks took up position along the inner moat, across from the citadel. For three days they probably maintained a withering fire of arrows, stones, and other missiles. This is testified to by the large concentration of arrowheads around the citadel on the barbican, as described in Raphael and Tepper’s article that follows this one. The large number of trebuchet stones and the clearly-perceived impact points on the extant walls shows that artillery was also trained on the citadel, although it is unclear how much of this

2:69]).

⁴⁸On this matter, see R. Amitai, “Foot Soldiers, Militiamen and Volunteers in the Early Mamluk Army,” in *Texts, Documents and Artifacts: Islamic Studies in Honour of D. S. Richards*, ed. C. F. Robinson (Leiden, 2003), 232–49.

⁴⁹Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 238–39 (=Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 1:94–95 [tr. 2:75–76]). Interestingly enough, Baybars’ Sufi mentor Khaḍir is not mentioned by this source, although he may have been in the vicinity and even predicted the date of the city’s capture; Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh*, 272–73. Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir may have deliberately suppressed the information on Khaḍir, since he later fell afoul of the sultan and was imprisoned. On this matter, see P. M. Holt, “An Early Source on Shaykh Khaḍir al-Mihrānī,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 46 (1983): 33–39, esp. 35.



was from outside the city and how much from newly-erected or moved machines. The great number of arrowheads and trebuchet stones found in the environs of the citadel gate shows that the Mamluks especially concentrated their fire there, as would be expected.

After three days of softening up the citadel, the Mamluks commenced their final assault. Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir mentions the attack against the *bāshūrah*, the barbican or forward fortification surrounding the main citadel wall,⁵¹ which is clearly seen on the map of the site. On Thursday, 11 Rajab/29 April, the *bāshūrah* fell, with some of its wall collapsing; it is not stated why this happened, but it was surely due to either mining or the bombardment (or a combination of the two). The Mamluk soldiers scaled the walls of the *bāshūrah* and were among the Frankish defenders there before the latter knew what was upon them; the Muslim banners were soon flying from there. But the main citadel was still in the hands of the Franks. At this time, the sultan, who evidently was not in the thick of the fighting, offered an *amān*, or guarantee of safety, to the Franks. This was accepted, and a Mamluk officer was hoisted up to the citadel by ropes, with the sultan’s banner (*sanjaq*); the citadel gate must have been well barricaded from the inside or blocked with rubble. The officer took possession of the citadel, the Franks handed over their swords, and were taken into captivity. Forty days of fighting were now ended.⁵²

There is no description of fighting within the citadel. On the other hand, as seen in the article by Raphael and Tepper, a large number of arrowheads were found inside the citadel. These may be the remnants of Frankish arrows which were left behind. Possibly these were Mamluk arrows which were shot over the wall of the citadel. Finally, it may be that small groups of Mamluks managed to penetrate the citadel before it surrendered and these arrowheads are evidence of fighting at close quarters. This is a matter upon which it is difficult to decide, although I must admit that none of these possibilities are very satisfactory.

We should first examine what the reasons for the Mamluk victory here were, and then see whether one can find here indications of a general Mamluk strategy for the taking of fortresses. The Mamluk conquest of Arsūf was not a foregone conclusion at the commencement of the campaign, as the city was well fortified and garrisoned. Baybars, however, had several advantages: while much of his army was off in the north, and some had remained in Egypt, he still commanded a relatively large force of several thousand, perhaps even more than ten thousand, trained fighters. His army therefore greatly outnumbered the defenders, who have

⁵⁰Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 238–39 (=Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 1:95 [tr. 2:76]).

⁵¹On this term, see R. Amitai, “Notes on the Ayyūbid Inscriptions at al-Ṣubayba (Qal‘at Nimrūd),” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 43 (1989): 114, note 9.



been estimated at 270 knights, plus auxiliary troops and civilians who could contribute to the defense.⁵³ Secondly, once the Mongol threat was temporarily removed, the sultan could devote his full attention to the Franks virtually where he chose. Thirdly, it became increasingly clear as the siege wore on that the defenders at Arsūf had almost no hope of receiving reinforcements. The raiding forces which Baybars sent in various directions before and during the siege reduced any chance of such help being dispatched. There was hardly any possibility that the Franks could slip in help by sea, in spite of their almost total control of the sea along the Levant. The little harbor of Arsūf, such as it was, was totally covered by the Mamluk positions, including their artillery; Baybars himself is recorded shooting at ships.⁵⁴ This also meant the Franks probably could not withdraw in a serious way by sea. Fourthly, as has been seen, the Mamluks employed sophisticated engineering techniques, as well as much artillery. Fifthly, Baybars' presence and hands-on leadership meant that discipline and alertness among the Mamluks was at a fairly high level during the campaign. This is related to the sixth, and last, reason: morale. As the siege continued, it became increasingly clear that the Muslim army would prevail, spurring on the soldiers even more. The presence of Sufis and other religious figures contributed to the atmosphere of jihad which in turn strengthened morale. As the *élan* in the Mamluk camp increased, desperation among the Franks would have also become amplified. In the long run, barring unexpected news from another quarter, an outbreak of disease among the besiegers, or serious—but increasingly unlikely—Frankish reinforcements, the Mamluk victory was almost a certainty.

In this campaign, we can already discern several of the characteristics of early Mamluk siege warfare: (1) a large concentration of troops; (2) careful logistical planning; (3) mining and other sophisticated engineering techniques; (4) massive use of artillery; (5) attention to matters of morale, discipline, and motivation; (6) a frontal attack after attrition and the completion of preparations. Most of these characteristics are found in Baybars' later sieges, such as Safad, Beaufort (Shaqīf Arnūn), Montfort (al-Qurayn) and Crak des Chevaliers (Ḥiṣn al-Akrād), as well as the sieges of his successors, e.g., Tripoli and Acre. The Mamluks, then, were not only first-class cavalymen, but could transform themselves into infantrymen and sappers if the need arose. It was the latter skills which contributed much to their successes against the Franks.⁵⁵

⁵²Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 241–42 (=Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 1:96 [tr. 2:76–77]).

⁵³Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, 318.

⁵⁴Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 237 (=Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 1:93 [tr. 2:75]).

⁵⁵For some general but important considerations of Mamluk siege warfare, see D. Ayalon, "Ḥiṣār," 472–76; David Nicolle, *The Mamluks, 1250–1517*, Men-at-Arms Series, no. 259 (London, 1993),



As is well-known, among Baybars' acts after the conquest was the destruction of the city, its fortifications, and its harbor. To carry out the work, he divided different sections among the commanders.⁵⁶ That this destruction was far from complete is seen by the impressive remnants of the moats and citadel. The policy of deliberate destruction of coastal cities which were conquered by the Mamluks had already been initiated in the aftermath of the Muslim victory at Caesarea, and would be continued virtually without exception after every Mamluk conquest along the coast. This strategy was examined in detail by the late Prof. David Ayalon,⁵⁷ and there is therefore no reason to expand upon it here. Suffice it to say that Baybars had a keen understanding of the Mamluks' weakness on the sea, as well as the numerical limitations of his army. Unable to devote large forces to garrison the conquered port cities, he deemed it wise to destroy them with their harbors to hinder a new Frankish landing and occupation. Long-term Mamluk security in the area was not to be guaranteed by large static forces divided into garrisons, but rather the existence of a fairly large and powerful, highly mobile army, which could be moved to meet every danger.

In the aftermath of the conquest of Caesarea and Arsūf, Baybars divided all the villages in their agricultural hinterland, 37 in number, among many of his officers, in total 61. This land, by the way, was not given as *iqṭā'*, or the right to collect revenue to pay for one's military household, but rather as *mulk*, that is, private property. The recipients of this largesse were both senior and junior officers, including some rather obscure individuals. Most were being rewarded for their actions on the present campaign on the Palestinian coast, but a few were commanders who took part in the operation at al-Bīrah, demonstrating the sultan's concern that they should not feel that they had been left out of the action, profitable as it was.⁵⁸ The list of villages has been analyzed by several scholars, and virtually all have been identified and placed on the map, thereby providing us with a fairly accurate idea of the scope of the lordships of both Caesarea and Arsūf, although perhaps the border between them is not completely clear.⁵⁹

Finally, the conquest of these two towns, the fate of their inhabitants, and their destruction, must have made it clear to all—Franks, local Christians, local Muslim civilians, and members of the military elite—that there was a "new sheriff" in

19–22.

⁵⁶Ibn 'Abd al-Zāhir, *Rawḍ*, 243 (=Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 1:97 [tr. 2:78]).

⁵⁷David Ayalon, "The Mamluks and Naval Power: A Phrase of the Struggle between Islam and Christian Europe," *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities* 1, no. 8 (1967): 1–12, reprinted in D. Ayalon, *Studies on the Mamlūks (1260–1517)* (London, 1977), art. VI.

⁵⁸See Amitai-Preiss, "The Mamluk Officer Class during the Reign of Sultan Baybars," 267–300.

⁵⁹F. M. Abel, "La liste des donations de Baibars en Palestine d'après la charte de 663 H (1265)," *Journal of the Palestine Oriental Society* 19 (1939): 38–44; see also the discussion and reference



town with an unequivocal anti-Frankish policy. Baybars had commenced a strategy which was to result in the sizeable reduction of the Crusading entity; his successors, of course, were to bring this policy to fruition some fourteen years after his death. It is not a coincidence that it was about this time that Baybars adopted in inscriptions the sobriquet of *mubīd al-tatar wa-al-ifranj*, "the annihilator of Mongols and Franks,"⁶⁰ giving clear expression to the double-headed policy which he so forcefully adopted in 1265.

in the notes to Ibn al-Furāt, *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, ed. Lyons, 2:208.

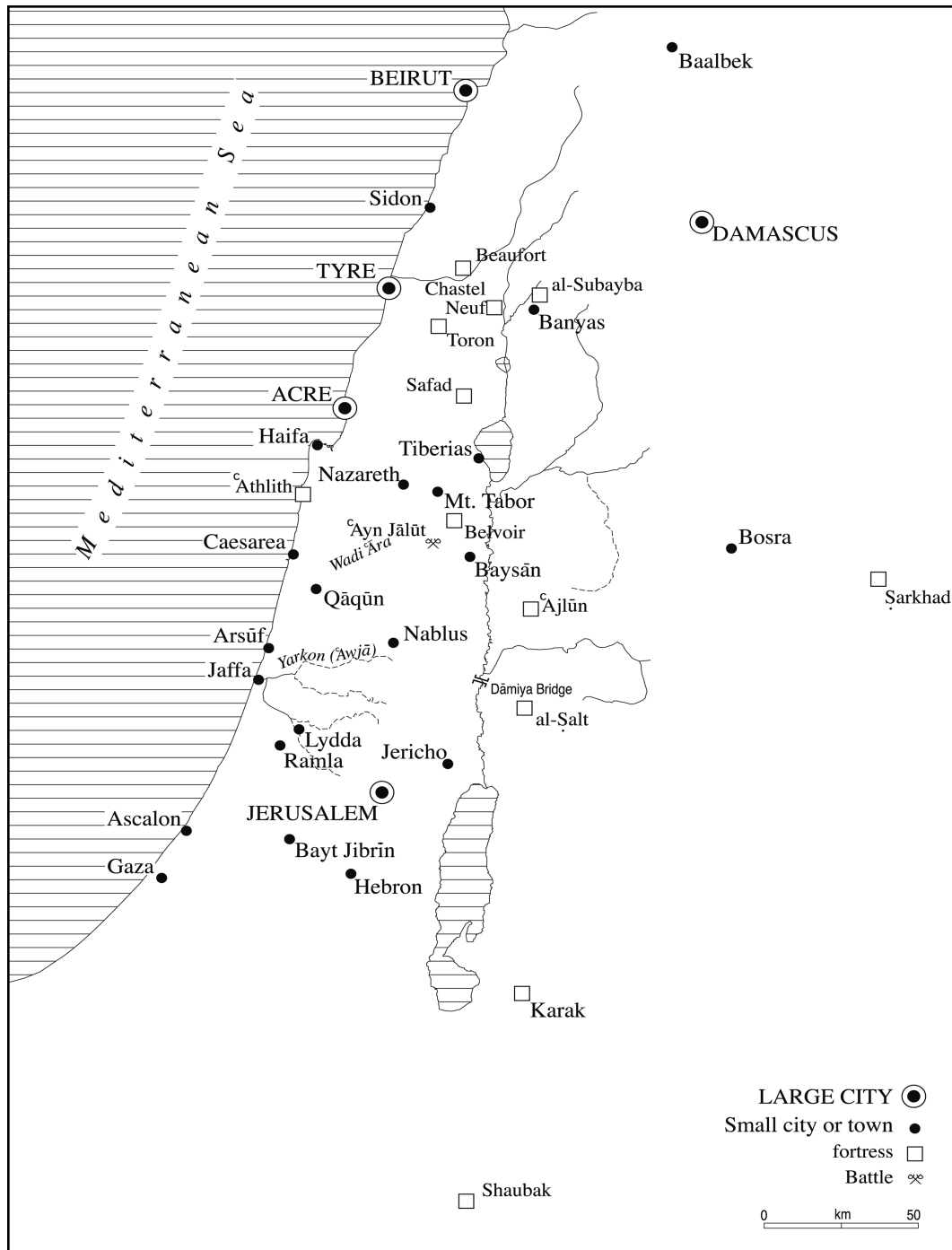
⁶⁰Sometimes *al-arman*, "the Armenians," is added to this expression. See R. Amitai, "Some Remarks on the Inscription of Baybars at Maqām Nābī Mūsā," Michael Winter *Festschrift*, edited by Ami Ayalon and David Wasserstein, forthcoming.



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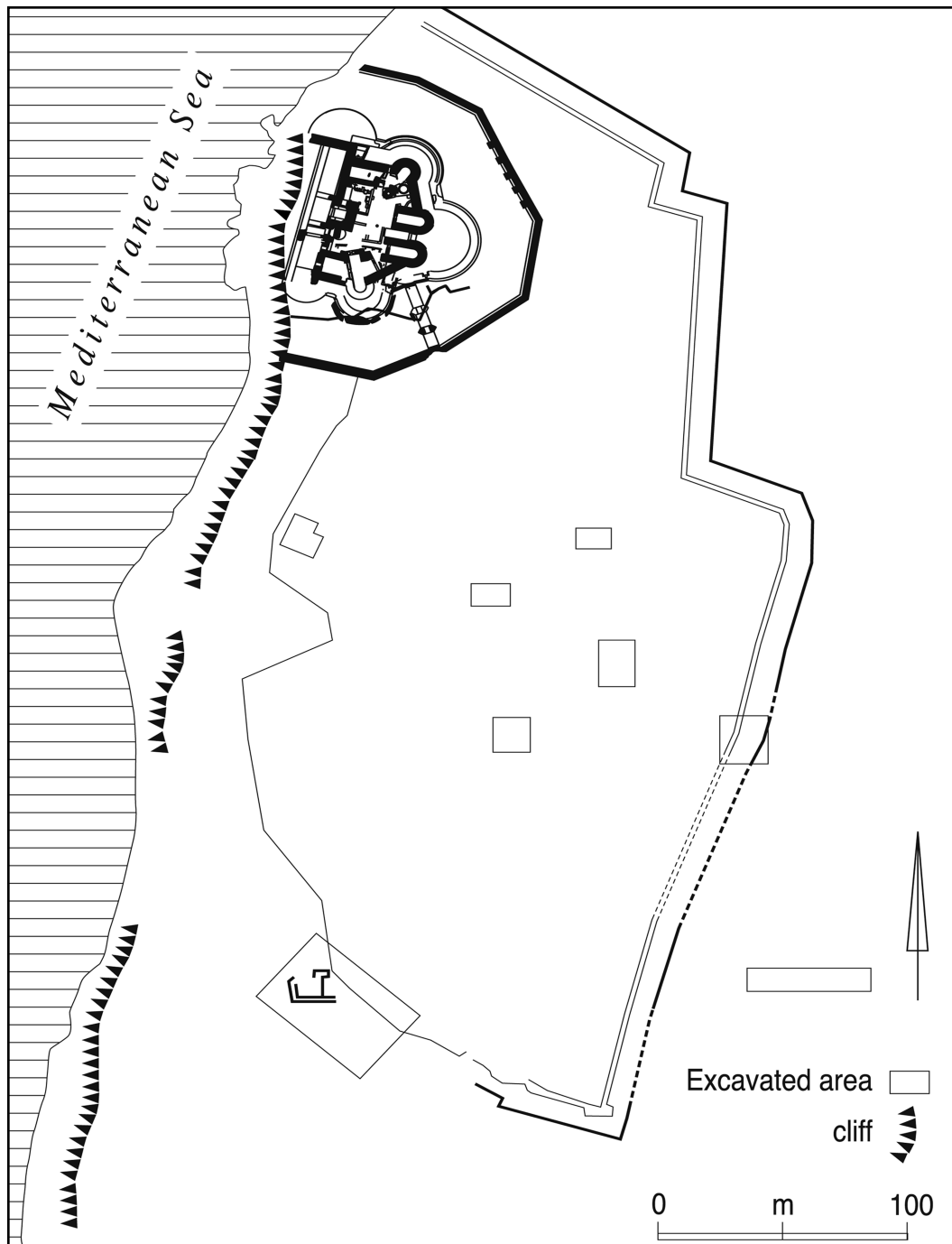
Map 1. Palestine and its environs in the early Mamluk period. (Based on R. Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhānīd War, 1260-1281* [Cambridge, 1995]; reproduced with permission).



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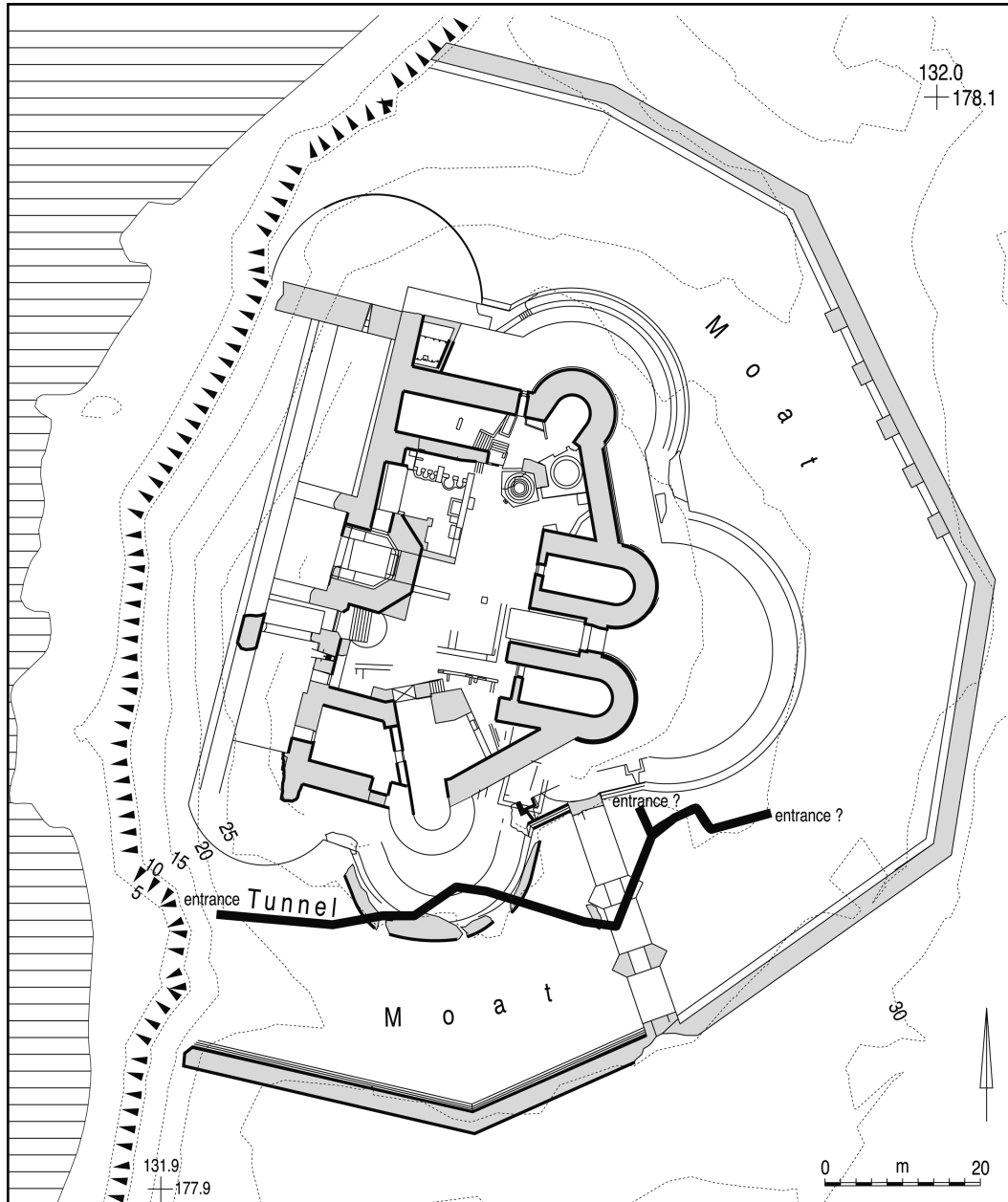
Map 2. The city of Arsūf. (Tamar Sofer, The Cartography Laboratory, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem).



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Map 3. The city of Arsūf, showing the Frankish tunnel. (Tamar Sofer, The Cartography Laboratory, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem).

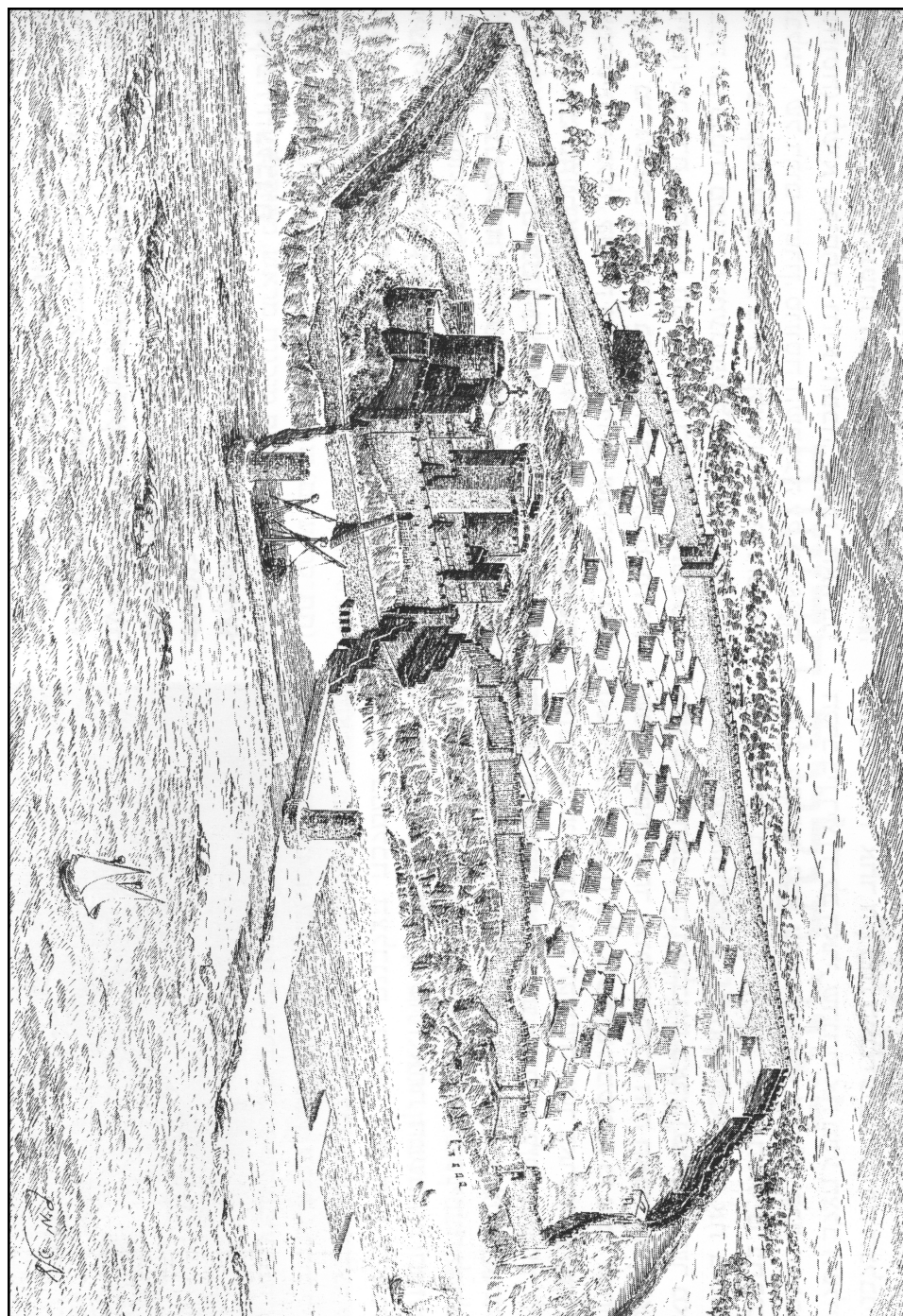


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Figure 1. Suggested reconstruction of the city of Arsūf. (From I. Roll et al., "Apollonia-Arsuf in the Crusader Period in Light of Recent Discoveries," *Qadmoniot* 33, no. 1 [1999]: 18-31; reproduced with permission).



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Fig. 2. A pile of *manjānīq* stones from Arsūf (photograph by the author).



Fig. 3. The moat of the citadel of Arsūf: a view of the north side looking west (photograph by the author).



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The Archaeological Evidence from the Mamluk Siege of Arsūf

During the past five seasons of excavations at the Crusader fortress of Arsūf, over a thousand arrowheads were found along with close to three thousand catapult stones. It is important to note that those numbers will change once the excavation of the moat is completed. The aim of this article is to map the distribution of the arrowheads and catapult stones, and try to determine the location of the Mamluk siege machines and archers that were employed throughout the battle. We shall also discuss some of the problems that Baybars encountered and solved while preparing his siege engines.

Each arrowhead and catapult stone was marked on the map of the site according to where it was found. Due to rain and landslides the original location may have shifted somewhat, so the locations given here are approximate.

As we were mapping out the location of each arrowhead and catapult stone on the map of the fortress of Arsūf, the full scale of the final stage of the Mamluk siege slowly became clear. One can easily imagine the force of the attack, the heavy bombardment and the horrifying sound of *majānīq* stones continually thundering and crashing down on the citadel during the final three days after the city itself had been taken; there would have been scarcely a place within the walls of the citadel that was safe or protected.

1243 ARROWHEADS AND 2748 CATAPULT STONES

The arrowheads are all of the same design. Made of iron, their average length was 4.5 cm and their width approximately 1 cm. In cross section they are square or diamond shaped. The shaft was secured to the arrowhead with a tang that was driven deep into the wood (Fig. 1). Similar arrowheads were found on various Crusader and Mamluk sites: Montfort (al-Qurayn), Chastel Pèlerin ('Athlith), Yoqne'am, Safed, Burj al-Aḥmar, Ḥamāh, Vadum Jacob (Bayt al-Maḥāzin), and Belvoir (Kawkab al-Hawā').¹ This design seems to have been dominant throughout

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¹D. Bashford, "A Crusader Fortress in Palestine," *The Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, Sept. 1927, pt. 2, Fig. 53:N; C. N. Johns, "Excavations at Pilgrims Castle 'Atlit (1932–3):



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the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. From the evidence gathered so far, they were used by both Frankish and Muslim archers.² They were designed to penetrate armor, and once imbedded in the flesh, pulling them out became a tricky maneuver, since the shaft was more than likely to break, leaving the arrowhead buried deep inside the flesh. The shafts were made out of pine or cedar.³ Only five arrowheads differ from those described above. Those five are kite shaped and flat (Fig. 2). They were often used for hunting game or for wounding horses in times of battle.⁴ Although the Mamluk archers played an important part in the siege, the main role belonged to the teams that operated the siege machines, and the engineers who assembled them. The masons who quarried the stone saw that the weights matched the required order and shaped the stones into suitable projectiles.

Arsūf has so far been the only site within the boundaries of the Crusader kingdom that has yielded such a large number of trebuchet stones. Although many sieges were recorded by both Latin and Muslim sources, very few sites have supplied the archaeological evidence to support the historical sources. While some sites have not yet been excavated, others have simply been resettled and the archaeological evidence lost or scattered. Much has been written on siege warfare in the Latin East, the invention and development of siege engines, and the changes that followed in the field of military architecture. Most of those works rely on the examination of historical sources, some on experimental archaeology, but very few have gathered evidence from the actual fortresses, towns, or cities where those sieges occurred.⁵ The importance of Arsūf lies in the fact that in addition to

Stables at South West Suburb," *Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities of Palestine* 5 (1936), fig. 15:2; A. Khamis, "Chapter 18: The Metal Objects," in *Yoque'am: The Later Periods* (=Qedem Reports 3), ed. A. Ben Tor, M. Avisar, and Y. Portugali (Jerusalem, 1996), photo. xviii.4, No. 6; E. Damati, "Safed Citadel," in *Excavations and Survey in Israel 1988–89*, 7–8 (Jerusalem 1988–89), 159–60; D. Pringle, *The Red Tower (al-Burj al-Ahmar): Settlement in the Plain of Sharon at the Time of the Crusaders and Mamluks A.D. 1099–1516* (London 1986), fig. 57:21, 22; G. Ploug et al., *Hama, 1932–1938 IV3* (Copenhagen, 1969), fig. 21:1; K. Raphael, "Archers in the Crusader Period," M.A. thesis, Hebrew University, 2001; M. Ben Dov, "Crusader Fortresses in Eretz Israel," in *Qadmoniot* 32 (=vol. 8, no. 4) (1975), 102–14 (in Hebrew).

²Raphael, "Archers in the Crusader Period," 103–16.

³The botanical research was done by Dr. Nili Lifshitz from Tel Aviv University. Among the shafts that were examined there was also a type of coniferous wood that could not be identified with certainty.

⁴W. Swietoslowski, *Arms and Armour of the Nomads of the Great Steppe in the Times of the Mongol Expansion*, trans. M. Abramowicz (Lodz, 1999), 131, plate XIX:4–6.

⁵Christopher Marshall, *Warfare in the Latin East, 1191–1291* (Cambridge, 1996), 212–14; J. Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege* (Suffolk, 1992); P. Chevedden, "Artillery in Late Antiquity," in *The Medieval City under Siege*, ed. I. A. Corfis and M. Wolf (Woodbridge, 1995), 131–73; P. Chevedden, "Fortifications and the Development of Defensive Planning during the Crusader Period," in *The*



the historical references, we can map and analyze the catapult stones and arrowheads that have been left as testimony to the Mamluk siege that took place in the spring of 1265.

Out of the 2747 catapult stones that were found, 800 were measured and weighed (Chart 1). While working on the typology, we noticed that the catapult stones that were found to the north of the gate, among a pile of burnt cedar logs, were larger in diameter and heavier than the stones that were collected from the main area within the citadel walls (Map 1). It is more than likely that the siege engine, which dealt with the Frankish defenders who evidently took refuge under the wooden construction, was of a different type and was capable of hurling stones of greater diameter and weight. The prevalent weights of the catapult stones that were found in the area of the burnt cedar logs were 16 kg, 20 kg, 28 kg, and 35 kg (Chart 2).

Although the majority of catapult stones are carved out of limestone, they vary a great deal in weight, diameter, shape, and quality of the stone dressing. The table below gives the dominant weights and diameters among the catapult stones that were found within the fortress walls.

WEIGHTS AND DIAMETERS OF THE CATAPULT STONES IN ARSŪF

| Weight (kg) | Diameter (cm) |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 8 | 20 |
| 10–11 | 21–23 |
| 16 | 25 |
| 20 | 27–28 |
| 28 | 30 |
| 35 | 31 |
| 40 | 33–34 |
| 41–42 | 35–37 |
| 48 | 40 |

The heaviest catapult stone reached 78 kg, but altogether only 11 catapult stones weighed over 70 kg. The lowest weights recorded are 1–3 kg. Almost 50 stones weighed less than 3 kg.⁶ While the majority are carved, some are more like huge pebbles (Fig. 3), and appear to have been gathered from the mouth of a riverbed at

Circle of War in the Middle Ages: Essays on Medieval Military and Naval History, ed. D. J. Kagay and A. J. A. Villalon (Suffolk, 1999), 33–43; K. DeVries, *Medieval Military Technology* (Peterborough, Canada, 1998), 133–40; Swietoslawski, *Arms and Armour*, 70–71.

⁶Some of those stones may have broken and therefore these figures may not represent the original weight.



the foot of the Samarian hills to the east of Arsūf.⁷ Among the catapult stones that are dressed, a small percentage has an almost perfect round shape (Fig. 4); most are roughly round and dressed in a coarse manner. Very few are just large stones that have not been dressed and simply left with jagged rough edges (Fig. 5). Five catapult stones were carved out of a marble Roman-Byzantine column (Fig. 6). Two are from flint, and four from kurkar (calcareous sandstone, found along the coast of Israel), which would have left very little impact on the fortress walls.

One of the problems Baybars encountered while laying out the plan and setting up the logistics for the siege of Arsūf would have been finding a nearby quarry that could supply the stone for the making of stone projectiles. The cliffs overlooking the sea are made of kurkar, which was used for the construction of the fortress, but is not quite suitable for the making of catapult stones. Prior to the beginning of the siege and possibly while the fighting was taking place, a group of masons were busy preparing catapult stones at nearby quarries. The stones were probably then loaded on large wagons that were sent off to the Mamluk siege camp. As noted above, the source of the limestone has been identified at the foot of the nearby Samarian hills which lay approximately 15 km to the east of Arsūf.

In order to try to calculate the location of the Mamluk archers and siege machines, each arrowhead and catapult stone was marked on the map of the fortress. Both maps show a similar distribution. The majority of the arrowheads, 812 (65%), were found between the two towers of the main gate (Map 1). This correlates with 1112 (40%) catapult stones that were gathered from around and between the walls of the gate (Map 2). The majority of the catapult stones in the region of the main gate fell somewhat closer to the northeastern gate tower. This may indicate that a siege machine was stationed almost opposite, at an angle of fire that gave a clear view and turned the northern gate tower into a relatively easy target. On the other hand, the southern gate tower yielded less than 75 catapult stones. The front wall of the southern tower is slightly damaged on the side facing the northeast (Fig. 7), giving a clear idea of the angle of fire. As noted above, one of the larger or stronger siege engines was positioned directly in front of the wooden construction. The markings left on the southeastern peripheral wall (Fig. 7) indicate that at least one of the siege engines must have been carried through the town after it fell and stationed on the southeast edge of the fortress moat.

⁷According to the geological survey conducted by Ram Ben-David.



In an analysis of the siege given by Meron Benvenisti it is proposed that Baybars opened his attack from the south.⁸ This view seems quite unlikely, as the distribution of catapult stones is mainly in the northern section of the fortress.⁹

The land to the north and the northeast of the fortress is slightly elevated, so that the Mamluk siege engines may have gained sufficient advantage, until the city wall was breached. It seems, though, that the Mamluk force concentrated most of its efforts opposite the main gate. From the archaeological evidence it appears that a fierce attack was carried out by both siege engines and a strong group of archers that was stationed almost opposite the gate. The following description may indicate that a great crossbow was used in the attempt to break through the main gate.

Among the arrowheads that were found between the gate towers was a huge bolt made of iron (Fig. 8a–b).¹⁰ While cleaning the bolt under a magnifying glass strands of rope could be seen. The rope had been tightly tied around the bolt and one of the knots is still quite visible.¹¹ The size and weight of the bolt present the possibility that it was shot out of a large crossbow that was probably mounted on a wooden frame. As the bolt is covered with burnt fragments of wood it is possible that it served as a torch and the rope secured a thick piece of cloth that was lit and aimed at the wooden doors that secured the main entrance to the fortress.

The southwest corner of the fortress yielded 187 arrowheads. There are a number of explanations that may be given in order to understand this scattered distribution. It could indicate that those arrows were shot once the fortress was entered and close combat took place within the fortress walls. Or, they may have been shot by a group of archers that made its way through the city and stood south of the fortress moat.

When it comes to establishing the type of siege engines that Baybars used, the task becomes rather difficult. Although the weight of the catapult stones varies a great deal, most stones could be lifted by one man, while the heavier stones required two people, who could handle each stone without much strain. This does not fit the descriptions of weights given by some of the Latin and Muslim chronicles and the modern historians that have dealt with the subject of early medieval siege warfare.

⁸M. Benvenisti, *The Crusaders in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem, 1976), 133. It is not clear if this refers to the attack on the town or the fortress.

⁹For the development of the siege, see the article by R. Amitai in this volume.

¹⁰With it were two fragments that seem to belong to bolts of a similar size and design.

¹¹We would like to thank Mimi Lavi, who heads the conservation laboratory in the Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University, for pointing out this incredible find to us.



Paul Chevedden states that the hybrid trebuchet that the Franks operated during the siege of Damietta launched projectiles that weighed 185 kg. The counterweight trebuchet launched projectiles that probably reached a common maximum of 300 kg, while the counterweight trebuchet used at the siege of Ḥimṣ (1248–49) threw projectiles weighing 259 kg. At the siege of Acre (1291) the large Frankish trebuchet employed by the Mamluks threw stone projectiles that weighed 185 kg. The only weights that are close to those measured in Arsūf are the weights of stone projectiles from Qal‘at Sahyūn,¹² and even those are heavier than the average weight found in Arsūf. Donald P. Little quotes al-Yūnīnī, who reports—evidently on the authority of an eyewitness at the siege of Acre—that the Frankish mangonels employed by the Mamluks could fire a shot of 45 kg and more.¹³ Christopher Marshall quotes a modern experiment in which a model of a counterweight trebuchet hurled stone projectiles that weighed 100 to 150 kg to a distance of 150 m.¹⁴ The siege engines used by Baybars at Arsūf were probably not quite as powerful as those described above. Very few of the stone projectiles that were found at Arsūf reach those weights. The majority weigh well under 45 kg. And yet the damage that those siege engines caused was encountered throughout the excavation.

There are still quite a few enigmas left. No evidence has been found of the Mamluk sappers’ tunnels described by Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir. There are very few clues as to the methods the Hospitaller garrison used in order to defend the fortress. Could they have possibly mounted artillery on the citadel’s towers or roofs? And what was the exact nature of the wooden construction, the pile of burnt cedar logs on the northeastern side of the citadel? We may find some of the answers to those questions as the excavation continues in the grounds around the fortress and once the moat is cleared.

¹²Chevedden, “Fortifications and the Development of Defensive Planning,” 37–38.

¹³D. P. Little, “The Fall of Akkā in 690/1291: The Muslim Version,” in *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization in Honour of Professor David Ayalon*, ed. M. Sharon (Jerusalem, 1986), 171, citing Quṭb al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī, in A. Melkonian, *Die Jahre 1287–1291 in der Chronik al-Yūnīnīs* (Freiburg, 1975), 86.

¹⁴Marshall, *Warfare in the Latin East*, 213.



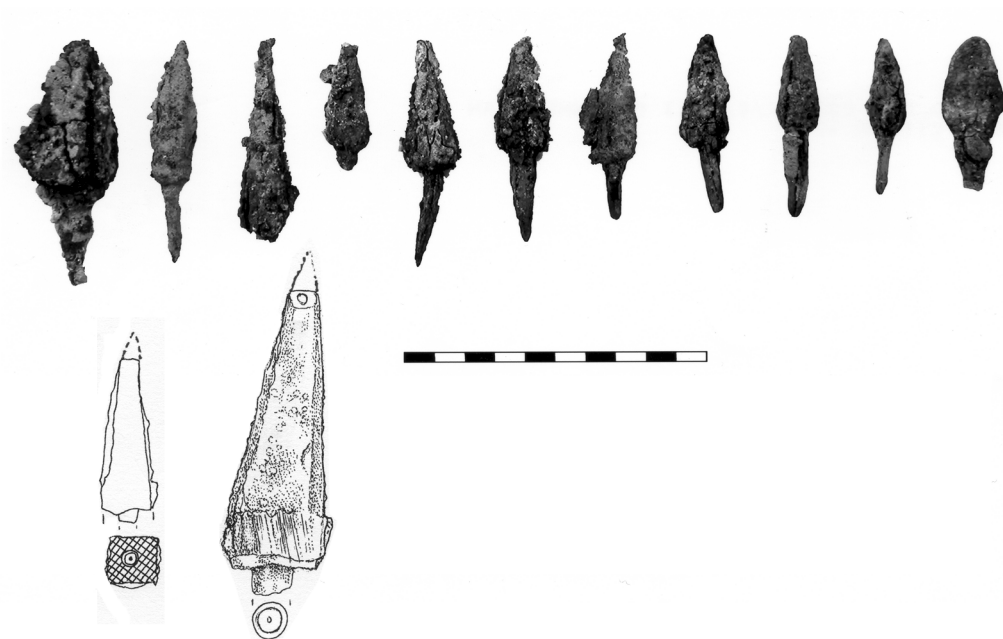


Figure 1. Arrowheads made to penetrate armor (photograph: Yotam Tepper).

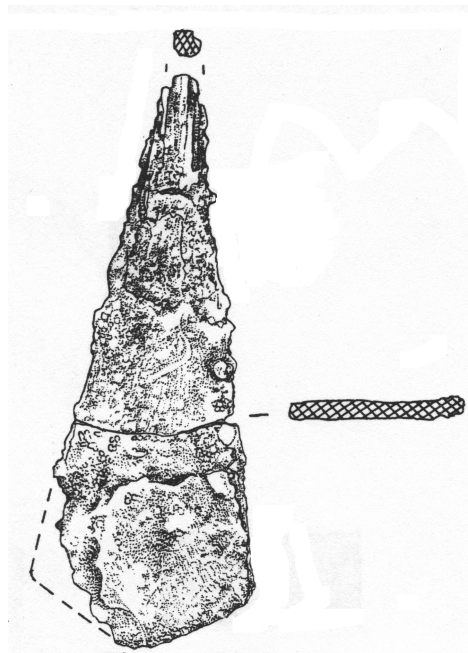


Figure 2. Arrowheads meant to wound horses.



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Figure 3. On the right, a large pebble. On the left, a catapult stone that had been dressed (photograph: Yotam Tepper).



Figure 4. Well-dressed catapult stones (photograph: Yotam Tepper).



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Figure 5. Far right: a catapault stone that has not been dressed and simply left with rough edges (photograph: Yotam Tepper).



Figure 6. A catapault stone cut out of a Roman marble column (photograph: Yotam Tepper).



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Figure 7. “Craters” from direct catapult hits on the face of the southern gate tower (photograph: Yotam Tepper).



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Figure 8A. Iron crossbow bolt (photograph: Gabi Laron).



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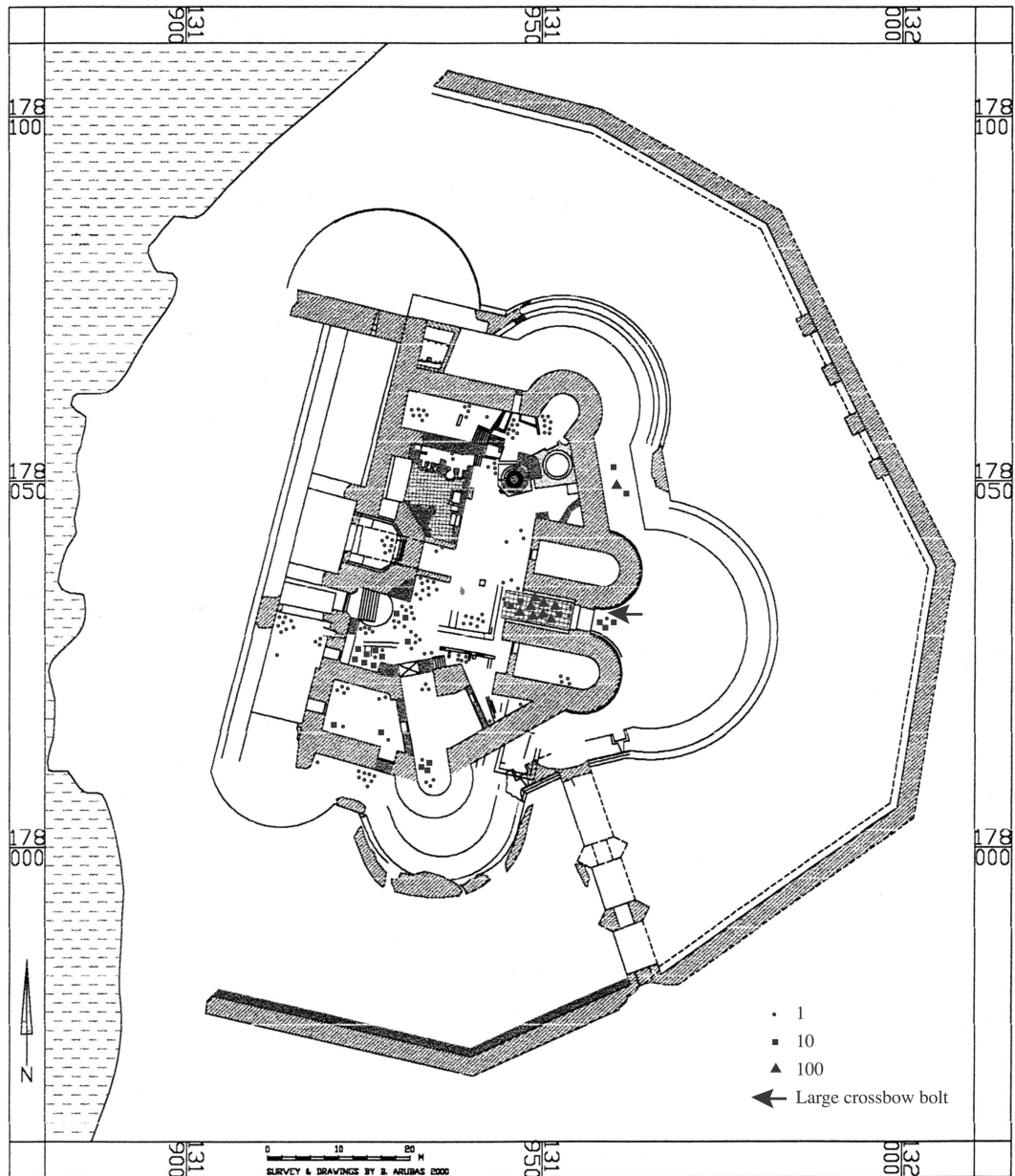
Figures 8B and 8C. Close-ups of the iron crossbow bolt, remains of rope tightly tied round the bolt (photograph: Gabi Laron).



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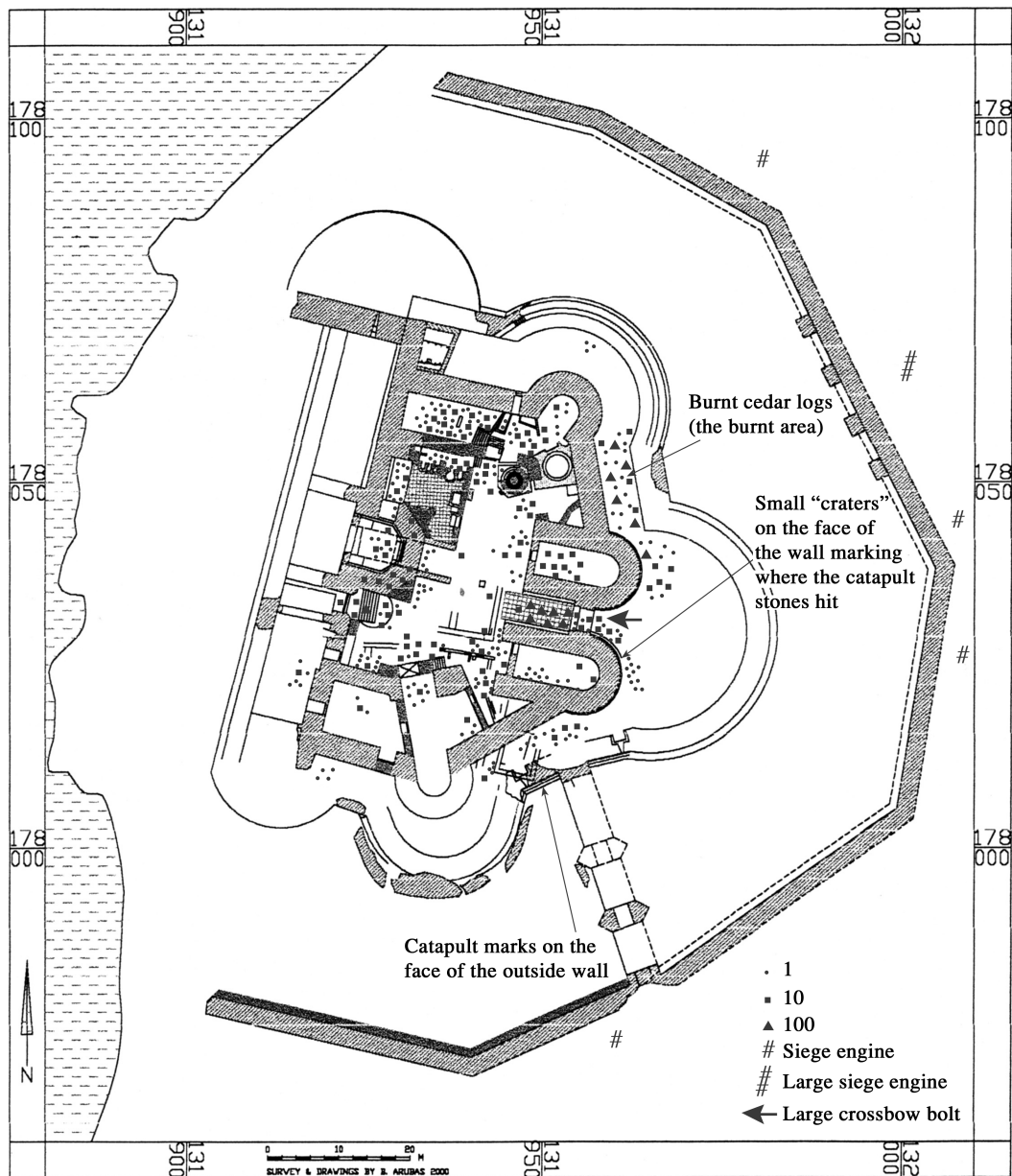
Map 1. Distribution of arrowheads.



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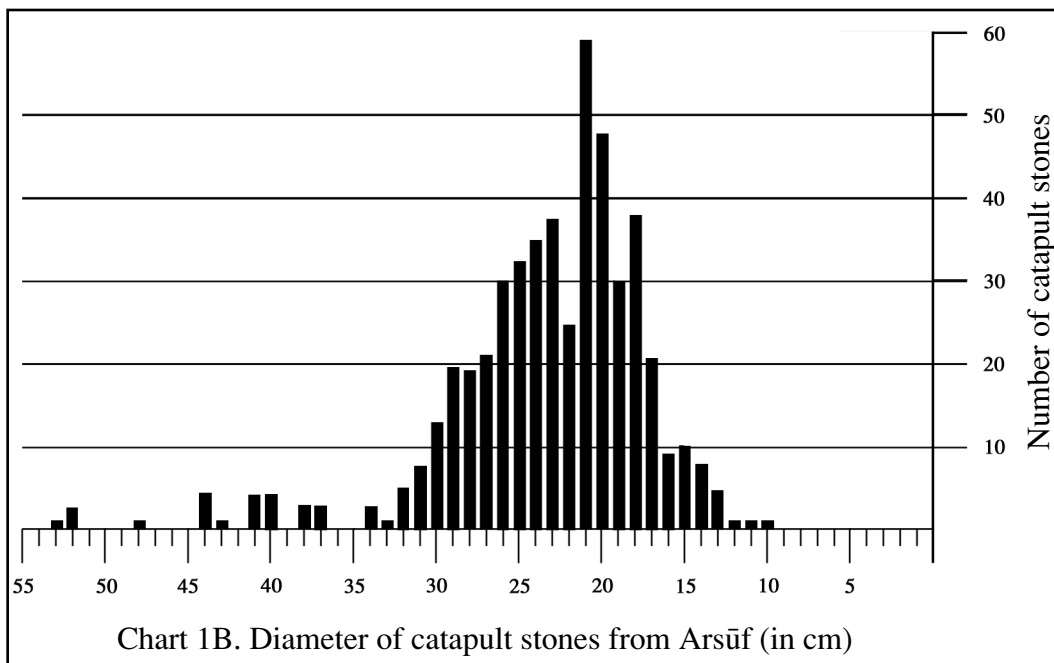
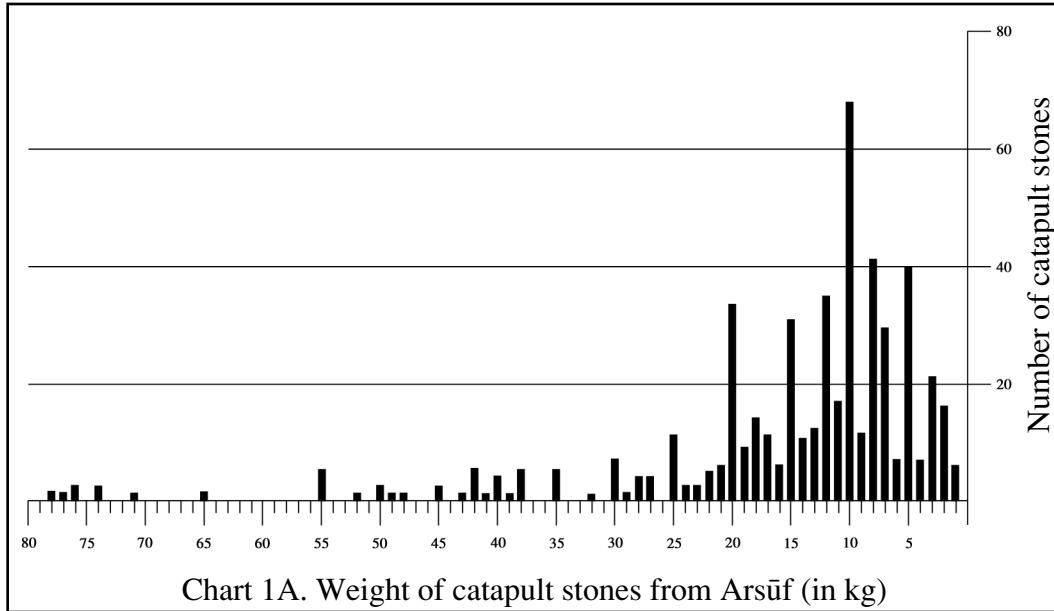
Map 2. Distribution of catapult stones.

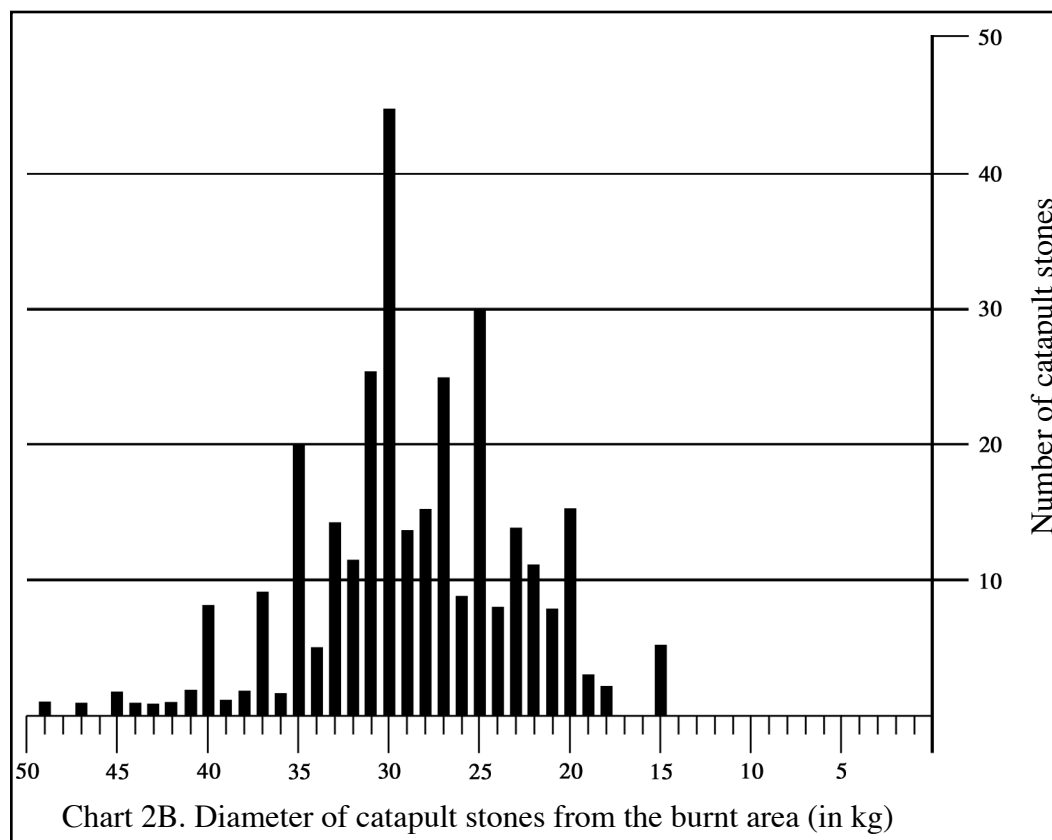
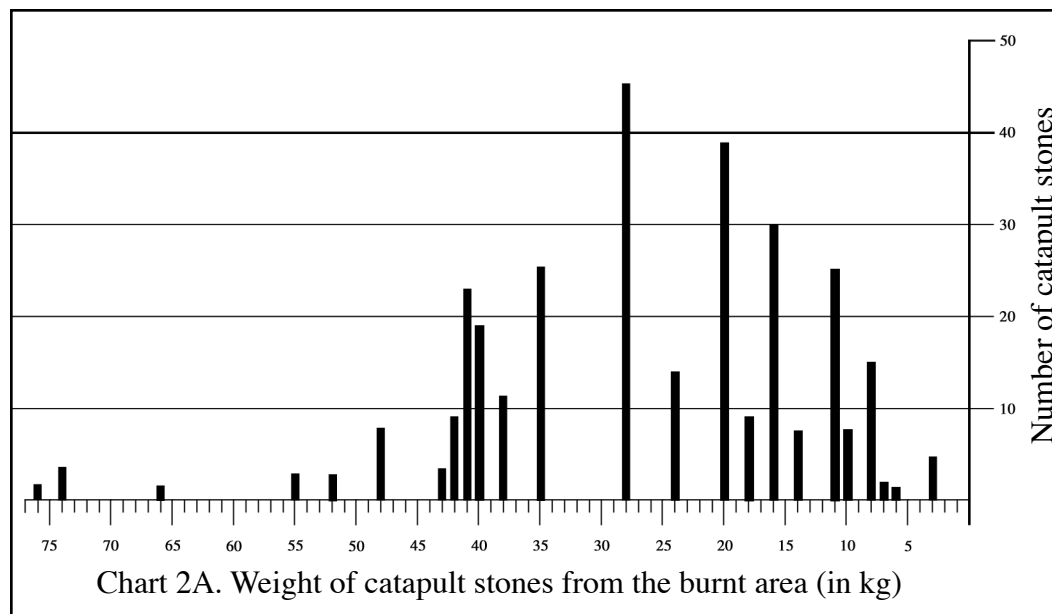


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Tales of a Medieval Cairene Harem: Domestic Life in al-Biqā'ī's Autobiographical Chronicle

Among the findings of recent scholarship on medieval Arabic autobiography¹ is a reaffirmation, or redefinition, of the long-held notion that the realm of "private" life was "never the central focus of pre-modern Arabic autobiographical texts."² To address this paradoxical contradiction between the business of "self-representation" and the obvious lack of "private" material in such texts, four sets of recurring features have been identified to help in uncovering the "modes" the medieval Arabic authors used to construct their individual identities: portrayals of childhood failures, portrayals of emotion through the description of action, dream narratives as reflections of moments of authorial anxiety, and poetry as a discourse of emotion.³ Other related areas, such as domestic life, gender, and sexuality, are largely left out. The "autobiographical anxiety," after all, has perhaps more to do with the authors' motivations to pen elaborate portrayals, in various literary conventions, of themselves as guardians of religious learning and respected community members (and in some cases, to settle scores with their enemies and rivals) than self-indulgence and exhibitionist "individuating." In this regard, a good example is perhaps the universally acclaimed autobiographical travelogue, the *Riḥlah* of Ibn Baṭṭūṭah (d. 770/1368), who married and divorced over a period of thirty years of globetrotting more than twenty women and fathered, and eventually abandoned, some seventy children. However, little, if any, information is provided

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¹The term autobiography is broadly defined in this essay. It includes autobiographies proper as well as autobiographical materials found in chronicles and biographical dictionaries. The latter is particularly important with regard to the later Mamluk period, which saw a surge of autobiographical writings of all kinds. Recent studies have demonstrated that Mamluk historians, especially those who wrote in the fifteenth century, tended to insert the autobiographical materials into their chronological works, thus combining memoirs and history; see Donald Little, "Historiography of the Ayyubid and Mamluk Epochs," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, ed. Carl Petry (Cambridge, 1998), 412–44, especially 413–14. For a comprehensive survey of medieval Arabic autobiographical writings, see *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition*, ed. Dwight Reynolds (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2001).

²*Interpreting the Self*, 243.

³*Ibid.*, 242–43; also see 28–29, 30–31.



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in Ibn Baṭṭūṭah's accounts about these women and children, most of whom remain nameless.⁴

Such, however, is not the case with the Mamluk alim Burhān al-Dīn Ibrāhīm al-Biqā'ī (d. 885/1480), in whose autobiographical chronicle, entitled *Iḏhār al-'Aṣr li-Asrār Ahl al-'Aṣr* (Lightening the dusk with regard to the secrets of the people of the age), various aspects of his private life loom large.⁵ In this remarkable, and somewhat odd, work, the author's colorful life and eventful career, as well as the historical events in which he participated, witnessed, or otherwise learned about, are wrought in a narrative that combines conventional *tārīkh* narration, Quranic exegesis, and dream interpretation,⁶ and is constantly switching between the third person voice—that of a chronicler—and the first person—that of an autobiographer. The extraordinarily intimate nature of the text is best illustrated by the author's tell-all accounts of his own messy domestic life: failed marriages, family feuds, harem melodrama, as well as childbirth, nursing, and infant mortality. The personal nature of the material thus offers glimpses into the autobiographer's mindset and sheds light on his personality and emotions, a rarity in pre-modern Arabic autobiographical writing.

A Syrian immigrant later based in Cairo, al-Biqā'ī's life and career, as he tells it, saw highs and lows. He studied with the great masters in Damascus, Jerusalem, and Cairo; among his teachers was Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 852/1449). Through his connection to Ibn Ḥajar, he was appointed to serve as a scholar-in-residence to the Mamluk sultans Jaqmaq (r. 857/1453) and Īnāl (r. 857–65/1453–61). Although hailed by many as one of the best minds of his generation, al-Biqā'ī never attained in his lifetime the status of a leading figure among the intelligentsia in Cairo and Damascus, although he tried very hard to present himself as such in his writings.⁷

⁴See Ross Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta: A Muslim Traveler of the 14th Century* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, 1989), 39, 44, 62, 67, 176–77, 195, 207, 224–29, 233–34, 236–37, 247–48, 269.

⁵Also known as *Tārīkh al-Biqā'ī*; the first half of the work, covering 855–65/1451–61, has been published in three volumes (ed. Muḥammad Sālim ibn Shadīd al-'Awfī [Riyadh, 1992]). The remainder is still in manuscript form: MS Medina, Maktabat al-Shaykh 'Ārif Ḥikmat 3789 (microfilm: Cairo, Ma'had al-Makhṭūṭāt, tārīkh 893). The folios of the original manuscript are not numbered; the pagination given in this article is therefore my own. The work is not included in "An Annotated Guide to Arabic Autobiographical Writings, Ninth to Nineteenth Centuries, C.E.," in *Interpreting the Self*, 255–88 (whereas al-Biqā'ī is mentioned as a major author of autobiography, 271).

⁶Li Guo, "Al-Biqā'ī's Chronicle: A Fifteenth Century Learned Man's Reflection on his Time and World," in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt (c. 950–1800)*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden, 2001), 121–48.

⁷The situation has been improved only in recent years. Among some sixty works attributed to him, the *Naẓm al-Durar fī Tanāsub al-Āyāt wa-al-Suwar*, a Quranic commentary in 22 volumes (Hyderabad, 1969–84), is perhaps better known. Of his history works, several have been published:



His scholastic achievements were overshadowed by his highly publicized and ill-fated attacks on the saint-like Sufi poet Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235) and his resulting estrangement from the Cairene ulama establishment.⁸ He was also battling against chronic poverty and hardship, compounded with a series of disastrous turns in his personal life.

While in the *Izhār* he talks about the glories and failures of his lifetime with equal enthusiasm and attention, it is his recounting of his domestic life that will be the focal point in the following pages. Based on a close reading of the intensely personal and anecdotal accounts, I will discuss three intertwined episodes concerning the various aspects of his domestic life: his infamous divorce case, the harem politics among his concubines, and the premature deaths of his children. Through an analysis of the dynamics of various storytelling strategies, the larger question of presentation and self-presentation in Mamluk autobiographical writings will be assessed as well.

DOOMED MARRIAGE: THE CASE AGAINST SU‘ĀDĀT

By all accounts, al-Biqā‘ī married and divorced numerous times; some of these occurred prior to the time period covered by the *Izhār* and are therefore not documented. His marriage to, and eventual divorce from, Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad (d. 884/1479), the daughter of a Cairene merchant, are recounted in a brief and scathing account by his contemporary al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497), which is nothing short of the tale of a poor immigrant marrying into a “good” local family only to have second thoughts when his luck changed for the better.⁹

As his career began to take off in Cairo, al-Biqā‘ī married well, at least in appearance. On Friday, 24 Ṣafar 858/23 February 1454, al-Biqā‘ī, then forty-eight

in addition to the *Izhār*, we have the *‘Inwān al-Zamān bi-Tarājim al-Shuyūkh wa-al-Aqrān*, a biographical dictionary of the learned men al-Biqā‘ī had personal contacts with (vol. 1 ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī [Cairo, 2001]) and the *‘Unwān al-‘Unwān bi-Tajrīd Asmā’ al-Shuyūkh wa-Ba‘ḍ al-Talāmīdh wa-al-Aqrān*, an epitome of the above (ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī [Beirut, 2002]). The interconnectedness, in both form and content, of these works is discussed in Guo, “Al-Biqā‘ī’s Chronicle,” 137–38.

⁸For a detailed account of this debate, see Th. Emil Homerin, *From Arab Poet to Muslim Saint: Ibn al-Fāriḍ, His Verse, and His Shrine* (Columbia, SC, 1994), 62–75; Guo, “Al-Biqā‘ī’s Chronicle,” 123–24.

⁹Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw’ al-Lāmi’ fī A’yān al-Qarn al-Tāsi’* (Cairo, 1934–36), 12:105 (no. 664). Al-Sakhāwī’s wording also seems to suggest that Fāṭimah was not the only woman who fell victim to al-Biqā‘ī’s opportunistic marriage scheme (*kānat mimman tazawwajat bi-al-Biqā‘ī fī ḥāl qillihī wa-faqrīhī . . .*, “she was one of those [women] who married al-Biqā‘ī when he was a poor nobody. . .”). Al-Sakhāwī was a fellow student of al-Biqā‘ī under the tutelage of Ibn Ḥajar and later became his archrival; his negative take on al-Biqā‘ī should come as no surprise; for more details on this rivalry, see Guo, “Al-Biqā‘ī’s Chronicle,” 122–24.



years old and riding high thanks to his association with Sultan Īnāl, married Su'ādāt,¹⁰ the daughter of the late Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī al-Būshī (d. 856/1452), a prominent former head of the prestigious Nāṣirīyah *khānqāh* in Siryaqus on the northern outskirts of Cairo.¹¹ The engagement (*al-'aqd*), held at the *khānqāh*, was attended by the sultan (al-Biqā'ī was his personal secretary) and his son-in-law, the powerful Mamluk amir Buradabek (al-Biqā'ī was his confidant and advisor). The author tells us that this was "the first wedding ever" in this small backwater town attended by the Mamluk officials and civilian elite (*a'yān*) from Cairo. A long list of prominent guests includes the Hanbali chief judge, the leading shaykhs of nearly all the major madrasahs in Cairo, several Mamluk amirs, the Treasurer (*wakīl bayt al-māl*), the head of the State Hospital (*nāẓir al-māristān*), the chief of the State Stable, the sermon-giver at the Grand Mosque in Mecca, and various Sufi masters, among others.

On the night of 7 Jumādā I, three months after the engagement, the bride was brought to the groom for their first night together (*juliyat 'alayya wa-zuffat ilayya*). It is here that the author's elaborate narrative gets interesting. First, he introduces the idea of divine blessings on his marriage. Not only were the festive events marked by a "God-sent aura of dignified peace and tranquility," they were also highlighted by many "coincidences" (*al-ittifāqāt*), not least of which is the date of the engagement, which happened to be on a Friday, the day the author usually held his weekly Quran commentary sessions (*mī'ād*). The material for that day "happened" (*ittafaqa*) to be Quran 43:67–70 and 47:15: "Enter Paradise, you and your wives, walking with joy. . ."; "This is the similitude of Paradise. . . therein are rivers of water unstaling, rivers of milk unchanging in flavour, and rivers of wine. . . ."¹²

The Quranic prophecy of the author's marital happiness is further recast by the bride's dream, which occurred on 5 Sha'bān, three months after the couple's first coition. The dream narration is itself a fine piece of belletristic prose:

[She said: In her dream,] a man came to her. He wore fine white garments and an exquisite turban the likes of which she had never

¹⁰Her biography is found in al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw'*, 12:62–63 (no. 377); she was still alive at the time of al-Sakhāwī's writing. A discussion of al-Biqā'ī's two marriages is found in Yossef Rapoport, "Marriage and Divorce in the Muslim Near East, 1250–1517," Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 2002, 273–75.

¹¹Founded by Sultan Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn for the Sufis, the construction was completed in 725/1325; see al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Mawā'iz wa-al-I'tibār fī Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār* (Cairo, 1853–54), 2:422.

¹²Translations of the Quranic passages are from A. J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted* (New York, 1955).



seen before; his long hair flowed over his shoulders. Although wearing a veil, his face radiated with lights and halo. He stood in front of our door and said: "Come on!" She said: "So I dressed up and went along with him, and you [i.e., al-Biqā'ī] followed behind me. He took us not far, then opened a door and said: 'Come on in (*udkhulū*)!' We entered (*dakhalnā*) a garden full of trees, apple trees, pear trees, lotus, and more. Rivers ran here and there without courses. Birds were perching on the trees, warbling the most beautiful songs. We kept walking, and all of a sudden over our heads there were fruits, and the grounds appeared yellow as the color of saffron. The grounds, the trees, and the aromatic plants all had this incredible fragrant scent I had never smelled before. We ended up in a corner; when we looked up, there was a thing that looked like a bed; then we sat in that bed, leaning on each other. The fruits were above us, and we began to pluck them, and ate." As if thinking that we were heading home, she said to me [i.e., al-Biqā'ī]: "Take these fruits with you!" Then that man said: "You should not leave this place." When we entered the garden, he [i.e., the strange man] gave us white and green garments, and told us to take our clothes off, throw them away, and put on these garments. We did so. . . . Then she woke up while we were in such a happy state. God made all this happen. Amen!¹³

This account gets a little fuzzy at the end of the narrative as it weaves the wife's narration, of *her* dream, with the author's explanatory note. But the basic elements and their symbolism are clear. The biblical reference to the Garden not only underlines the heavenly bliss of matrimony, but also alludes to pleasure-seeking sensuality. All this is done through the guidance of the strange man, who fits the descriptions, in popular religious lore, of the Prophet Muḥammad. The pun on the words derived from the root *d-kh-l*, *udkhul*, "enter!," *dukhūl al-jannah*, "entrance to Paradise," and *laylat al-dukhūl*, "the night of coition," links the spiritual enlightenment directly to the earthly pleasure of the flesh. The repeated reference to "fruits," and the Prophet's warning against "leaving this paradise," bear yet another biblical topos of the forbidden fruits and the resulting Fall of Adam and Eve. Following the biblical line, the blame rests squarely on the woman: it is Su'ādāt the bride that insisted on taking the fruits and leaving paradise. The implication of this "blame the woman" topos is fully explored later in the narrative.

The marriage produced a son, Abū al-Yusr Muḥammad, who was born in

¹³ *Izhār*, 2:22–23.



859/1455, one year after the wedding. Al-Biqā'ī was at the time traveling in Syria where he received the news from a letter by the boy's maternal step-grandfather. The birth of Muḥammad was an important event in the author's life,¹⁴ to which a lengthy section of the text is devoted (we will come back to this point soon). However, the marriage itself was doomed. During his trip to Syria, which lasted approximately a year,¹⁵ something happened.

What happened exactly in Damascus, where al-Biqā'ī stayed to supervise the building of a *khān al-funduq* on behalf of Sultan Īnāl's son-in-law, the Mamluk amir Burdabek, is not very clear. In the *Izhār*, al-Biqā'ī only has this to say:

I arrived at al-Khānkah [on the outskirts of Cairo] on the night of Saturday, 19 [Shawwāl 859/September 1455]. I stayed the night with my in-laws. They blamed me for my marriage in Damascus. I explained to them that I was unable to endure celibacy (*ṣabr . . . 'an al-nikāḥ*) for such a long period, and that I had already divorced her [i.e., the woman in Damascus] prior to my return [to Egypt]. I then took off for Cairo and slept in my own house Sunday night, the end of Shawwāl. They did not treat me well at all. They did not show any hospitality for the homecoming man.¹⁶

More trouble was waiting for the returning alim. In his usual self-righteous tone, al-Biqā'ī recalls the ensuing battle over custody of his newly-born son. It is noted here that Su'ādāt's voice is never heard in the whole process. The major figure leading the fight on her behalf was al-Biqā'ī's soon-to-be ex-mother-in-law,¹⁷ who mobilized an army of relatives and supporters marching on Cairo to confront the disgraceful al-Biqā'ī. Tempers ran short while tensions rose high. "Things got so bad that its ugliness is unheard of. . . . But I stayed calm and remained patient, because I did not want to risk losing my son."¹⁸ The standoff lasted for a few days before a great number of the Cairene elite (*ghālib ru'asā'*, literally "most of the leading scholars," obviously an exaggeration) felt compelled to intervene. The matter was even brought to the attention of Sultan Īnāl himself, who, by the way,

¹⁴ Al-Biqā'ī had a son named Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad, from an earlier relationship, who died in 853/1449 (*Izhār*, 3:119). Su'ādāt's son Abū al-Yusr Muḥammad would be his first boy since then.

¹⁵ He left Cairo shortly after Dhū al-Qa'dah 858 and returned from Damascus in Shawwāl 859; see *Izhār*, 2:87, 141.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2:143–44.

¹⁷ Aṭlas bint 'Alī Ibn al-Bilbīsī (d. 884/1479); her biography is in al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw'*, 12:7 (no. 7).

¹⁸ *Izhār*, 2:144.



was very satisfied with al-Biqā'ī's work in Damascus where all the trouble had started. It is, as the author pointedly informs us, under the direct intervention of the sultan that the divorce was finalized. The date was Friday, 19 Dhū al-Qa'dah 859/31 October 1455. The marriage made in heaven lasted exactly a year and a half on earth.

Al-Biqā'ī apparently got himself a very good deal in the settlement. We do not know much about the details of the legal maneuvers. But it is obvious that al-Biqā'ī gained what he wanted, including sole custody of his son (*asqattu ḥaqqahā min ḥiḍānat waladī minnī lī*), and a pledge by Su'ādāt that at any time if she, or her legal representative, wanted visitation rights, "or anything else," she would have to pay al-Biqā'ī five hundred dinars up front (*ḥālātān*).

It is here that al-Biqā'ī's account differs drastically from that of al-Sakhāwī. In al-Biqā'ī's account, the harsh terms, at the expense of Su'ādāt's rights, were approved by (*wa-ḥakama lī bi-dhālika*) a local Maliki deputy (*nā'ib*) named Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Mukhallāṭah. In al-Sakhāwī's version, however, this settlement was in fact vehemently rejected (*ṣammama 'alā al-imtīnā'*) by a Maliki deputy by the name of Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Maḥallī, on the grounds that according to a famous hadith, "He who separates a mother from her son, God will separate him from his loved ones" (*man farraqa bayna wālidah wa-waladihā farraqa Allāh baynahu wa-bayna aḥibbatihi*), affirming that the rights of a child's biological mother in such a custody dispute should not be denied.¹⁹

There are two interesting things about the contradictory accounts of this settlement. First is the identity of the Maliki qadi(s) in question. It is likely that the Muḥammad Ibn al-Mukhallāṭah in al-Biqā'ī's account is the same as Muḥammad al-Maḥallī in al-Sakhāwī's version. If that proves to be the case, then the question would be: who, al-Biqā'ī or al-Sakhāwī, lied? Even if there were *two* Maliki deputies named Muḥammad whose opinions al-Biqā'ī sought, then our historian still had something to hide in that only the judgment in his favor, a claim al-Sakhāwī's account flatly rejects, is reported. And this leads to our next point: the fact that al-Biqā'ī, a Shafī'i by training and affiliation, would seek the approval of a Maliki—the least popular and influential legal branch in Mamluk Egypt—deputy judge in the first place, certainly says something about his cunning. This was most likely for practical reasons: Yossef Rapoport has speculated that al-Biqā'ī's choice of legal venues in this particular case has to do with the notion that the Maliki school in general allowed greater freedom of contract for men in custody settlements.²⁰ Furthermore, given the often hostile receptions our historian received

¹⁹ Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Daw'*, 9:113–14.

²⁰ Rapoport, "Marriage," 274 (with bibliographical references).



from the ulama at large, and the fact that his soon-to-be ex-mother-in-law's husband was a Shafi'ī qadi,²¹ his being selective in choosing the "right" person to do the job is justifiable.

This perhaps also explains the seemingly unnecessary ranting from a man who appears to have it all. Su'ādāt's family "did not give truce a chance," al-Biqā'ī bitterly complains, "despite my efforts to settle (*al-i'tirād*). . . , leaving the matter in God's hands."²² Perhaps as a gesture of goodwill, al-Biqā'ī was willing to allow Su'ādāt to stay with her family during the entire 'iddah, or waiting period, before she could legally remarry. However, Su'ādāt's family would not cooperate: they refused to accommodate the divorced woman, but instead chose to move her around "whenever and wherever they, and she, so desired."²³ And more importantly, they did not give in under pressure, refusing to give up the family's claims of Su'ādāt's rights, including custody of the boy.

This whole affair, al-Biqā'ī assures us, like many others in his life, could not have taken place without divine intervention. Around the time when the divorce was finalized, the triumphant alim, in his regular *mī'ād* session, began to teach the surah the title of which happened to be *al-mumtaḥanah*, "The Woman Tested."²⁴ The relevance of the themes of this surah, chief among them how to handle marriages between the "true believers" and those "unbelieving women" (60:10–12), is evident. In addition, the mention herein of Abraham's example in "justice," "love," and "virtue" also alludes to a parallel between Abraham's domestic situation, seen in a wife (Sarah) vs. concubine (Hagar) conflict, and that of al-Biqā'ī, the details of which will be discussed below. Here again, al-Biqā'ī is using hermeneutic tools in an attempt to interpret the events taking place in his own life and to justify these less-than-holy developments.

Al-Biqā'ī's insistence on using this technique, which at times seems far-fetched, did not come from a vacuum. In this regard, one should bear in mind that the combative alim perhaps had to fend off the attacks launched by the likes of al-Sakhāwī. In his account, al-Sakhāwī insisted that Su'ādāt, the "virgin daughter" of a highly respected shaykh "could not take it any more" and *asked* for a divorce,²⁵ and that the marriage was just one means used by the opportunistic Syrian immigrant

²¹For more details of his troubled relationship with the Cairene establishment, see Guo, "Al-Biqā'ī's Chronicle." Al-Biqā'ī's ex-mother-in-law married Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Wannā'ī after the death of Su'ādāt's father al-Būshī; see al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw'*, 12:7.

²²*Izhār*, 2:144.

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*, 2:144–45; al-Biqā'ī cited Quran 60:1–9.

²⁵Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Ḍaw'*, 12:62; Rapoport, "Marriage," 274.



to consolidate his status among the Cairene elite.²⁶ It is perhaps against this backdrop that al-Biqā'ī's elaborate narrative strategy, which is rich in scriptural allegories, makes more sense. If al-Sakhāwī's emphasis on the innocence and frailty of Su'ādāt was meant to make the groom look bad, then al-Biqā'ī would assure us: it was not the marriage itself that went wrong, but rather that the "woman tested" turned out to be the wrong one; and, consequently, all the "love" and "affection" underlined by divine bliss and lavished on her were largely wasted. It follows that the son should stay with the right person, that is, his father, who is the true guardian of his children, just like Abraham was. The case against Su'ādāt is, al-Biqā'ī would like us to believe, closed. Or is it?

HAREM POLITICS: THE PLOTS OF ḤASBIYA ALLĀH THE CONCUBINE

Al-Biqā'ī maintained a modestly-sized harem. A number of women, whom he calls *fatātī*, literally "my slave girl," *amatī*, "my house maid," and *surrīyatī*, "my concubine," are named in the *Izhār*. It should be pointed out here that the distinction among these terms is not always clear-cut, in that a woman could be mentioned as a *fatāh* in one place, an *amah* in another, and a *surrīyah* yet elsewhere. In addition, the term *fatāh*, in al-Biqā'ī's usage, also denotes wives of his male slaves (*fatā*).²⁷ We have reason to believe, as the text hints, that al-Biqā'ī the master enjoyed sexual rights to many, if not all, of these *fatāhs* in his harem.

These maids/concubines were of various ethnic stocks. There was, for example, an Indian woman, Thurayyā, "Stellar," to whom our author variously refers to as *surrīyah*, *fatāh*, and *amah*.²⁸ She died during the Black Death. "For an Indian woman," al-Biqā'ī reflects in her obituary, "she was obedient (*rayyīdah*), pious, quiet, and soft-mannered."²⁹ There was an Ethiopian woman named Ḥulwah, "Sweetie," who is mentioned as *jārah* (for *jāriyah*?), *amah*, and *fatāh*.³⁰ This concubine sometimes also served as an informant for our historian; for example, she saw the locusts that struck the village in the year 861/1456 and reported it to al-Biqā'ī, who recorded the event in his chronicle.³¹

Among the many women in the household, none seem to have generated as much attention and fuss as one Ḥasbiya Allāh, who was, it seems, constantly in the thick of harem intrigue. An African princess of sorts (she was the daughter of

²⁶ Al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Daw'*, 12:62–63.

²⁷ For example, Shahīdah, the wife of 'Amr, a male servant (*fatā*) of the family; see *Izhār*, 3:117.

²⁸ Ibid., 2:367; 3:120, 127.

²⁹ Ibid., 3:120.

³⁰ Ibid., 2:235, 299; 3:118.

³¹ Ibid., 2:235.



Khaliṣṣah, the king [*sulṭān*] of the land of al-Masalāt),³² Ḥasbiya Allāh al-Zanjīyah, "The Black Girl," was purchased by al-Biqā'ī in Rajab 853/1449 under unknown circumstances. There are two peculiar events that put this African concubine at the center of controversies. First is her bizarre story of a multi-year pregnancy, which is recounted in detail by al-Biqā'ī, an aficionado of medicine.³³ The story goes something like this: when al-Biqā'ī first purchased the young woman, she was menstruating (*ḥā'id*), but one month later stopped having periods. Everyone thought she was pregnant, presumably by her new master. Nothing happened, though. Then the woman developed a series of strange symptoms the details of which are recorded meticulously by al-Biqā'ī. The symptoms—irregular menstrual cycles, chronic fatigue, lack of appetite, and persistent stomach pains—convinced al-Biqā'ī and a local physician that she suffered from a condition called, in the Avicennian terminology, *al-rajā'*, that is, false (literally "wishful") pregnancy. But Ḥasbiya Allāh insisted that she was *actually* pregnant and that the baby was in her womb. The unsettling situation continued to baffle and trouble everyone involved until years later, in the month of Jumādā I 863/1459, Ḥasbiya Allāh finally gave birth to a son, to be named Abū al-Luṭf Aḥmad.

The story did not stop here. The woman claimed that this was the same boy conceived nearly ten years earlier shortly after she was purchased by al-Biqā'ī. What concerns us here, of course, is not the truth of such a fable, but rather the extraordinary attention paid to its documentation. If one bears in mind that al-Biqā'ī's narrative is based on observations made over a period of more than nine years, the sheer tenacity, on the part of both the concubine and the master, to hold the miraculous story together is incredible:

Then she developed what one might call pregnant woman's "craving" for food (*waḥam al-nisā'*) . . . to the extent that she could not observe the rituals of fasting during Ramaḍān. She lacked the resolve (*futūr al-quwwah*) to fast in the year [8]54. She would force herself to keep the fast until noon for a couple of days, then she would feel dizzy and nauseous (*dawkhah wa-qay'*) and would break the fast; after eating, she would feel fine. The same happened in Ramaḍān 855. She was able, however, to fast in the year 866 and [the year] after that, and everything was fine. . . . And then all of a sudden, she began to have periods [again], all the while her womb remaining lean. . . . Her menstrual cycle was irregular: sometimes it occurred

³²Bilād al-Masalāt, on the Mediterranean shore, is thirty-five miles from Tripoli in present-day Libya; see *Iḏḥār*, 3:42 (note 2).

³³For al-Biqā'ī's interests in medicine, see Guo, "Al-Biqā'ī's Chronicle," 132.



earlier than expected, and sometimes it was late; sometimes it was cut short by a few days, and sometimes it lingered for a few more days; sometimes she would menstruate once a month on a regular basis, and sometimes every two months, making it hard to calculate and predict. This continued until the year 859 when a bit of milk was found in her breasts. The milk was not white, but of a dusty color, and this continued until she gave birth [in the year 863]. When Ramaḍān 862 came, her periods stopped totally, and her belly began to swell, exceeding the normal size. I thought it would at least be twins!³⁴

If Ḥasbiya Allāh's motive was to attract attention and lay the grounds for bettering her position in the harem, al-Biqā'ī's attitude towards, and treatment of, the incident is quite revealing. Alongside his year-to-year account of the physical condition of his concubine are citations from Avicenna and Ibn al-Nafīs, an obvious attempt to reconcile the inexplicable phenomenon with mainstream medical literature.³⁵ Worth notice also is his note that in recording the story, he consulted with other women in the harem. The result is a "paraphrased" account (*ḥarrartuhu*) based on claims by the protagonist, i.e., Ḥasbiya Allāh, as well as confirmation from witnesses. If the excessive details of his concubine's menstrual cycle, eating habits, changing belly, and even the color of her milk, sound a bit "kinky" for an alim, he keeps a straight face throughout.

Women have always played a central role in folklore and popular traditions, such as medical care and superstitious beliefs and practices, in the Islamic Near East.³⁶ Viewed from this perspective, al-Biqā'ī's acceptance of, and respect for, tales of marvels and miracles perhaps should not be seen as out of place. As the text shows, the high-minded alim was in fact taking sides in this debate by openly challenging those "[ignorant] people who have yet to put their feet in the field of knowledge (*al-ilm*) and let their minds wander in the garden of learning (*al-jawālān fī fayāfī al-ma'ārif*)."³⁷ By "knowledge" and "learning" he meant not only a recognition of the works by the likes of Avicenna and Ibn al-Nafīs, but also an acknowledgment of miracles and wonders (*'ajā'ib wa-gharā'ib*) and their role in worldly affairs

³⁴ *Izhār*, 3:42–45.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3:43–44.

³⁶ See, for example, Huda Lutfi, "Manners and Customs of Fourteenth-Century Cairene Women: Female Anarchy versus Male Shari'a Order in Muslim Prescriptive Treatises," in *Women in Middle Eastern History*, ed. Nikki Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven and London, 1991), 99–121. A contemporary description of the phenomenon is to be found in Fatima Mernissi, *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood* (Cambridge, MA, 1994).

³⁷ *Izhār*, 3:45.



and the human condition, a major topos in medieval Arabic historiography.

As is usually the case, miracles and wondrous stories are substantiated by visions. Ḥasbiya Allāh's dreams about her miraculous marathon-pregnancy are cited, with an interesting note stating that our historian was in the habit of writing down his and others' dreams in "large notebooks" for future reference.³⁸

Next time we hear from Ḥasbiya Allāh, she is once again in the center of harem politics. This time, she offered an apocalyptic vision supporting al-Biqā'ī's case against his wife Su'ādāt, which we discussed earlier in this essay. In the dream, Ḥasbiya Allāh claimed she saw a female sheep give birth to a strange creature, in the shape of a fish, that was barely alive. The next thing she knew, a group of "strange women" approached her, asking, "What do you think? Do you want the baby dead or do you want us to bring life to him?" Those strange women, Ḥasbiya Allāh recalls, "looked very vicious (*laysa fīhim khayr*). I turned to them, and suddenly realized that they were none other than your wife and mother-in-law! I cried out, 'Please save the baby, and do whatever you want with the sheep!'" The dream concluded with a series of allegorical images—among them a dying fish, a big jar (*zīr*) filled with a mixture of milk and greenish paste, some holy smoke—and then Ḥasbiya Allāh woke up to realize that "there is no fish, no sheep, no Su'ādāt, and no other harem women at all."³⁹

What grudges this concubine harbored against her mistresses we do not know. If a person's dream reveals some truth, then we are certain that no love was lost between the two women. Here one may be surprised by such poisonous assaults coming from the mouth of a concubine, but bearing in mind that childbirth has always been a source of tension among the jealous and competitive wives and concubines in the harem, Ḥasbiya Allāh's tales are by no means beyond reason. In this regard, one may place all of her dream-related stories in a context: the plot was, first, to allude to the notion that Ḥasbiya Allāh's son somehow had more seniority than Su'ādāt's (although the former was born after the latter, he was "conceived" earlier in Ḥasbiya Allāh's account); and next is a crafty allegory aimed at damaging Su'ādāt's and her family's credibility. Al-Biqā'ī's ulterior motive in penning such tales, on the other hand, stems from his own overall strategy: it all has to do with a continuous spin on his divorce and child custody case against Su'ādāt, whom, for some reason, our author seems to have been unable to let go.

³⁸ Ibid. For the use of wives' dreams to verify dates and events in medieval Arabic autobiographical writings, see, for example, Nicholas Heer, "Some Biographical and Bibliographical Notes on al-Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhi," in *The World of Islam: Studies in Honour of Philip K. Hitti*, ed. James Kritzeck et al. (London, 1959), 121–22.

³⁹ *Izhār*, 2:89.



In this connection, it is also evident from the narrative that al-Biqā'ī's principal motive for keeping records about his harem women derives largely from his concerns about their, and his, children. We hear about Ḥasbiya Allāh a few years later, in the year 865/1461, when she gave birth to a second son, Abū al-Luṭf Aḥmad II, this time after a "mere" fourteen-month pregnancy, according to her own count. The birth, "an extremely easy one," as our author happily informs us, is described with repeated elaborate textual devices aimed again at showing divine intervention in his personal affairs. The scriptural quote this time is from Quran 12:43–57, the story of Joseph and his brothers. The significance of this newborn is underlined by the fact that his birth came after the death of Abū al-Yusr Muḥammad I, Su'ādāt's only son, and after the outbreak of plague, in 863–64/1459–60, that killed his older brother Abū al-Luṭf Aḥmad, Ḥasbiya Allāh's first-born. Detailed descriptions of the birth of the boy and the ensuing celebration of his circumcision and other related activities are given. The proud father was so overwhelmed with joy that he took upon himself the task of cutting the baby's hair for the *'aqīqah* ceremony, and decided to shower all the neighbors with free bread and watermelons in celebration, twice. That must have been extra sweet for Ḥasbiya Allāh, the African concubine: not only was her rival Su'ādāt now long gone, but more importantly, the *tafriqah*, or giving gifts to celebrate the birth of a son, was offered on the occasion of the birth of Muḥammad I, the precious son of the formal wife Su'ādāt, only once.⁴⁰

ABOUT A BOY: BIRTH, REARING, AND DEATH OF CHILDREN

The accounts of childbirth, rearing, and infant mortality in the household constitute a considerable part of the *Iḥḥār*. The birth of a child is always celebrated and accorded rhetorical notice. The reason for this intense attention perhaps lies in the fact that, as the narrative shows, none of al-Biqā'ī's sons survived. Was it a curse, or God's plan? Our historian certainly had some explaining to do.

Among the several elaborate accounts of the birth of a child is that of Abū al-Yusr Muḥammad I,⁴¹ whose custody case became a bone of contention in al-Biqā'ī's divorce battle against the boy's mother Su'ādāt. There were, as al-Biqā'ī tells it, many "marvelous and spectacular things about this boy (*'ajā'ib ḥādihā al-walad*)." Foremost of these was his birthday, 12 Rabī' I, corresponding to that of the Prophet Muḥammad. The proud father, then in Damascus, composed a poem to celebrate the occasion. The poem is replete with the formulaic panegyric elements celebrating the *mawlid*, or birth, of the Prophet. Its motif is a confirmation of the coincidence of the birthday of his son and that of the Prophet; this is

⁴⁰Ibid., 3:355–56.

⁴¹Ibid., 2:85–89.



achieved through word-play with repeated juxtaposition, and deliberate mixing, of the *mawlid* of the Prophet Muḥammad and that of the boy, whose name is, of course, Muḥammad.

As can be expected, the wonders also have to do with dreams and "coincidences" (*ittifāqāt*) prior to, and after, the boy's birth. Al-Biqā'ī's own dream, we are told, occurred on the eve of receiving the good news from Egypt. In the dream, he was crossing a road and stumbled upon a piece of paper containing the names of God. This reminded him of the famous incident involving the Sufi Bishr Ibn al-Ḥārith, known as al-Ḥāfī, "the Barefooted" (d. 226/841?). Legend has it that Bishr, having accidentally trampled the paper underfoot, heard God saying, "If you honor my name, I will honor your name in this world and the hereafter." Following the Baghdadi saint's footsteps, our Cairene historian duly placed the paper on his forehead, honoring God's names. For al-Biqā'ī, this dream, like many others recorded in the *Izhār*, was a sure sign of divine intervention. Furthermore, by showing respect to God, he was also betting on the future, "hoping that a great deal of benefit will befall my newborn son."⁴²

The joyful father was apparently not the only one who saw this coming. On the eve of al-Biqā'ī's trip to Damascus, the Shafi'i judge Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ziftāwī⁴³ told of a similar, but more complex, dream he had: while contemplating the reading of the phrase *wa-yazīdahum* (or was it *yazīduhum*?) *min faḍlihi* (Quran 24:38), the shaykh fell asleep and had a vision that his father, the prominent Shafi'i scholar Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, was standing in front of him, chanting the correct reading of the Quranic verse in question (it is *yazīdahum*, to be sure). Surprised, Nāṣir al-Dīn asked his father, "Why are you here?" The father said, "Shaykh Burhān al-Dīn's [i.e., al-Biqā'ī's] son just went downstairs, carried by a servant; . . . I am here to watch over him lest the boy fall." "But Shaykh Burhān al-Dīn has no son!" the bewildered Nāṣir al-Dīn protested. "He surely does now," the father replied. After telling the bizarre anecdote, Nāṣir al-Dīn turned to al-Biqā'ī and inquired, "Is any one in your household pregnant?" "Yes indeed," al-Biqā'ī assured him, and then went on, "God has brought the pregnancy to term, in the form of a boy, and He is solely responsible for materializing the remainder of the Quranic verse," which reads: "God may recompense them for their fairest works and give them increase of His bounty; and God provides whomsoever He will, without reckoning."

The wonder-boy's marvelous stories never ceased to dazzle our keen-eyed historian. The baby, we are told, not only resembled his father in looks, he also acted like him: an anecdote related to al-Biqā'ī by his own mother Fāṭimah has it

⁴²Ibid., 86.

⁴³He died in 876/1471; for his biography see al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Daw'*, 9:116 (no. 302).



that when al-Biqā'ī was born, he did not cry and showed no sign of life; assuming he was dead, people left him aside, uncovered. Then some female relatives took a closer look at the baby and realized that he was still alive. They quickly poured sulfur powder around the baby's nose; after a sniff came a big sneeze and the happy sound of a baby crying. The same thing, al-Biqā'ī writes, happened to his own son. What comes next is perhaps central to the whole story:

I was told by his mother [i.e., Su'ādāt] and other women, who are experts in this matter, that the baby was delivered in the eighth month of the pregnancy—may God make all His blessings available to him and protect him from all evils! But two months after the birth, the baby still could not suckle the breasts [of his mother for milk]. So his aunt Fāṭimah, the daughter of Shaykh Nūr al-Dīn al-Būshī, would squeeze milk from her breasts and then drop the milk to his mouth. It was only after two months that he began to suckle [his mother's] breasts; but he did not like her milk at all. From her left breast, he did not drink a thing; and from her right breast, he would suck and drink with reluctance (*'alā kurh*), and then he would throw up most of what he had consumed.⁴⁴

As a result, the baby, we are told, was nursed by a group of concubines and maids in the Biqā'ī harem: among them the above-mentioned Ḥasbiya Allāh, "only in whose arms the baby would become calm and content," and 'Azīzah, the daughter of a male slave (*ghulām*) owned by the family, whose milk "was preferred by the baby boy."⁴⁵

There are, to be sure, some obvious holes in the whole story, not least of which is the availability of milk at the exact time in question from so many women other than the nursing mother, Su'ādāt. As the narrative proceeds, the underlying theme is unmistakable: that Su'ādāt is an unfit mother by any standard. It follows that al-Biqā'ī's harsh, and seemingly unfair, custody claim, discussed above, is not only legally sound but also morally right and biologically appropriate. The fact that the newborn baby was raised largely by the father, with the help of other women in the harem, "is proof," the author claims, "that what happened as a result of the evil-doings wrought by his mother, which led to the separation [of the baby and the birth mother], turned out to be God's merciful blessings. Amen!"⁴⁶

⁴⁴*Izhār*, 2:88.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 89.

⁴⁶*Ibid.* For Islamic legal discourse on the subject, see Avner Giladi, *Infants, Parents and Wet Nurses: Medieval Islamic Views on Breastfeeding and their Social Implications* (Leiden, 1999),



Sadly, this heaven-bestowed son was not to live long. He died on 12 Sha'bān 860/1456, at the age of "one year, four-and-a-half months, and two days," by al-Biqā'ī's own count.⁴⁷ The exact cause of death is unknown. From the symptoms described in great detail (nearly two pages), one learns that the boy suffered from diarrhea, vomiting, loss of appetite, and perhaps high fever. In a poignant passage, the lamenting father recalls what happened during the final hours: when the dying boy showed signs of thirst, the father asked a slave girl to hurry to fetch some melon juice; however, the boy's body language made it clear that he would only drink from a jar (*zīr*), a reference to the *zīr* that saved him at the time of his birth, in Ḥasbiya Allāh's above-mentioned dream version of the event. Now the tale has come full-circle: the boy—who in the concubine's dream was a dying fish taken out of the sea and later rescued in a big "jar" of water—then drank from the jar, on his deathbed, and stopped crying. "He remained very calm and content, till he passed away," our historian recounts.⁴⁸ The grief-ridden father then goes on to devote a long passage to describing the final moment:

He continued in this state up until Thursday morning, . . . and every passing hour was a struggle. Despite that, he seldom complained, nor did he utter a sigh of pain. . . . Then I heard a moan from him . . . and rushed to his side as he was dying: his head became stiff up to the upper palate, and his gaze became frozen . . . , his eyes closed . . . , and he showed no sign of movement except for his lower palate and below. His chest began to clatter, with continuous moans. . . . I felt a profound sense of compassion (*al-wijd*) that no words can describe, and I sought comfort in prayers. I ordered the maids to perform the ritual ablution (*wuḍū'*), that each of them should bow two prostrations, asking God to ease the pain of death. I then washed myself and started performing the ritual. During my second prostration, I heard women's whispers, which indicated to me that he was dead. I hastened to his bedside and he was gone.⁴⁹

This account offers one of the most poignant moments in the entire *Izhār*, the likes of which, to the best of my knowledge, is rarely seen in Mamluk historical writings. Adding to the sadness is the fact that even in the boy's death, his mother,

especially 45–62 (maternal breastfeeding vs. wet nursing), 94–101 (parents; father's responsibility and legal rights).

⁴⁷ *Izhār*, 2:192.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 193.



Su'ādāt, was kept totally out of the picture. No word of her reaction is even mentioned.

The cycle of childbirth and infant mortality occurred again a few years later, in Ramaḍān 861, when the Ethiopian concubine Ḥulwah gave birth to a son. In celebrating the coming of the new boy, who was named after his late half-brother Abū al-Yusr Muḥammad I, and perhaps in an attempt to eradicate the memories of the tragic loss of Muḥammad I, al-Biqā'ī threw a big party on the occasion of his 'aqīqah, or hair cutting ceremony and circumcision for the newly born. More than a hundred notables, among them Sufī masters from Mecca and Medina, attended the feast. Food was distributed to all of his neighbors. Panegyrics, including the ones praising the virtues of "Ethiopian women," were presented.⁵⁰ Al-Biqā'ī once again takes pains in describing the marvels and wonders ('ajā'ib) of his newborn son. Among these is his account of a rift between the boy and a neighbor's naughty children, "the most evil creatures on earth," in al-Biqā'ī's characterization. When the bullying boys were about to harm the then two-year-old Muḥammad II in front of the mosque where al-Biqā'ī was teaching, the boy was miraculously rescued by his father and nanny.⁵¹

This younger Muḥammad was a lovely boy, indeed, the proud father repeatedly emphasizes. He was "smart, confident, and full of self-esteem," and had a vigorous intellectual curiosity. He began to crawl when he was eight months old, began to comprehend the world around him from the ninth month, and started walking in the next. He was weaned on 18 Ramaḍān 863, that is, two full years after his birth,⁵² by which time he had the appearance of a five-year-old toddler. "He was able to ride on horseback. He would ask for a whip, and would hold it in his hands, in the manner of a horseman." The proud father also predicates the boy's "potential for future greatness."⁵³ Unfortunately, the promising boy would soon perish, this time during a new outbreak of the Black Death in 863–64/1459–60.⁵⁴ Muḥammad II, we are told, was "martyred" by the epidemic (*shahīdan maṭ'ūnan*), the infection from which "started creeping up from his left armpit," at the age of "two years and nine days, no more and no less."⁵⁵

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., 299–301.

⁵¹Ibid., 3:54.

⁵²Ḥasbiya Allāh's second son was also weaned after two full years; see *Izhār*, 3:356. This seems to follow a common medical recommendation in the Islamic Near East; see Giladi, *Infants*, 62–67.

⁵³*Izhār*, 3:118.

⁵⁴Two outbreaks of the plague hit Egypt during the period in question, first in 858–59/1454–55, and then again in 863–64/1459–60; see *Izhār*, 3:114 (years 863–64); Michael Dols, *The Black Death in the Middle East* (Princeton, 1977), 217, 312.



Al-Biqā'ī's documentation of the Black Death presents a vivid firsthand personal account of the events. In the *Izhār*, aside from many obituaries of the Cairene notables who fell victim to the epidemic, we also find a long list of casualties in the author's own household. Among them was Shahīdah, a female slave (*fatāh*) who died in Jumādā II 863;⁵⁶ Ghāliyah, her daughter, and Thurayyā, the Indian concubine, both died in the same month;⁵⁷ Abū al-Luṭf Aḥmad, Ḥasbiya Allāh's first son, died five months later, in Dhū al-Qa'dah.⁵⁸ All told, in a few months, the plague claimed a handful of lives in this household alone. The dead were all buried in the family cemetery, next to the corpses of many sons, daughters, and concubines who had died earlier.⁵⁹

More births are reported in the remainder of the *Izhār*. For example, Ḥulwah, the Ethiopian concubine, gave birth to another son named, again, Abū al-Yusr Muḥammad in 866/1461.⁶⁰ All in all, infant mortality seems to have been a curse hovering over al-Biqā'ī's head. Even for those who managed to survive temporarily, destiny was never in their favor. Ḥasbiya Allāh's second son, Abū al-Luṭf Aḥmad II, for example, would later suffer from developmental problems; not only was he slow in learning to walk and talk, but was also, worst of all, always sick, "with gross sores on his face and body all the time."⁶¹ Eventually the boy died when he was three years old.⁶² Ḥulwah's son Abū al-Yusr Muḥammad III died when he, too, was merely three years old.⁶³ We don't know much about the fate of al-Biqā'ī's daughters.⁶⁴ As far as the period covered by the *Izhār* is concerned, none of al-Biqā'ī's sons survived. All told, this is, in the end, a very sad story, indeed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: PRIVATE LIFE AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The various episodes presented above form the story of an eccentric Mamluk alim's turbulent domestic life. In the category of dysfunctional families, our protagonist and narrator al-Biqā'ī was not alone, given the extremely high rate of

⁵⁵ *Izhār*, 3:118.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 117.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 119, 120.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁶⁰ *Izhār*, MS, 338.

⁶¹ *Izhār*, 3:356.

⁶² *Izhār*, MS, 462.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 486.

⁶⁴ One daughter, Umm Hānī Fāṭimah, was born to Thurayyā, the Indian concubine, in 862/1457 (*Izhār*, 2:367); another daughter, Umm al-Ḥasan Zaynab, was born to Ḥulwah, the Ethiopian concubine, in 869/1464 (*Izhār*, MS, 486).



divorce in the Mamluk era.⁶⁵ However, as Leo Tolstoy's adage about unhappy families goes, everyone's story is unique. When it comes to the various factors that caused a marriage to collapse and a family to dissipate in medieval Muslim societies, little is known beyond the legal (and economic) parameters.⁶⁶ This, of course, has largely to do with the nature of our sources. While "family" occupies substantial importance in Islamic legal discourse, historians, on the whole, usually have little, if anything, to say on the subject. Even in autobiography, a presumably "ideal" genre for such a pursuit, one is confronted with the predominance of generic narratives over individual voices. In al-Biqā'ī and his *Iẓhār*, the subject of the present study, we find a rather special voice.

The first remarkable thing about al-Biqā'ī's *Iẓhār* is its blending of literary genres. This is evidenced by the at-times-confusing narrative structure, constantly switching back and forth between a chronicle and an autobiography. Very often the awkwardness of the seemingly bungled narrative is obvious. For instance, al-Biqā'ī's wedding to Su'ādāt is narrated in a strictly third person tone, as part of a larger narrative frame of the sultan's, not the author's—that is, the groom's—activities. It begins with an account of: on such-and-such day, "he [i.e., the sultan] came to" the Nāṣirīyah *khānqāh*, "to marry off his secretary (*li-tazwīj kātibihi*) [i.e., al-Biqā'ī] to Su'ādāt. . . ." The author then abruptly switches to first person narrative in the next paragraph when the groom, "he," becomes "I."⁶⁷ Another example of this oddity is seen in the obituary of al-Būshī, al-Biqā'ī's late father-in-law, who had died two years prior to al-Biqā'ī's marriage to his daughter Su'ādāt. This relationship, although posthumous, is never acknowledged.⁶⁸ This kind of inconsistency may reflect the raw condition of the unfinished autograph manuscript, a work-in-progress *musawwadah*-draft; the author was perhaps writing a chronicle on the basis of his own diary. However, the possibility that such a narrative strategy was so designed cannot be ruled out. In the case of al-Būshī, the silence on the relationship between the two may have to do with al-Biqā'ī's awareness of the accusations, by al-Sakhāwī and the like, of his opportunistic marriage schemes for career advancement. And in the case of his wedding, the interpretive tension between a heavenly matrimony and its eventual ugly reality is

⁶⁵Thirty percent of marriages in the Mamluk period ended in divorce; see Rapoport, "Marriage," 268. A quick glimpse at vol. 12 of al-Sakhāwī's *Al-Daw'*, the most extensive Mamluk biographical work covering women's lives and careers, will give the unmistakable impression of the frequency of divorce.

⁶⁶For the most up-to-date bibliography of the current scholarship on marriage and divorce in the Islamic Near East, see Rapoport, "Marriage," 300–25. The literature on women and family in Muslim societies in general is very extensive and need not be repeated here.

⁶⁷*Iẓhār*, 2:20–21.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, 1:193.



reconciled by a multiple-narrative line with various voices and perspectives. By switching back and forth between the first person narrative and the third person commentary, as both protagonist *and* eye witness, the narrator is in total control of the narrative.

The second remarkable thing about al-Biqā'ī's *Iḏhār* is its rare insights into the author's personality and emotions, an element that is commonly held to have been largely missing from medieval Arabic autobiographical writings. In this respect, his poignant depictions of the births and deaths of his children come to mind immediately. Despite the common attitude of treating such disastrous events as a manifestation of God's unknowable plans for His creatures, al-Biqā'ī seeks some concrete explanations for, and human elements in, the tragedies. As the text attests, in telling the heart-wrenching stories, the author's emotions are genuine and sincere. This is in sharp contrast to his tell-alls about his sinister ex-wives and in-laws. Full of grudges, voluntary self-voyeurism, and vendetta, these flashy tales further expose, by default, the author's true character and attitudes. What we see here is a far cry from a calculated, self-righteous, stoic alim, but rather a man full of contradictions: an overzealous moralist, a caring father, a wife abuser, and finally, a big-mouthed jackass. During his entire life, there were too many battles to fight and too many scores to settle. In the *Iḏhār*, his many smear campaigns and personal vendettas are always in full swing, with all the trimmings of literary manipulation. You would not want to be on al-Biqā'ī's enemy list.

The third thing that sets al-Biqā'ī aside from his peers is his portrayal of his relationships with women. While women are relatively well represented in Mamluk autobiographies, the authors tend to talk more about their mothers and daughters than about their wives and concubines,⁶⁹ much less about their perspectives on their relationships with them. In al-Biqā'ī, however, we have someone who lets us into these areas of his world and psyche. His support of Ḥasbiya Allāh the concubine against Su'ādāt the wife in the baby-bearing melodrama is but one example of such personalized and overtly biased interpretive narrative. It obviously has to do with his overall plan to defame Su'ādāt; but on the other hand, it does allow the reader to appreciate his plain style in voicing his likes and dislikes of the women in his harem. Compared with his peers, this certainly marks a leap; but unfortunately it perhaps is not big enough. Al-Biqā'ī's women, in the final analysis, are like those in a Dostoevsky novel: they do not have their own personal history and voice—they enter the male heroes' lives, constitute part of their fate, and disappear.⁷⁰

For al-Biqā'ī, the "autobiographical anxiety" stems directly from his need to

⁶⁹Rapoport, "Marriage," 13–17.

⁷⁰Konstantin Mochulsky, Introduction to *The Brothers Karamazov*, by Fyodor Dostoyevsky (New York, 2003), xxi.



explain many seeming downturns in his life experiences: failed marriages, messy domestic situations, and worst of all, the endless deaths of male descendents, the utmost blow to a man whose very existence was facing the danger of eternal oblivion and meaninglessness. Thus writing his autobiography perhaps became, in a sense, his way of finding salvation. Call it egocentric or self-serving, al-Biqā'ī's writing is always of, and for, himself. The depiction of his domestic life serves as part and parcel of this salvation history project. It is through his overtly subjective lens and intimate personal experiences that we are able to view the history of the time period he covered. It is true that many things are not entirely novel here: the *'ajā'ib* and *nawādir* elements, the use of dream interpretation, the apocalyptic spins, and hermeneutic manipulation, all point to a continuation of the traditions in Arabic historical writing, but it is the sheer volume of using such devices, and the way they are put together, that distinguish al-Biqā'ī from his predecessors and contemporaries. Although his story-telling is not always elegant and convincing, his story is unusual and his voice unique.



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The Construction of Gender Symbolism in Ibn Sīrīn's and Ibn Shāhīn's Medieval Arabic Dream Texts*

INTRODUCTORY AND METHODOLOGICAL REMARKS

It was years ago when I first bought my Bulaq edition of Arabic dream texts authored by the three canonical interpreters: Ibn Sīrīn, Ibn Shāhīn, and al-Nābulusī. In the eighties it was a favorite pastime among some Cairene intellectuals to read such popular classics, a way to converse with and learn more about the past. But what began as a pastime developed into an exercise in cultural and historical probing, a wish to use the dream text as a potential source for examining the cultural assumptions that shape us as social beings. In this article, I propose to use a gender-sensitive reading of selected narratives so as to explore both accepted and undetected cultural constructs of gender, and to examine how the text re-enforces or subverts conventional notions of gender hierarchy. In doing so, a dialogue is established with the text, infusing it with new grounds of sensibility, with memory, and questions that may help us understand the genealogy of cultural assumptions.

It is important to bear in mind, however, that although linguistic symbols reflecting a dichotomy between masculinity and femininity may not be remarkable in and of themselves, they do serve as reminders of the underlying connection between the textual or ideological construction of gender and the existing structures of order which constitute the social ground of the text. An interactive relationship between the symbols used in the dream text and its social context is thus expected to be at play. Notions of gender, economic status, age, religion, and sometimes race and color closely intersect in dream imagery, just as they do in the existing social context. And as Toufy Fahd rightly remarks, these texts may be considered as mirrors of society, providing reflections about everyday life in medieval Arab-Muslim society that cannot be found in conventional historical texts.¹

Apart from a few recent studies, modern scholars still show little interest in the use of the dream text as a source for understanding the cultural assumptions of

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¹Toufy Fahd, "The Dream in Medieval Islamic Society," in *The Dream and Human Societies*, ed. Gustave. E. von Grunebaum and Roger Cailliois (Berkeley, 1966), 362.



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Arab-Muslim society.² Such lore of dreams has been doubly ignored: historians dismiss it as not pertaining to facts and events, psychologists and psychoanalysts follow Freud's famous devaluation of such popular manuals in his *Interpretation of Dreams*. For him, the key to a dream was to be sought in the unconscious of the dreamer, and not in manuals that simply offer ready-made correspondences between dream motifs and their meanings. My approach in examining the dream narrative does not simply focus on the psychological, but rather on how the dream text might be helpful in contributing to our knowledge of cultural constructs. This study therefore will draw attention to the wealth of social implications latent in the dream narrative, to the complexity and ambivalence of its mode of symbolizing, without however appropriating its meaning.

While many of the Arabic dream texts still survive in manuscript form, only a few of these texts have been published. However, the fact that these three canonical dream texts have been published together and continue to circulate widely in the Egyptian Bulaq edition is significant in its own right, for it implies that these dream texts continue to have a certain level of credibility and relevance in the popular imaginary of the Egyptian-Arab reader. For the purposes of this article, I will examine in some detail two of these three dream texts. The first is the text attributed to the eighth-century interpreter Ibn Sīrīn (born in Basra, died there in 110/728), and who is unanimously acknowledged by later Muslim scholars to be the greatest master in the field. It should be noted, however, that Ibn Sīrīn may not have written this text himself, but most probably it was his disciples who collected his teachings in a text that was later attributed to him and which is entitled *Muntakhab al-Kalām fī Tafsīr al-Aḥlām* (A concise guide for the

²Ibid., 351–63; idem, "Les Corps de métiers au IV/Xe siècle à Bagdad d'après le chapitre xii d'al-Qadiri-fī-t-Ta'bir de Dinawari," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 8, no. 2 (1965): 186–212. For a more detailed discussion of Arabic dream texts, see idem, *Le Livre des Songes* (Damascus, 1964); see also his *Les Songes et leur Interpretation*, Sources Orientales, vol. 2 (Paris, 1959). More recently, Leah Kinberg published a critical edition of Ibn Abī al-Dunyā's dream text entitled *Morality in the Genre of Dreams* (Leiden, 1994). See Steven M. Oberhelman's recent study of medieval Greek and Arabic dreams, *The Oneirocriticism of Achmet: A Medieval Greek and Arabic Treatise on the Interpretation of Dreams* (Lubbock, TX, 1991). See also his article "Hierarchies of Gender, Ideology, and Power in Medieval Greek and Arabic Literature," in *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature*, ed. Jerry Wright, Jr., and Everett Rowson (New York, 1997), 55. For a comparative approach on dreams, see *Dream Cultures: Explorations in the Comparative History of Dreaming*, ed. David Shulman and Guy Stroumsa (New York, 1999). Western scholarship has produced numerous studies on dreams; for example, see Michel Foucault's classic work *The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 3 (New York, 1988); John Winkler, *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* (New York, 1990); Patricia Miller, *Dreams in Late Antiquity: Studies in the Imagination of a Culture* (Princeton, 1994).



interpretation of dreams). The second text which I will examine is authored by the Mamluk statesman and scholar Ibn Shāhīn al-Zāhirī (born in Jerusalem, died in 873/1468 in Tripoli), and is entitled *Al-Ishārāt fī 'Ilm al-'Ibārāt* (Signs in the science of dream interpretation). In light of its authoritative status in the Arabic dream tradition, Ibn Sīrīn's text will be used as a basic reference source against which Ibn Shāhīn's later text is compared and examined, thus allowing us to investigate the degree of continuity or discontinuity within the tradition of dream interpreting. As for 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī's text (born in Damascus, died there in 1143/1731), it is used more as a supplementary source for the useful commentaries that the author makes on interpreting dreams, and when necessary, for further comparative purposes.³

The Arabic medieval dream text is an encyclopedic maze. Whereas Ibn Sīrīn's earlier text comprises 59 chapters, Ibn Shāhīn expands them to 80, each dealing with related dream motifs. The list of such motifs is exhaustingly long and varied, and a few examples of these will suffice to give the reader an idea of their rich variety: death, heaven and hell, sacred spaces, religious rituals, the Prophet and his Companions, food, sexual relations, man, woman, slaves, children, body parts, houses, furniture, funerals, festivals, torture, plants, beasts, insects, birds, etc.⁴ Given such a wide variety of topics, I decided to narrow down the data to be studied to a more manageable size. Out of the various chapters dealing with animals, I chose the one on the bird kingdom, and out of the numerous chapters dealing with human actors and related activities, I chose two: one dealing with men, women, children, and slaves; the other dealing with sexual and marital relations. For analytical and comparative purposes, textual choice of chapters from the two dream texts was based on the detected similarities in title and content. Furthermore, the choice of examining and comparing two different dream motifs, one dealing with birds, the other with humans, allows us to investigate how the two interpreters constructed correspondences between animal and human

³For this article, I have used the Bulaq two-volume edition, reprinted by Maṭba'at 'Īsā al-Bābī (Cairo, n.d.). The edition includes the three dream texts attributed respectively to al-Imām Muḥammad Ibn Sīrīn, Ibn Shāhīn al-Zāhirī, and the eighteenth-century scholar 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī. On the upper section of the first volume is al-Nābulusī's text entitled *Ta'ṭīr al-Anām fī Tafsīr al-Aḥlām*. Ibn Sīrīn's text *Muntakhab al-Kalām* is printed on the lower section of the same volume. Al-Nābulusī's text is continued in the second volume, but on the lower section of this volume is Ibn Shāhīn's *Ishārāt*. For more information on these three authors, their lives, and their works, see Yehia Gouda, *Dreams and Their Meanings in the Old Arab Tradition* (New York, 1991), 29–34. On the importance of Ibn Sīrīn as the most authoritative oneirocritic, see Fahd, "The Dream in Medieval Islamic Society," 360–61.

⁴For a full English translation of Ibn Sīrīn's table of contents, see Gouda, *Dreams and Their Meanings*, 21–25.



symbols. In the first part of this article findings based on the bird chapters will be examined, and in the second part such findings will be compared with those deduced from chapters directly dealing with human actors.⁵ While animals, birds, and insects are generally used in the dream texts to signify events or actions relating to human subjects, the choice to examine the bird, as opposed to any other animal category, is based on the observation that the dream narratives of the bird kingdom appear to be analogously constructed according to the social structures that informs them.

Closer examination of our two historically disparate dream texts reveals more similarities than differences in structure and content, suggesting a high degree of continuity within the tradition of dream interpretation. Both Ibn Sīrīn's and Ibn Shāhīn's texts follow a thematic classification that demonstrates similarity in content and structural sequence. For instance, both texts begin with introductory chapters on the theoretical principles of dream interpretation, followed by those on dreams dealing with eschatological and religious themes, and then by those dealing with mundane matters. Finally, both conclude with anecdotes about master interpreters, addressed primarily to those who wish to study the discipline of dream interpretation. The two texts also reveal close parallels in the manner symbols are interpreted, which is not surprising, given the well-known dependence of later interpreters on earlier masters. Ibn Shāhīn seems to have had great respect for Ibn Sīrīn's teachings, for the latter is frequently used as one of his authoritative sources.⁶ Nonetheless, some thematic differences or emphases may be noted; a notable example of this is the subject of human torture and violence, a theme which does not merit a separate chapter in Ibn Sīrīn's text, but to which Ibn Shāhīn devotes four chapters. The prevalence of torture in Mamluk society is

⁵The chapter I used from Ibn Sīrīn's text *Muntakhab* are 21, 35, and 54. Chapter 21 is entitled "Fī Ru'yā al-Nās: al-Shaykh minhum wa-al-Shābb wa-al-Fatāh wa-al-'Ajūz wa-al-Atfāl" (The vision of people: the old man, the young man and woman, the old woman, and children); Chapter 35 is entitled "Fī Ru'yā al-Ṭuyūr al-Waḥshīyah wa-al-Ahliyah wa-al-Mā'iyah" (The vision of wild, domesticated, and water birds); Chapter 54 is entitled "Fī al-Nikāḥ wa-Mā Yaṭtasilu bihi" (Concerning marriage and other matters which relate to it). Chapters from Ibn Shāhīn's *Ishārāt* are 16, 27, and 60. Chapter 16 is entitled "Fī Ru'yā al-Rijāl wa-al-Nisā' wa-al-Ṣibyān wa-al-Ṣighār wa-al-Ṭawāshīyah wa-al-'Abīd wa-al-Khadām wa-al-Khinathā" (The vision of men, women, male adolescents, children, eunuchs, slaves, servants, and hermaphrodites); Chapter 27 is entitled "Fī Ru'yā al-Khuṭbah wa-al-Tazwīj wa-al-'Urs wa-al-Ṭalāq wa-al-Jimā' wa-al-Qublah wa-al-Mulāmasah wa-Mā naḥwahu" (The vision of engagement, marriage, weddings, divorce, sexual intercourse, kissing, touching, and other matters relating to it); Chapter 60 is entitled "Fī Ru'yā Sā'ir al-Ṭuyūr min al-Jawāriḥ wa-Ghayriḥā" (The vision of birds, those that are predatory and otherwise).

⁶In his introduction, Ibn Shāhīn lists at least thirty master interpreters whom he cites as his sources (*Ishārāt*, 3).



confirmed by contemporary historical sources, suggesting that the practice may have reached special heights during this period.⁷ Furthermore, on examining al-Nābulusī's eighteenth-century dream text, which is structured along alphabetic rather than thematic lines, I have observed that the interpretive meaning of bird symbols does not seem to have changed in substantial ways. In a general statement on this textual tradition, Toufy Fahd tells us: "This seemingly very rich literature will appear in rather more modest dimension, I think, when all known manuscripts have been collated."⁸

THE MEDIEVAL ARABIC TRADITION OF DREAM INTERPRETATION

Medieval Arabic dream texts were primarily written by men and for men, for they were mostly addressed to the male dreamer, his desires, anxieties, hopes, and obsessions relating to society. The female dreamer, on the other hand, makes fewer appearances in these texts, and when she does, her dreams appear to relate primarily to household matters such as marital or domestic affairs, physical looks, pregnancy, and birth of children.⁹ This being so, the dream discourse may be viewed more as an expression of the Arab-Muslim masculine imaginary, one in which the male author replays, among other things, cultural notions of difference, interdependence of gender, and other social boundaries. How much of what the interpreter says is a reflection of his social and cultural makeup is a question that will be addressed in the course of this article.¹⁰

The belief that dreams could have a predictive value was almost universal in both ancient and medieval cultures of the Mediterranean region. To fulfill the need to understand the symbolic value of the dream, interpreting dreams developed as a profession performed by the ancient priestess and priest of the temple. But it was in the precincts of the market place that dream interpreters were readily accessible to their clients, and where much rivalry between different prognostic practices prevailed. In time, dream texts were produced recording standard interpretations of culturally defined and shared dream symbols. And while there is evidence that an extensive literature has been written on the subject, we are told that most ancient dream texts have been lost.¹¹

⁷See Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, chapters 17, 24, 25, and 26. For more details on this subject see Tamer el-Leithy's excellent M.A. thesis, "Public Punishment in Mamluk Society," Darwin College, Cambridge University, 1997.

⁸"The Dream in Medieval Islamic Society," 362.

⁹For example, see Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 58, 59, and Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 133–34.

¹⁰On this question, see Oberhelman, "Hierarchies of Gender, Ideology, and Power," 56.

¹¹Fahd, "The Dream in Medieval Islamic Society," 351, 359–63. Fahd argues that while the Greco-Romans seem to have produced a large body of dream literature, very little survived apart from Artemidorous of Ephesus's text, which was translated into Arabic from Greek by Ḥunayn



Arabic medieval dream texts did not suffer such a loss, for a large legacy of manuscripts on dreams still survives. "Enriched by a Greek element working within like ferment, Arab-Muslim oneirocriticism reached heights no other civilization seems to have known."¹² Despite its discomfort with earlier pagan practices, medieval Muslim discourse privileged dream interpreting with an honored status not accorded to any of the other common prognostic practices. Visions conveyed through dreams were taken seriously because they were considered to be intimately connected to prophecy. Consequently, the "science of dream interpreting," as our Arab-Muslim scholars liked to call it, enjoyed the same respectability bestowed on canonical religious sciences.¹³

The profession of dream interpreting came to be primarily perceived in the written texts as the reserve of the male scholar who has received training in the formal religious sciences. And despite the fact that women continued to be dream interpreters, they do not appear to have enjoyed the status they had occupied in earlier historical periods.¹⁴ The dream texts that I have examined also testify to the less important status given to female interpreters; thus whereas master male interpreters are normally mentioned by name, female interpreters only appear in anonymous terms. For example, in Ibn Sīrīn's dream text they are referred to simply as *al-mu'abbirah* (female interpreter) or *al-'ālimah* (female scholar).¹⁵ Moreover, although Ibn Shāhīn meticulously lists his bibliographic sources in his introductory chapter, I have not been able to find any reference to names of

Ibn Ishāq (d. 873/260). On the practice of dream interpreting in the ancient world, see A. Leo Oppenheim, "Mantic Dreams in the Ancient Near East," in *The Dream and Human Societies*. On the significance of dreams in the Indic tradition, see Wendy O'Flaherty, *Dreams, Illusion and Other Realities* (Chicago, 1984).

¹²See Fahd, "The Dream in Medieval Islamic Society," 359 ff.

¹³See 'Abd al-Rahmān Abū Zayd ibn Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, abridged edition by N. J. Dawood (London, 1967), 371, 367. On dream interpretation, Ibn Khaldūn states:

This is a science resplendent with the light of prophecy, because prophecy and dreams were related to each other. . . . This is one of the sciences of the religious law. It originated in Islam when the sciences became crafts, and scholars wrote books about them. The science of interpretation implies a knowledge of general cultural norms upon which the interpreter bases the interpretation and explanations of what *he* is told. . . . The dream interpreter knows these general norms by heart and interprets the dreams in each case as required by the data establishing which of these norms fits a particular dream vision best.

¹⁴In the ancient Near East dream interpretation was largely practiced by women. For more details, see Oppenheim, "Mantic Dreams in the Ancient Near East," 350.

¹⁵Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 143, 144, 150. All translations of the dream texts I have used are mine, unless otherwise stated.



female interpreters. This inadequate recognition of women's contribution confirms what we already know of the authorship of the medieval text, for it was more the prerogative of the male-author to inscribe his society's cultural traditions and values. Perhaps the question of literacy among women interpreters might also explain why they were less likely to have left a written record of interpretations.

Whereas Ibn Sīrīn's earlier text does not contain explicit restrictive statements with regard to who should or should not practice dream interpretation, by the time we reach the fifteenth century we find Ibn Shāhīn emphatically insisting that "visions should not be related except to an interpreter (*mu'abbir*). As for those who are not versed in the "science of interpretation" (*'ilm al-ta'bīr*), they should not interpret dreams for anyone. For if he does so he sins, because it is like issuing a religious decree (*fatwá*). Indeed this is a demanding science."¹⁶ Ibn Shāhīn here is defining the boundaries within which only those who belonged to a professionally trained elite could practice interpreting. In effect, he is calling for the censoring of the unprofessionally-trained interpreter, who may have been nonetheless an equally talented interpreter. Furthermore, he seems to elevate the interpreting of dreams to the status of issuing a religious decree (*fatwá*), which we know could only be performed by professionally recognized male scholars. Two interpretive traditions may very well have coexisted here, a written one that is accorded respectability, and an orally popular tradition that is considered suspect. It was probably within the latter tradition that women performed the practice of dream interpreting. And while our dream texts furnish little evidence for the existence of a separate oral feminine tradition, we can assume the earlier presence of one practiced by and for women within the context of the household. For we can still find today *baladī* Egyptian women continuing the practice of interpreting dreams for neighbors and members of their family.¹⁷

What constituted the required training in the formal discipline of dream interpretation seems to have already been in the making as early as the ninth century, when Muslim scholars were earnestly synthesizing, recording, and codifying what they constructed as the cultural canons. For such purposes, the famous ninth-century literary scholar and critic Ibn Qutaybah outlined a demanding curriculum for the dream interpreter:

For every scholar of some branch of the sciences, the tool of his science can be sufficient for practicing it; but the oneirocritic has

¹⁶Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 361.

¹⁷The term *baladī* here refers to urban traditional women of Cairo. On the living practice of interpreting dreams by Cairene women, I have consulted Ḥasan Surūr, an Egyptian anthropologist who works on Egyptian folklore, and who confirmed that Egyptian women in the traditional quarters of Cairo continue to interpret dreams for their neighbors and relatives.



to be a scholar of Quran and hadith in order to interpret dreams according to their ideas, to be acquainted with Arab proverbs and rare verses of poetry, to have a knowledge of Arabic etymology and of current colloquial speech. Besides, he has to be an *adīb*, gentle, sagacious, endowed with a capacity to judge the countenance of people, their character-features, their rank and state, to have a knowledge of analogy (*qiyās*) and an acquaintance with the principles (*uṣūl*) of oneiromancy.¹⁸

Again, such statements remind us that the profession of dream interpretation is cast in preference for a male practitioner. The professional interpreter seems to be at once a religious scholar and a connoisseur of his culture, as well as of people. Such scholarly consensus to define the practice of dream interpreting as a formal science has significant gender implications, as it may have contributed to marginalize the practice of female interpreters who lacked such training.

Just like other canonical religious sciences, dream interpreting also developed its own parameters of interpretation as well as its own biographical narrative. Following the canonical model of the science of the principles of jurisprudence (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), the science of dream interpretation also developed its own principles of interpretation (*uṣūl al-ta'bīr*) inscribed by male scholars who pronounced its interpretive rules. The tradition also produced its own specialized biographical dictionaries (*ṭabaqāt al-mu'abbirīn*), classifying its interpreters according to chronological categories that stretch back as far as pre-Islamic times.¹⁹

¹⁸M. J. Kister, "The Interpretation of Dreams: An Unknown Manuscript of Ibn Qutayba's *Ibārat al-ru'yā*," in his collected volume entitled *Society and Religion from Jāhiliyya to Islam* (Hampshire, 1990), 75.

¹⁹See *Ṭabaqāt al-Mu'abbirīn* by al-Ḥasan ibn Ḥusayn al-Khallāl (before 400/1000), which al-Nābulusī summarizes in his dream text *Ta'fīr*, 355. On al-Khallāl, see Fahd, "The Dream in Medieval Islamic Society," 359. Al-Khallāl's biographical text of dream interpreters comprises fifteen categories (*ṭabaqah*), bestowing top ranking to monotheistic prophets, such as Abraham, Joseph, and Muḥammad. The Medina Companions of the Prophet and their followers occupy the second and third categories. Interpreters from the earliest generations of pious Muslim scholars (*al-fuqahā'*) and ascetics (*al-zuhhād*) follow these, then Arab-speaking master interpreters, authoring the earliest written texts of dreams. In this category, the ancient Greek interpreter Artimedorous and the Arab speaking Ibn Sīrīn rank the highest. Philosophers and physicians versed in the Hellenistic tradition come next in importance, followed by famous interpreters from the Jewish, Christian, and Magian religious traditions. Lastly, Arab pagan interpreters, soothsayers (*al-kahanah*) and specialists in physiognomy (*al-fīrāsah*) are ranked in the lowest categories. A special status seems to be bestowed on Greek interpreters in this hierarchy, for they are ranked above their Jewish, Christian, and Magian counterparts, and honored with a category separate from other pagan interpreters. This is an implicit recognition on the part of Arab interpreters of the importance



While Ibn Sīrīn's and Ibn Shāhīn's dream texts demonstrate that pre-Islamic Arab, Greek, and Persian master interpreters were incorporated as authoritative sources, a monotheistic, and more particularly, an Arab-Islamic preference is to be noted. Understandably, Arab Muslim interpreters used their own cultural iconography as the primary source for interpreting dreams encoded in the Arabic language. This may be readily seen in the primacy given to the Quran and hadith, to classical Arabic poetry, and to popular sayings (*al-amthāl al-sā'idah*, *al-amthāl al-mubtadhalah*).²⁰ Yet this did not preclude dream interpreters from freely using the wisdom and knowledge of ancient masters, such as Artemidorous, for they continued to believe that these classical traditions conveyed universal truths about human dreams and experiences. This is evident not only from the numerous bibliographical references to be found in our dream texts, but also from what dream specialists say about the ancient principles of interpretation. Ibn Sīrīn tells us that "the ancient principles of dream interpretation (*uṣūl al-ru'yā al-qadīmah*) have not changed, but it is people's conditions that constantly change with regard to their daily worries, manners, and their preference for the mundane as opposed to the sacred."²¹ Likewise, but much later, al-Nābulusī modestly states that his work is simply a synthesis of earlier texts, to which he added little.²² Despite this respect for early authority, interpreters seem to have been equally aware that interpreting dream symbols was not a fixed or mechanical exercise. For we are told that "dream interpreters invented innumerable ways of interpretation which are always subject to new additions, depending on the knowledge of the interpreter, his sharp perception and intuition."²³ Two complementary views may be seen here, one respectful of the ancient tradition, the other giving more leeway to the creativity of the individual interpreter. To come up with the best interpretation possible, the interpreter was probably expected to combine both, his creative intuition and his thorough knowledge of interpretive principles.

Not all dreams possess a predictive value, for many were classified as muddled dreams unworthy of the interpretive endeavor. Dreams of predictive value were classified into two categories: the non-allegorical dream, which is straightforward and does not need interpretation, and the allegorical dream which makes use of ambiguous symbols to convey its message. It is the latter type of dream that demanded the attention of the interpreter. But this was no simple matter, for symbols often conveyed rich and contradictory meanings. The interpreter's awareness of the elusive nature of a symbol, one that defies precise and simple

of Greek influence on their tradition.

²⁰ Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 3–4.

²¹ Ibid., 13.

²² Al-Nābulusī, *Ta'fīr*, 351.

²³ Ibid., 8; see also Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 6.



definitions, explains the relative flexibility adopted in decoding it, and thus it was agreed that more than one interpretation could always be possible. While interpreters assumed the principle that a symbol must in some way be related to the meaning, as connoisseurs of culture, they also recognized that symbols did not possess fixed intrinsic meanings, and therefore they perceived them as culturally specific constructs. The interpreter came to understand this to be an important working principle. Thus in his discussion on how to interpret dream symbols, al-Nābulusī stresses the significance of the cultural factor, which in turn is defined by such variables as geographical location and climate:

Know that the soil of each country is different from others, due to the differences in water, wind, and geographical location. This explains why the interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of every group of interpreters from the community of unbelievers and Muslims differs according to variations in character and geography. For example, if a dreamer living in a hot country dreams of snow or ice, this signifies famine and high prices, but in a cold country, it may signify prosperity and wealth.²⁴

In another passage al-Nābulusī stresses the significance of cultural difference, pointing to variations in religious morality and people's customs (*'ādāt al-nās*) as important principles to be considered in interpreting symbols:

For example, if one dreams of wine, it is interpreted as illegal wealth for those who consider it a forbidden object, but as a blessing for those who do not. Similarly, if a woman dreams that she is committing adultery in the mosque, this would signify a great evil or misfortune in Muslim culture. In contrast, the same image in Indian religious culture would signify worship and virtue. This is because the sexual act in Indian culture is linked to the sacred, and hence receives approval.²⁵

Here al-Nābulusī aptly demonstrates how symbols are culturally constructed, confirming the presence of a dynamic, interactive relationship between symbolic language and the social ground which informs it.

The idiosyncratic factor is another important principle in interpreting dream symbols. Relevant personal details relating to the dreamer's life must be revealed

²⁴ Al-Nābulusī, *Ta'fīr*, 5.

²⁵ Ibid., 360–61.



in order for the dream to be aptly interpreted. As with culture, the meaning of a symbol may also differ along idiosyncratic or personal lines. The pomegranate, for instance, may signify multiple meanings. Round and impregnated with seeds, the fruit is readily used as a symbol of femininity. Thus for the sultan, the pomegranate in his dream signifies a city to rule; for the single man, it is a wife or concubine; while for the pregnant woman, it is a female baby.²⁶ Sultan to city, man to wife or concubine, mother to baby, are all pairs in which the first party dominates the second, revealing the constructed power dynamics in play.

Interpreters also resorted to interpreting the linguistic signifier (*al-ta'wīl bi-al-asmā'*) as a way of understanding dream symbols; thus we are told that if one dreams of a bird with a feminine name like *al-ansīyah*, a derivative from the Arabic root *uns* (intimacy), it is interpreted as a symbol of a friendly woman.²⁷ However, interpreting the signified meaning (*al-ta'wīl bi-al-ma'nā*)²⁸ seems to have been the most commonly-used method, primarily mediated through the logic of analogy (*al-qiyās*).²⁹ A mountain in a dream may thus be likened to the erect phallus, not because of its lexical root, but because of the shared attribute of erectness.

In addition, dream interpreters adopted an overall system of taxonomy which proved quite useful in examining dream symbols, and which further informs us of their methodological principles of interpretation. Such taxonomy is made up of three differentiating categories: genus (*al-jins*); type (*al-ṣinf*); and behavioral nature (*al-ṭab'*).³⁰ Accordingly, trees, animals, and birds may be classified under different genus categories. The latter is further sub-divided into two more categories: type and nature. What follows is an example of how the palm tree may be interpreted. Given their erectness, all trees (as genus) are constructed as masculine symbols, and since the palm tree grows in the territory of the Arabs, it is used to signify an Arab male. To define the behavioral traits of the palm tree, interpreters refer to Quranic iconography, which describes the tree as noble and giving. Hence the palm tree in a dream is said to signify a generous and pleasant-natured Arab man. In Table 1, I would like to demonstrate the rationale of this taxonomy and its significance in relation to the classification of birds, which will be examined later in greater detail.

²⁶For more details on the multiple meanings of the pomegranate, see Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 5.

²⁷Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 298.

²⁸Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 8.

²⁹Ibid., 10.

³⁰Ibid., 10–11.



Table 1: Bird Taxonomy

| | | |
|----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| Genus: | | |
| Bird | | |
| Type: | | |
| | Predatory | Non-predatory |
| | Falcon | Dove |
| Nature: | | |
| | swift | slow |
| | aggressive | peaceful |
| | powerful | domesticated |

Here we see how the bird as a genus is classified according to two different main types, predatory and non-predatory. Perceived as swift, aggressive, and powerful, the falcon is classified as predatory, while perceived as peaceful, slow, and domesticated, the dove is classified as non-predatory. What is more relevant to our analysis is to explore how the text uses such behavioral patterns in constructing the gender of birds. In defining docility as a feminine trait, our interpreters consistently construct the dove as feminine. Conversely, constructing aggressiveness as a masculine trait, the falcon is assigned masculinity. Clearly, such an interpretation reflects the interpreter's cultural assumptions with regard to gender roles, and confirms the close connection between symbols and the cultural ground that informs them. The examples of the falcon and the dove are also useful in demonstrating what medieval Arab-Muslim culture perceives to be the "normative" feminine and masculine behavioral traits. Moreover, the construction of such a sharp opposition between the essential feminine and masculine traits demonstrates how this culture defines the constitutive difference between femininity and masculinity.

Further examination of how the dream text genders other symbols shows that it is not always immediately clear why different symbols such as the horse, lion, mountain, tree, and predatory birds are all used to signify masculinity. Here we need to understand how the symbolic language of dreams creates relations of resemblance or association between objects that may seem far apart. Symbols such as the lion, wolf, and predatory birds share the qualities of power, swift movement, and aggressiveness, and therefore are constructed as masculine traits which constitute the cultural model of masculinity. Similarly, the horse, being closely associated with masculine martial behavior in medieval Arab culture, is used to signify masculinity. In the same vein, given that mountain, tree, spear, and dagger share the qualities of hardness and erectness, they are readily likened to the erect male sexual organ, and therefore are constructed as symbols of masculinity.



In such cases analogy is based on either resemblance or association.

Woman is also symbolized by diverse objects, such as the saddle, ship, glove, *sirwāl*, non-predatory birds, and cattle. The saddle and ship metaphors are likened to the image of the conventional female sexual posture in relation to the male, while the glove is likened to the enveloping womb of the female. The *sirwāl*, typical attire of Arab-Muslim medieval women, having become so closely associated with the female body, is metonymically used to signify woman. The symbol of the cow is commonly used as the archetypal feminine symbol, evoking the female role of the good, docile, and nurturing mother.³¹ Dream interpreters use docility and gentleness as essential behavioral traits of the female, and thus animals that exhibit "passive" behavior are almost always used as symbols for women and occasionally for children. Interestingly, the inverse notion of the predatory woman may also be detected in the dream text, and as we shall see in the following section, the symbol of the wild and untamed female bird (signifying woman) seems to always receive negative recognition.

THE STRUCTURING OF THE BIRD KINGDOM

The bird often appears as a favorite topos in the medieval Arabic literary tradition.³² Here, I would like to examine how our interpreters constructed the bird kingdom as a sort of metaphorical reflection of human social hierarchy, and how they constructed correspondences between behavioral patterns on the one hand, and

³¹Ibid.

³²There are numerous examples of classical Arabic and Persian works which use bird or animal motifs in their literary works. *Kalīlah wa-Dimnah*, a literary fable in which animals play the role of human actors, became a classic shortly after its translation into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa'. The famous ninth-century scholar and writer al-Jāhīz also wrote another Arabic classic on animals which he entitled *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* (The book of animals) and which is considered a masterpiece of both Arabic literature and zoology. Medieval Sufi writers often used animals and birds as important metaphors in their spiritual teachings. Persian Sufis such as 'Aṭṭār and Rūmī are important in this respect; the former wrote a brilliant work devoted totally to the quest of the birds to discover the Divine, which he entitled *Manṭiq al-Ṭayr* (The conference of the birds). Ikhwān al-Ṣafā' also used animals as allegorical characters in their pedagogical treatises, the most famous of these being the one entitled *Tadā'ī al-Ḥayawān* (The complaint of animals), which Denys Johnson-Davies has translated into English as *The Island of Animals* (Austin, 1994). In addition there is also a rich zoological literary tradition that deals with the animal kingdom, and in which Arab-Muslim zoologists used cultural and scientific data to describe the animals. An example of such classical works is the one written by the fourteenth-century zoologist Muḥammad ibn Maḥmūd al-Qazwīnī, which he entitled *'Ajā'ib al-Makhlūqāt* (The wonders of created beings); the fifteenth-century author Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Damīrī wrote another classical zoological work, entitled *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān* (The life of the animal). Such zoological studies contain large sections on birds, which also include an examination of the symbolic significance of birds in dreams. The works of both al-Qazwīnī and al-Damīrī are available in one edition (Cairo, 1978).



gender or social roles on the other. By way of introduction, I would like to give a brief synthesis of the principles of bird interpretation (*uṣūl ta'wīl al-ṭayr*) as expounded by both Ibn Sīrīn and Ibn Shāhīn.³³

Anonymous birds (*al-ṭuyūr al-majhūlah*) are variously interpreted as the human spirit, the angel of death, or simply as human deeds. Given the taboo against usage of the figurative to signify the Divine, Muslim interpreters have censored this ancient symbolic meaning in their text.

The behavioral nature of birds, and sometimes their size, are used to determine both their gender and social status. Predatory birds in general are gendered as masculine, and predictably, the most powerful or aggressive of these birds often denote the highest social status. On the other hand, non-predatory birds may be gendered as both masculine and feminine, but some are viewed as more feminine and others as more masculine. Birds that devour dead corpses, or steal things that belong to others, signify outcasts or criminals who subvert social boundaries, and thus signify deviant masculine types. Small size birds may sometimes signify lowly or parasitic status; thus they are the lowliest (*al-arādhīl*) of the bird kingdom. They are also interpreted as female slaves, servants, or children, but more frequently as male rather than female children.

Birds that fly close to the ground, and hence are more easily domesticated, are almost always gendered as feminine. Water birds are mostly gendered as feminine, but they also signify nobility, wealth, and fertility, for they control two domains, air and water.

Movement or flying indicate acquisition or loss of status, travel, or death, depending on the bird's gender. Birds that possess the capacity of flying long distances are exclusively gendered as male birds. Conversely, a female bird flying away from home may indicate divorce or separation, or death, hence loss of status for the male.

Possession of a large numbers of birds may indicate both power and wealth. Similarly, their flesh, bones, and feathers indicate economic status.

The act of slaughtering or cutting a female bird, a common dream motif in our bird text, signifies the deflowering of a female virgin in the sexual act. The slaughtering of the female bird is understood as a masculine act of conquest of the female body. Conversely, the slaughtering or capturing of a male bird signifies the defeat of a male opponent, hence equating male sexuality with power and conquest.

Catching or hunting a female bird signifies marriage or union with a woman. But if this involves a male bird it signifies victory, power, and wealth for the victorious male hunter. A similar interpretive rationale may be detected here, however, since interpreters also interpret marriage as power and wealth for the

³³Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 146; Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 303–4, 356.



male. Thus, for the male hunter, catching a female or a male bird carries similar connotations in terms of social status.

Bird eggs are interpreted variously as women, children, and family; a large number of eggs may signify wealth.

Color is often used to signify social status; thus the whiteness of a dove or a duck may signify high social status.

Drawing on both dream texts, I have a sample of seventy-six different bird types, constituting what our interpreters call the bird kingdom. Bird entries differ greatly in size, and depending on the symbolic significance of the bird in question, these may vary between two words and a paragraph. The crow, though perceived as the least favored predatory bird by both Ibn Sīrīn and Ibn Shāhīn, occupies the longest entry in their bird narrative, for it is assigned the significant social role of the extreme "other," the archetypal evil male. In collating the two bird texts, I observed that Ibn Shāhīn's narrative is more systematically structured than Ibn Sīrīn's, suggesting perhaps a later textual maturity that is absent in the earlier text. But it may also be that Ibn Shāhīn's membership in the Mamluk establishment could have made him more conscious of the significance of social hierarchy, which in turn becomes reflected in his structuring of the bird kingdom narrative. Both texts, however, seem to assume, and thus reify, some sort of hierarchy in the kingdom of birds, just as would be assumed for human society.

Some difference in bird taxonomy is observed between the two texts. Whereas Ibn Sīrīn's bird text is more or less organized around three categories: wild birds (*al-waḥshīyah*), domestic birds (*al-ahlīyah*), and water-birds (*al-mā'īyah*), Ibn Shāhīn's taxonomy seems to be based more on aggressive power and its absence. The latter's entire system of bird classification appears to be based on whether birds have the power to aggress or not. Thus predatory birds (*al-ṭuyūr al-jawāriḥ*) occupy the top category, followed by non-predatory birds (*al-ṭuyūr al-khārijah 'an al-jawāriḥ*), and finally by the category of small birds (*al-'aṣāfīr*).³⁴ Bird power is primarily defined by such traits as size, physical strength, aggressiveness, and swift capacity of movement, as well as intelligence. It follows then that birds exhibiting these traits are classified as the most powerful and deserving of high status. More important for our gender analysis is the fact that the most powerful birds are almost always defined as symbols of masculinity, while those least exhibiting of such powers signify femininity, or persons of lower social status, such as servants, slaves, youth, or children, confirming that woman as a social category is perceived to be of a lower status than man. In the following statement, Ibn Sīrīn aptly demonstrates how the socially constructed informs the bird narrative:

³⁴See Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 146; Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 295.



The bird is a man among men, whose status corresponds to a specific bird among birds, depending on his capacity, weaponry, power, feathers, and his ability to fly and soar in the sky. Known birds are therefore interpreted according to their power. Thus large and predatory birds signify the kings, the leaders, the notables, the scholars, and the wealthy. As for corpse-eaters, like the crow, the kite, and the vulture, these are trespassers, thieves, and evil. Water birds signify noble people (*ashraf*), who obtain high status through two powers, the power of water and wind. They may also signify male travelers by land or sea. . . . Birds who sing or wail signify people who sing or wail, be they masculine or feminine birds. As for small birds, such as sparrows and nightingales, these are young males.³⁵

This allocation of gender or social roles, however, does not seem to be as rigidly defined as Ibn Sīrīn would like us to believe. For on closer analysis we can detect shifting definitions in the gendering process. And while these may not appear to be remarkable in themselves, they allow us to understand the rationale behind such flexibility. Both seem to agree on assigning masculinity to the most powerful of the predatory birds. They disagree only on three predators, which turn out to be the least significant of them. Thus, whereas Ibn Sīrīn assigns neutrality to the owl, Ibn Shāhīn assigns it masculinity. Ibn Sīrīn assigns both femininity and masculinity to the kite, Ibn Shāhīn assigns it masculinity. There is also disagreement on the vulture. Defined as neutral by Ibn Sīrīn, it is described as a stupid and useless woman by Ibn Shāhīn (*al-mar'ah al-balhā' al-qalīlat al-fā'idah*), suggesting a negativity with regard to predatory birds gendered in the feminine.³⁶

Likewise with non-predatory birds, out of seventeen cases, five are differently gendered by our two interpreters. For instance, the gendering of the sandgrouse (*al-quṭāh*) is inverted; Ibn Sīrīn assigns it femininity, the other masculinity.³⁷ The case of the pheasant (*al-tadruj*) is also interesting for us, for Ibn Sīrīn tells us that this bird underwent transformation from a domestic to a big wild bird, hence changing from a female to a male bird.³⁸ On the whole, it may be argued that a sharp gender dichotomy is mostly reproduced with regard to the most aggressive or the most docile birds. However, when bird traits seem to be more ambiguous in

³⁵ Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 151, 146.

³⁶ Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 298; Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 148.

³⁷ Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 146; Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 298.

³⁸ Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 147, 149.



terms of defining gender construction, this bipolarity becomes less clear, permitting simultaneous gendering, flexibility, and even reversals in roles.

PREDATORY BIRDS

As mentioned earlier, hierarchy is most emphasized among predatory birds, especially by Ibn Shāhīn, who carefully places the masculine-gendered falcon at the top and the feminine vulture at the bottom.³⁹ In contrast, the vulture in Ibn Sīrīn's text is not even given a specified place within the constructed hierarchy of predatory birds, for even though it is considered a predator, it is textually placed in the midst of non-predatory birds.⁴⁰ In total, out of sixteen predatory birds, eleven are identified as masculine, three as feminine, and two as masculine and feminine simultaneously. Both interpreters define the most powerful of the predatory birds as royal masculine archetypes. We are told that they are the kings and masters of the bird kingdom. Ranked at the top of this category are the three predatory birds: the falcon, the eagle, and the hawk. The textual language used by our interpreters is noteworthy, for the Arabic terms *mulūk wa-asyād al-ṭuyūr* (the kings and lords of birds) clearly reproduce the same linguistic terms that are used to refer to kingship and nobility in medieval Arab-Muslim society. A number of common traits describe these masculine-gendered predatory birds, which appear to be the very same traits constituting the male stereotype: physical power, aggressiveness, courage, swift and powerful movement, honor, respect, spirituality, and intelligence.⁴¹ However, parallel to these positive traits of masculinity, there is an underside that is negatively perceived in the text. This is detected in the usage of highly negative traits to describe most of these masculine-gendered birds, such as stubbornness, injustice, oppressiveness, deceit, religiosity, and theft.⁴² Interestingly, both dream texts seem to view masculine power in suspicious terms, reflecting a strong fear of the powerful male figure whose abuse of power may violate the patriarchal norms of society. Two of the three royal birds appear to be constructed as symbols of degenerate power, whose strength is based more on oppressive physical force and usurpation than on justice. In this bird imagery, the ancient link between divinity and kingship seems to have been lost, revealing instead a low opinion of kingship. The eagle, though, deserves special attention, for it uniquely combines the attributes of power, honor, and spirituality, making it a more appropriate symbol of ideal royal masculinity. Absence of these royal birds as signifiers of the ancient goddess-queen must be noted, for these powerful

³⁹ Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 296.

⁴⁰ Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 148.

⁴¹ Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 295–96; Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 146–47.

⁴² Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 146.



bird types appear to signify exclusively masculine as opposed to feminine power, suggesting that royal power in medieval Arab-Muslim culture was ideally perceived in masculine terms only.

While the eagle is constructed as the ideal masculine prototype within the kingdom of predatory birds, the crow is depicted as the male villain par excellence. Both dream interpreters employ strong negative terms to describe the crow, for it commits the worst of social crimes: trespassing and disrupting social boundaries. It is described as a murderer, an adulterer, an unjust sultan, and a thief. Furthermore, its name (*al-ghurāb*) signifies, through its etymology, that it is the ultimate "other" or stranger (*al-gharīb*), whose presence signifies corruption in both the domestic and public spaces. Ibn Sīrīn tell us that "if a man dreams that a crow is in his house, it signifies both an attack from the sultan and a man betraying him with his wife."⁴³ Why is the crow chosen to signify the archetypal male villain? It turns out that in actuality the bird eats anything and attacks birds' nests to eat their eggs and young ones.⁴⁴ Though a large variety of traits are used to describe the crow, the bird is rarely assigned femininity. It represents a negative masculinity which violates social boundaries, and hence its denunciation in the two dream texts.⁴⁵

Predatory birds gendered in the feminine signify the prototype of the evil or the useless woman. However, woman-as-predator makes only fleeting appearances in the bird texts under study, and when she does, she is portrayed negatively. Given that social norms equate ideal femininity with passivity, this may explain why Ibn Shāhīn establishes a direct correlation between the trait of wildness and the negative traits of evilness or stupidity in woman. As we have seen earlier, Ibn Shāhīn defines the vulture (*al-riḫmah*) as a stupid and useless woman. As for the gold crest (*al-ṣafāwah*) it signifies for him a chaotic woman who commits ugly actions, particularly if the bird is wild (*mudabbirah sayyi'ah, dhāt af'āl qabīḥah khuṣūṣan in kānat barrīyah*).⁴⁶ If wild predatory birds are free-moving and able to fly long distances, hence uncontrollable, we can understand why they are more readily constructed as symbols signifying the feminine figure of disorder, depicted as evil, treacherous, disastrous, disorganized, useless, sinful, stupid, and finally,

⁴³Ibid., 149.

⁴⁴Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 297.

⁴⁵Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 146; Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 296. Other masculine-gendered predatory birds used as symbols signifying different male types are the petty prince, the irreligious scholar, the thief, and the soldier; most share the essential trait of physical aggression. Once again, adjectives describing these figures appear to be predominantly negative; they are depicted as envious, corrupt, destructive, sinful, vain, untrustworthy, and lazy. Cleverness and self-control seem to be the only two positively-constructed traits in this group of male predatory birds.

⁴⁶Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 146; Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 296.



predictive of misfortune.⁴⁷ For both interpreters, however, predatory birds generally signify human figures of power and evil, causing tyranny and brutality in the world (*al-ẓulmah wa-al-ghashmah*). Such acts, however, are predominantly perceived as man's rather than woman's domain of activities.⁴⁸

NON-PREDATORY BIRDS

Non-predatory birds are also gendered according to what is socially perceived as feminine or masculine, belonging to either high or low social status. Among the masculine-gendered birds, the cock, the peacock, and the griffin signify the status of petty kings and the wealthy. Similarly, among the feminine-gendered birds, the dove, duck, and goose signify women of wealth and nobility.⁴⁹ In between, there is a wide variety of birds, representing various urban social classes. Dream language has even invented bird symbols signifying the riffraff of society (*al-arādhil*). Tables 2 and 3 are specifically constructed to demonstrate which of these non-predatory birds are gendered as masculine or feminine.

Table 2: Non-Predatory Masculine-Gendered Birds

| Bird Type | Signified Activity | Attributes |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Cock (<i>al-dīk</i>) | petty prince, religious scholar, muezzin, soldier, chief male slave | courageous, honest, pious, evil |
| Starling (<i>al-zarzūr</i>) | male traveler, ascetic | irreligious, untrustworthy, liar, infidel, thin |
| Hoopoe (<i>al-hudhud</i>) | male traveler, scholar | perceptive, knowledgeable, highly professional, irreligious |
| Blackbird (<i>al-shuḥrūr</i>) | ascetic monk, captive lover | |
| Parrot (<i>al-babaghā'</i>) | slave merchant, philosopher | unjust, liar |

⁴⁷ See cases of other female birds signifying evil and misfortune in Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 296.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 298–303.



| | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Stork (<i>al-luqluq</i>) | noble man, weak king, peasant, guardian, ascetic | harmless, respectable, wise, strange |
| Partridge (<i>al-ya'qūb</i>) | man of war, soldier | |
| Palm dove (<i>al-dubsī</i>) | preacher | |
| Swan (<i>al-tamm</i>) | petty king | |
| Quail (<i>al-summānī</i>) | male servant, male youth (<i>ghulām</i>) | |

Table 2 depicts masculine-gendered birds signifying males who represent a wide range of urban professions, such as the petty prince or king, the soldier, the scholar, the intellectual, the ascetic monk, the philosopher, the preacher, the muezzin, the traveler, the merchant, the broker, as well as the slave and servant. Only in one instance do we encounter the solitary figure of the peasant, betraying the urban bias of our texts. Male figures of high power and wealth appear less prominently here than they did among predatory bird types. Instead, we see a predominance of the intellectual and religious professions among these non-predatory birds. The gendering of the long-distance traveling bird in the masculine deserves special attention. Though delicate in size and gentle in behavior, birds such as the hoopoe and the starling are known to fly long distances, and hence are gendered in the masculine, again demonstrating how the text reflects the normative in gendering social space. Both dream interpreters appear to reinforce the notion of public space as the legitimate and primary domain of the male. With the exception of the starling that is said to signify a thin man, little interest is expressed in describing the physical attributes of the male body. More interest is reflected in attributes reflecting economic, social, and ethnic status. Thus some figures appear as rich, noble, powerful, poor, or of slave origin, and are simultaneously depicted in ethnic terms such as the Iraqi, the Arab, and the Persian.⁵⁰ It is interesting to note here that the appearance of such varied ethnic categories seems to be more characteristic of Ibn Sīrīn's text than Ibn Shāhīn's, reflecting perhaps the existence of a wider range of ethnicity in Ibn Sīrīn's socio-historical context.

⁵⁰For more details on ethnic identities, see Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 146–51, and Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 295–305.



Table 3: Non-Predatory Feminine-Gendered Birds

| Bird | Profession/status | Attributes |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Dove (<i>al-ḥamāmah</i>) | slave, noble | virtuous, good, faithful to spouse, most beloved by man |
| Goose (<i>al-awz</i>) | noble, wealthy | corpulent, fertile body |
| Duck (<i>al-baṭṭ</i>) | white: noble, wealthy black: slave | fertile |
| Chicken (<i>al-dajājah</i>) | slave, domestic servant | beautiful, frivolous, virgin |
| Ring-dove (<i>al-fākhīyah</i>) | -- | evil, unfriendly, defective in religion, domineering, liar, unveiled around people |
| Partridge (<i>al-ḥijlā</i>) | slave | beautiful woman, unfriendly, wild |
| <i>Al-ansīyah</i> (?) | | friendly, sharp, coherent mind, good, harmless |
| Woodpecker (<i>al-shufraq</i>) | rich | beautiful |
| Sandpiper (<i>al-ṭīṭawá</i>) | slave | virgin |
| <i>Al-ḥurayrah</i> (?) | slave | black |
| Turtledove (<i>al-qumrīyah</i>) | -- | pious |
| Dipper (<i>al-ghaṭṭās</i>) | -- | religious |

An almost equal number of non-predatory birds are gendered as feminine by our two interpreters. These seem to be depicted more in terms of their character traits and physical attributes, rather than by their vocational activities. The few, but most typical, female activities that appear in this table are the wife, slave, servant, and the "beloved" of man, reflecting characters defined in relation to the male and



the household. The figure of the wealthy woman is signified by such birds as the goose, the duck, and the dove. Color seems to be used as a sign of status; thus in the case of the duck, white stands for the noble and wealthy woman, whereas black stands for a fertile slave. As with the masculine-gendered birds, feminine traits are described in oppositional terms: virtuous, pious, good, faithful, and friendly, as opposed to frivolous, unfriendly, evil, domineering, unveiled, and irreligious. In only one case is she described by her intellectual capacity: the *ansīyah* signifies a woman with a sharp and coherent mind. In contrast to the male birds, depictions of the body abound in this small sample, revealing an emphasis on the female body and its sexuality. Thus it is described as beautiful, fertile, corpulent, unveiled, and most importantly as virginal. Male dreams depicted in the bird narrative seem to confirm that virginity is a highly prized trait in the female. Imagery of possessing, hunting, or slaughtering the virginal slave or woman abounds in dreams of domestic birds.⁵¹ And as we shall see later, this is also a common feature in the dream chapters dealing with man, woman, slaves, and sexuality.

Among the feminine-gendered birds, both the dove and the streptopelia or wild dove (*al-fākhīyah*) deserve special attention, for they are constructed as opposite feminine prototypes. The dove, archaic symbol of feminine divinity and the spirit, is perceived here as the noble, virtuous woman, and most importantly, as the good and faithful wife. The wild dove on the other hand is constructed as the evil woman par excellence. Arab zoologists depict this bird as a liar that possesses a sharp voice and is most feared by snakes.⁵² Like the predatory bird *al-ṣafāwah* whom we have encountered earlier, *al-fākhīyah* is described in negative terms, as a woman who is untamed, irreligious, and who does not cover her body before strangers. But most importantly, she is a woman possessing an unrestrained tongue (*salīyah*). It is interesting to note that the word *salāyah* comes from the verb *tasallāyah*, and it is also related to the noun *sultān*. In contrast to masculine power, primarily defined in our bird text in terms of physical force and aggression, this feminine trait of *salāyah* (absence of restraint) is linked to the power of the tongue (*salāyah al-lisān*), a trait that seems to be most feared in women. According to medieval Arabic lexicography a person who possesses *salāyah* is defined as someone who possesses a strong, firm, glib, sharp, loose, and vicious tongue.⁵³ Thus the aggressive-tongued woman is perceived as a powerful and therefore dangerous character; so threatening is she to man that elsewhere in our dream text we are told that "if a man dreams of a woman who is *salīyah* his dream signifies that he

⁵¹ Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 300, 302; Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 150.

⁵² Al-Damīrī, *Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān*, 2:135.

⁵³ Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb al-Fīrūzābādī, *Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* (Cairo, 1911), 2:363.



will be killed.”⁵⁴ Inasmuch as dream language seems also to establish a close correspondence between the tongue and the phallus as symbols of sexual power,⁵⁵ the *fākhītah* becomes most feared because her “long tongue” may be considered as a weapon that corresponds to and therefore threatens male sexual power. Both the *ṣafāwah* and the *fākhītah* signify two of the most threatening feminine traits, wildness and verbal aggressiveness, and are therefore perceived as disruptive figures that contest normative gender roles.⁵⁶ The *fākhītah* and the *ṣafāwah*, however, are more exceptions to the rule, for birds that are gendered as feminine typically share the common trait of gentleness, and hence are constructed as symbols of domesticity. Among these, the dove, duck, goose, and chicken represent the archetypal feminine sacrificial birds, restricted in mobility, and most ubiquitous within the domestic space.⁵⁷

Non-predatory birds may also be simultaneously gendered as masculine and feminine. Understanding the rationale behind this simultaneous gendering is equally important because it may help us to find out why our interpreters no longer observe the sharp dividing lines between birds exclusively gendered as masculine or feminine. In Table 4, I would like to correlate these simultaneous traits so as to examine the blurred or gray areas in gender construction.

Table 4: Simultaneous Gendering of Non-Predatory Birds

| Bird | Male Attributes | Female Attributes |
|--------------------------------|---|--|
| Pheasant (<i>al-tadruj</i>) | deceitful | beautiful |
| Griffin (<i>al-‘anqā’</i>) | heretic, noble easygoing, reasonable | beautiful noble, reasonable, pleasant |
| Francolin (<i>al-durrāj</i>) | mamluk, treacherous, infidel | Persian, treacherous |
| Ostrich (<i>al-na‘āmah</i>) | eunuch | bedouin |

⁵⁴Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 129.

⁵⁵See Gouda, *Dreams and Their Meanings*, section on the tongue, 421; Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 79–80.

⁵⁶Oberhelman discusses the image of the “talkative woman” and how it provokes men; see “Hierarchies of Gender, Ideology, and Power,” 92. Also, in her study *Tales of Sex and Violence*, 102, O’Flaherty discusses the threatening power of “long-tongued” women depicted in Vedic texts. We may also find a similar attitude to the “long-tongued” woman in Shaykh Nafzāwī’s classical text on sexuality, *The Perfumed Garden*, trans. Richard Burton (New Jersey, 1964), 37, 109.

⁵⁷Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 302; for other examples, see *ibid.*, 300.



| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Nightingale I (<i>al-‘andalīb</i>) | singer, Quranic reciter | eloquent and pleasant |
| Nightingale II (<i>al-bulbul</i>) | rich, Quranic reciter | rich woman |
| Nightingale III (<i>al-hazār</i>) | boy singer, Quranic reciter, eloquent cultured scholar | good looking, good voice, slave singer |
| Swallow (<i>al-sunūnū</i>) | male slave, Quranic reciter, pious man of culture, rich, stupid | slave, rich |
| Peacock (<i>al-ṭāwūs</i>) | noble Persian or Persian king | beautiful noble Persian, slave girl, corrupt woman |
| Sparrow (<i>al-‘uṣfūr</i>) | big, dangerous man, rich and of high status | beautiful |
| Pelican (<i>al-baja‘ah</i>) | judge | uncouth, gluttonous |
| Bustard (<i>al-ḥubārā</i>) | wealthy, generous, gluttonous | butcher, wealthy |
| Bat (<i>al-khuffāsh</i>) | ascetic monk | sorceress |
| Parrot (<i>al-durrah</i>) | good servant, ascetic | virgin |

Table 4 shows that more activities and professions are assigned to the male as opposed to the female of the same bird type. In addition to some male figures of authority, such as the petty king, the vizier, the judge, and the soldier, we encounter a few male figures of wealth and noble status. But what is worth observing here is the prevalence of male figures of cultural, spiritual, and artistic inclinations, such as the singer, the Quranic reciter, the heretic, the eloquent scholar, the eunuch, and the ascetic.⁵⁸ Figures of a lower status may also be found among these male types. More female vocational activities appear in this sample. In addition to the

⁵⁸See Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 148–51; Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 298–303.



wife, the beloved of man, the domestic slave, and servant, we encounter for the first time the female slave singer, the female butcher (*al-laḥḥāmāh*), and the sorceress, figures that may be considered of a lower social status. Table 4 also shows that beauty and other physical descriptions recur as the most common description of the female figure. The dream text establishes a close link between the trait of female physical immodesty (*lā tastatir amāma al-nās*) on the one hand, and corruption or treachery on the other, suggesting that the unveiled woman is perceived as a corrupt figure in her social surroundings. This is confirmed elsewhere in the chapter on animals in our dream texts, where the she-goat is singled out as signifying a corrupt woman who shamelessly exhibits her body.⁵⁹ Different social status and ethnic categories appear to closely intersect here; thus the female is depicted variously as wealthy, noble, or poor, as well as of bedouin, Arab, or Persian origins. Once again, Ibn Sīrīn's bird text makes more references to ethnicity than does Ibn Shāhīn's.

A closer examination of these simultaneously-gendered bird types help us in understanding how feminine and masculine traits correlate. Whereas the male bat is cast as an ascetic (*nāsik*), his female counterpart is cast as a sorceress (*sāḥirah*), assigning a dangerous spirituality to woman, but a more respectable one to man. Likewise, the bird text casts the male pelican as a judge, but denies this to his female counterpart; instead she is perceived as an uncouth and gluttonous woman. Equally interesting is the case of the parrot, which, as a male bird, signifies a religious or ascetic man, but as a female bird, signifies a virgin. This parallelism between female virginity and male asceticism is confirmed elsewhere in the bird text, allowing us to observe how the dream text differently perceives male and female states of purity.⁶⁰ Table 4 also suggests a correlation between the feminine attribute of beauty and masculine attributes such as deceit, heresy, innovation, wealth, and danger, revealing a fear and suspicion of physical beauty as an attribute of female power. In some cases, though, similar traits are assigned to both the male and female bird; thus the *hazār*, a type of nightingale, signifies both a boy singer and a female slave singer, indicating a close connection between lower social status and the profession of singing, as well as the equally low status of children and women. Equating women with children is a stereotype which is repeatedly found in our dream texts, and which is confirmed by the insistence of existing legal and social norms within medieval Arab-Muslim culture that both children and women must have male guardianship. Finally, if this bird sample generally represents men and women of less privileged social status, then it is

⁵⁹Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 139.

⁶⁰Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 302. For comparative purposes see *Sexual Asymmetry: Studies in Ancient Society*, ed. Josine Blok and Peter Mason (Amsterdam, 1987).



easier to understand why such birds may be gendered either way, for the social stakes do not seem to be so high.

SEXUALITY AND DYNAMICS OF POWER

How do men's dreams about sexuality and marital dynamics reveal their obsessions, fears, and anxieties? In the remaining sections of this article I would like to further examine the bird narrative along with those directly related to human actors, so as to explore points of convergence and divergence between them. Men's dreams relating to sexuality and marital dynamics seem to be generally centered on the male agent, and are structured around the act of penetration. A close correlation between social power and sexual posture can be clearly observed in reading sexual dreams—this is so with regard to both the heterosexual and the homosexual act. Following their own social parameters, our dream interpreters view the male partner who initiates the act of penetration as the one who is in a position of power or in a position to receive benefit. Difference or sameness of the biological sexes of the persons engaged in the sexual act does not seem to be a crucial factor in interpreting the sexual dream; what is more important here is to determine its predictive significance for the dreamer. To determine the predictive value of the dream, actors—regardless of their sex—are classified according to two basic categories, the active (*al-fā'il* or *al-nākiḥ*) and the passive (*al-maf'ūl* or *al-mankūḥ*). But while the dream chapters on sexuality and marriage seem to generally assume a relationship of dominance in the heterosexual act, where the male is normally expected to be the sexually dominant partner, this is not so in the homosexual act. As will be seen, with the exception of pederasty, homosexual acts are interpreted alternately in terms of power and social benefit, receiving little negative judgment on the part of the interpreter.

Numerous passages in the bird text reflect the all-important male desire to marry, inherit, or receive wealth from a rich wife. Here, Ibn Shāhīn reminds us that water birds, primarily gendered as feminine, "are better off than any of the other birds in dreams; their flesh, feathers, and bones signify great wealth and status."⁶¹ But it is the female duck that is viewed as the best signifier of wealth and prosperity in the bird text: "the white duck is wealth or a rich woman. . . . Thus if a man dreams that he slaughtered a duck or ate its flesh, he inherits from his wife a lot of money or hoards it."⁶² This dream motif is reiterated in the case of other female birds as well.⁶³ It is not surprising therefore to find that possession of a

⁶¹ Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 303.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 299.

⁶³ For instance, "if a man dreams that he caught the children of a *fākhitah*, it signifies the birth of male children, and its flesh signifies receiving money from women" (*ibid.*, 300). For other examples of female birds, see the case of the dove, the ostrich, and the griffin, *ibid.*, 299–300.



woman reflects a major desire in men's dreams, for it ultimately signifies increase in his social status and power. This may partly explain why the bird text is replete with images of slaughtering, catching, or hunting female birds.⁶⁴ On the other hand, if a man dreams of slaughtering, catching, winning, or possessing a male bird, it is interpreted as attaining power or success, vanquishing an enemy, or befriending a man. This seemingly variant interpretation is illustrated in the cock and chicken dream:

If a man dreams that he is fighting a cock and he gets hurt it means he will get hurt by an evil man, if he dreams that he slaughtered a cock, it means the death or sickness of his male slave, and if he dreams that he caught a cock and held it, he will achieve far reaching aims.⁶⁵ . . . But if a man dreams that he slaughters a chicken it means that he will marry a virgin female slave.⁶⁶

One may argue, however, that the cock and chicken dreams seem to be equally inspired by the same male desire to attain power, benefit, and high social status. The close link between male sexual potency and attainment of power and status is brilliantly demonstrated by male dreams of the archetypal woman, which are best illustrated in Ibn Sīrīn's narrative of the sexual conquest of the female virgin:

As for deflowering the female virgin, this signifies confronting difficult matters such as meeting sultans, war, sword fighting, conquering the city, digging underground granaries and wells, hunting treasures, *dīwāns*, searching for difficult sciences, hidden wisdom, and entering in all tight matters (*al-umūr al-ḍayyiqah*). Thus if he performs the opening (*fataḥa*) and penetrating (*awlaja*) in his sleep, he succeeds in his quest in his state of awakening. But if his penis goes limp, or its head is hidden, or if he ejaculates without penetration, this signifies that he will receive much harm and his vigor will be weakened.⁶⁷

⁶⁴Thus "if a man dreams that he caught (*amsaka*) a partridge it signifies that he will get married . . . and if a man dreams that he cuts (*qaṭa'a*) her, it signifies that he penetrates a virgin female slave" and "if a man dreams that he slaughters (*dhabaḥa*) a *ḥurayrah* (?) it signifies that he will deflower a virgin female slave" (ibid., 300, 299). For other cases, see the chicken, the peacock, the female ostrich, the griffin, the hoopoe, and the starling, ibid., 298, 299, 301, 302.

⁶⁵Ibid., 300.

⁶⁶Ibid., 302.

⁶⁷Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 264.



Woman is perceived here as crucial in defining masculine power. Her sacrifice or conquest seems to be essential in order that man may achieve social greatness and wisdom. But this is also a dream that reflects the thing most feared by men: failure in fulfilling the sexual or sacrificial act, and hence great social harm. Moreover, this dream celebrates man as the phallic conqueror and woman as the object of his conquest. In his dreams she stands for all that he aims for: power, cities, wealth, science, knowledge, and wisdom, and most of all, she is the fulfillment of his sexual and erotic desires. For the male dreamer then, the successful act of female defloration or possession signifies the magical attainment of his desires, and conversely, the failed sexual act signifies great harm and loss of social power.

Linguistic terms denoting the masculine act of conquest or sacrifice in the bird text are also revealing, for the dreamer frequently appears in the act of catching (*amsaka*), killing (*qatala*), slaughtering (*dhabaḥa*), or hitting (*aṣāba*), an imagery that is reminiscent of the language of the male hunter who masters the act of sacrifice through "slaughtering" or "killing" the female in the sexual act.⁶⁸ An equally revealing vocabulary is used in the dream text on the sexual act between man and woman. Here the term commonly used for the heterosexual act is *al-waṭ'* (intercourse) which we are told is analogous to the act of killing (*al-waṭ' ka-al-qatl*); the tool used in such an act is the phallus (*al-dhakar*), likened in dream language to the dagger and the arrow.⁶⁹ We are also reminded that sexual intercourse is analogous to man's achievement of desired goals (*al-waṭ' bulūgh al-murād*), because as Ibn Sīrīn states, "it is pleasure and benefit achieved as a result of man's hard work."⁷⁰ Moreover, if the erect penis is used as a symbol of male power, the flaccid one is often used as a symbol of powerlessness.⁷¹ One might also add that the significance of the male phallus as an important tool of masculine power is corroborated in other dream texts by the lengthy attention it receives there.⁷² The metaphor of deflowering or marrying the virgin appears to take pride of place in man's sexual dream imagery. Here, the virginal slave seems to be more favored than her free-born sister, suggesting perhaps a male preference for the more submissive of the two. The virginal body is assumed to be still intact and therefore uncontaminated, hence, the male who lets its blood can take full possession of it, assuming the uncontested position of master. Not surprisingly, the dove, faithful wife par excellence in the bird text, is used to signify the archetypal metaphor of

⁶⁸On the significance of sacrifice, see O'Flaherty, *Tales of Sex and Violence*, 15–28.

⁶⁹Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 263.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 264.

⁷¹See Oberhelman, "Hierarchies of Gender, Ideology, and Power," 61.

⁷²Drawing upon the content of several Arabic classical dream texts, Gouda assigns the longest coverage to the symbol of the phallus. See *Dreams and Their Meanings*, 311–15.



the sacrificial virgin.⁷³

The close link between the sexual or marital act and achievement of male social power may be further observed in the dream narrative on marriage. Marriage is perceived as a significant achievement of power (*sulṭān*), depending on the social status of the woman, her beauty, and her virtue. On this Ibn Sīrīn tells us that if the man dreams that he marries ten wives, then all the more power to him. Similarly, if a woman dreams that she takes a second husband, this would also signify more benefit for her.⁷⁴ Marriage to a close relative is viewed with much favor, for it signifies that the dreamer will dominate his household, a situation that is highly favorable in a society where kinship relations determine much of male social power.⁷⁵ On the whole, marriage is perceived according to the expected husband-wife roles: for the man it signifies power, for the woman benefit. But not all marriages signify power or benefit; again this depends on the woman in question. Accordingly, Ibn Shāhīn tells us that if a man dreams that he marries a Jewish, a Christian, or a Mazdian woman, these signify acts of abomination, futility, confusion, and distraction from religion. Such reservations, though, seem to be more of a worry to Ibn Shāhīn than Ibn Sīrīn, for in the latter's text, marriage simply signifies both power and social benefit. This difference between our two interpreters may demonstrate that Ibn Sīrīn's social context allowed more openness to mixed marriages than Ibn Shāhīn's.⁷⁶

MALE ANXIETIES OVER DOMESTIC BOUNDARIES

Dreams expressing male anxieties about marriage, seduction, promiscuity, adultery, divorce, and restriction of female movement abound in the bird text. Once again the dove, as archetypal wife, occupies a prominent place in domestic and sexual dynamics. Fear surrounding wife seduction or betrayal naturally produces images of anxiety in male dreams: "if a man dreams that he is using tricks to catch domestic doves (*al-ḥamām al-ahlī*), this means that he is seducing women of the household."⁷⁷ Ibn Shāhīn also tells us "that if a man dreams that he caught a dove, he will commit a forbidden act with a woman if she is a domestic dove (*ḥamāmah ahlīyah*). However, if she happens to be a wild one, then there is no harm."⁷⁸ Unlike hunting or catching wild birds, which is considered fair game, catching domesticated birds, which stand for women of the family, is interpreted as a taboo (*ḥarām*), hence reflecting a close parallelism between the text and the existing

⁷³ Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 300; see other cases as well, 299–305.

⁷⁴ Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 265.

⁷⁵ Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 129.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 300.

⁷⁸ Ibid.



social values of domestic integrity. Moreover, if a man dreams that a peacock and a dove, or a peacock and a francolin, are intimate with one another, this denotes corruption (*fasād*) in the family, or encouraging corrupt sexual behavior between women and men.⁷⁹ The rationale behind such an interpretation may not be immediately clear, but I have observed in other cases as well that dreams of cross-intimacy of different types of birds are almost always interpreted as transgression of social boundaries or classes, and hence perceived negatively in our texts, just as they would be in the interpreters' social setting.

Dream imagery also reflects male anxieties about divorce, death, and movement of the wife outside domestic boundaries. Imagery of flying birds is of particular significance, and, as we have already seen, is interpreted differently depending on the gender of the bird. Thus, "dreaming of doves flying away from the house signifies divorce of the woman."⁸⁰ Moreover, "if a man dreams that he saw a female peacock fly away from his house, it signifies that he will divorce his wife or she will die."⁸¹ On the other hand "if a man dreams that a griffin carried him and flew into the sky, it signifies that he will meet a noble man in his traveling."⁸² Similarly "if he dreams that a parrot flew from his hands, it signifies travel of his male slave or his servant."⁸³ Traveling, or free movement in the public space, is repeatedly viewed in our texts as a male prerogative, reifying the moral values of the urban middle and upper middle classes to which our interpreters belonged. Such concerns do not necessarily reflect the reality of everyday life of working or middle class women in the urban context, for as I have shown in an earlier study of Mamluk Cairo, women appear to have been moving in a relatively free manner outside their domestic boundaries.⁸⁴ Male anxiety over women's movement outside the domestic space is nonetheless detected in the following dream depicted by Ibn Shāhīn. Thus "if a man dreams that he cuts the wings of the dove, it signifies restricting his wife from going outside the house."⁸⁵ This imagined act of physical aggression against the female body perhaps allows us to sense the vulnerability of

⁷⁹Ibid., 301. See other examples of what the text views as family corruption, for instance the case of the francolin and the peacock, *ibid.*, 301.

⁸⁰Ibid., 300.

⁸¹See the case of the francolin in *ibid.*, 301.

⁸²Ibid., 303.

⁸³Ibid., 302.

⁸⁴See Huda Lutfi, "Manners and Customs of Fourteenth-Century Cairene Women: Female Anarchy versus Male Shar'i Order in Muslim Prescriptive Treatises," in *Women in Middle Eastern History, Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender*, ed. Nikki Keddie and Beth Baron (New Haven, 1991). In this article I showed that, much to the discontent of some religious scholars, women from the lower and middle classes in medieval Cairo were moving with relative freedom in the public space.

⁸⁵Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 300.



male power over the female, one that may burst into acts of physical aggression in his dreams.

Male anxiety over separation or divorce in the domestic space is also reflected in dreams relating to marital and sexual acts. Here also, divorce signifies a decrease in male honor and power. This is because—as both dream interpreters keep reminding us—“women, like kings, possess the feared power of *ʿkayd*”—an Arabic term which denotes multiple meanings signifying ruse, artifice, and subtle cunning, practiced by both women and kings alike.⁸⁶ Like *salāṭah* (aggressive tongue), *kayd* is another feminine power trait feared by men. Most important for us is the parallelism drawn between woman and power; thus we are told that if a governor or a king has a divorce dream, this signifies loss of their power or office. Worse still is the case of the monogamous dreamer, for his divorce dream signifies his pending death.⁸⁷ Given such a negative charge in divorce imagery in our dream texts, we may get a sense of the degree of cultural anxiety over matters concerning domestic rupture. The dream text clearly reflects the significance with which the culture in question views the crucial role that women play in upholding or disrupting the integrity of the basic social structure.

CHILDREN IN MALE DREAMS

Dreams about children receive much attention in the dream texts, reflecting a major recurrent concern of the male dreamer—sometimes joy, other times intense anxiety and worry: “Dreams about children in general signify worry (*hamm*), because they are brought up through pain and suffering.”⁸⁸ But the child’s gender is important in determining the joy or sorrow to which the dream points. In the bird text, the male child (*al-walad*) is signified by the young or small bird,⁸⁹ while the female child (*al-bint*) is signified by the bird nest or egg.⁹⁰ Elsewhere in Ibn Shāhīn’s text, “the testicles of a man signify his power or his male children (*bayḍ al-insān quwwatuhu aw wilduhu*).”⁹¹ Here we can see the close link between male power and the possession of male children, and since the desire to possess power is often accompanied by emotions of anxiety, this might explain why dreams about male children in particular evoke contradictory feelings of extreme tension or joy. Conversely, dreams about female children appear to signify release of tension and absolute joy. On this Ibn Shāhīn tells us that while dreaming about a

⁸⁶ Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 265. On the notion of *kayd* see also Oberhelman, “Hierarchies of Gender, Ideology, and Power,” 89.

⁸⁷ Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 130.

⁸⁸ Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 57.

⁸⁹ Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 297.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 300, 305.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 305.



male child may be variously interpreted as good fortune, worry, an enemy, or a bad omen, dreaming of a female child simply signifies release (*faraj*) from worry and restraint.⁹²

The desire to beget a male child occurs more frequently in dreams of the royal masculine-gendered bird. Here, there is hardly any mention of the female baby. Thus young predatory birds are almost always interpreted as male children: "If a man dreams of a wild hawk, it signifies a stubborn son, and if he dreams that he caught a hawk, but did not use him in hunting, he receives a son, and if he dreams that he eats the flesh of the hawk, he receives a son, who will cause him pain and difficulty when he grows older."⁹³ As for the young of the eagle, it is interpreted as a son who will become famous; similarly with the falcon, he will become a great and courageous son.⁹⁴ It may be argued here that such anxiety over begetting the male child may be said to reflect the obsessive desire on the part of the noble and the wealthy to produce male heirs, who will bring an extended increase in social power. Generally, female children appear less frequently in the bird texts. This may be readily observed from a simple statistical count—the son appears thirty times, the daughter only three times.⁹⁵ Moreover, fear of death, poverty, difficulties, or misfortunes appear to revolve more around the son than the daughter;⁹⁶ for instance "if a man dreams that he is holding a sparrow in his arms, which flew away and did not return, it signifies the death of his son."⁹⁷ Desire for a son who will bring benefit to the father also seems to be strongly reflected in male dreams; thus "if he sees that a young bird comes out of an egg, it signifies benefit from male children."⁹⁸ And "as for the nightingale, it signifies an eloquent son, of pleasant voice and speech, or a boy who will become a Quranic reciter."⁹⁹

Anxiety over the sexuality of the child is another important theme in dreams about children. In both dream texts sexual penetration of a male child (*tifl*) signifies sorrow and difficulties. Textual references to the act of molesting boys are more explicit than those referring to girls: "If a man dreams that he is stitching shut the eyelids of sparrows, it signifies that he is deceiving boys (*yakhda'u al-ṣibyān*)," and once again, "if he dreams that he is fondling (*ya'bathu*) sparrows or their young ones, it means that he is fondling boys."¹⁰⁰ Reference to pederasty appears

⁹²Ibid., 64.

⁹³Ibid., 296.

⁹⁴Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 147.

⁹⁵Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 295–305.

⁹⁶Ibid., 296, 298, 300.

⁹⁷Ibid., 303.

⁹⁸Ibid., 304.

⁹⁹Ibid., 301.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 303.



more frequently in Ibn Shāhīn's bird text than in Ibn Sīrīn's, and more than any other sexual act, it seems to demand his moralizing intervention:

Some interpreters say that if a man dreams that he is playing with doves (*al-ḥamām*) and he belonged to the people of corruption (*min ahl al-fasād*), it signifies that he is a homosexual (*lūṭī*), because this was part of the rituals of the people of Lūṭ. And nowadays, there are many who take a great liking (*yaghwī*) to this art of playing with doves. They should fear God!¹⁰¹

In this passage there is a double play on the meaning of the term *ḥamāmah* (dove), which we have come to know in the bird text as the good wife. In this context, however, Ibn Shāhīn may be using the term *ḥamām* as a metonym for boy. The terms used to describe dreams of child molesting call for some attention, for they denote that serious harm, deceit, or corruption is done to the child. Pederasty here is perceived as a form of sexual transgression socially harmful to the family and society at large, and therefore is negatively depicted by the dream interpreter. Moreover, Ibn Shāhīn's remark that "nowadays there are many who take a great liking to this art" coupled with his admonition that "they should fear God" suggest his disapproval of the prevalence of pederasty in his society.¹⁰²

In contrast, when it comes to dreams about the sexuality of the female child, the text seems to be more ambivalent. Thus "if a man dreams that a francolin is sleeping beside him, it signifies that someone is trying to mislead his children (*yakhda'u 'iyālahu*).¹⁰³ Here, it is unclear whether the Arabic term *'iyāl* refers to sons or daughters, or both, for it simply refers to dependent children of the family. But nowhere else in the bird text or in the other examined texts is there explicit mention of the sexual molesting of young girls. Textual ambivalence, or perhaps one should say silence, over the sexuality of young girls may reveal an even greater male anxiety over the sexual chastity of the female child.

THE ARCHETYPAL WOMAN, THE ARCHETYPAL MAN

Equally important for our gender analysis are the symbolic notions of man, woman, and their reversed or inverted models in the dream text. Here, I would like to further explore how the dream text on human actors reflects gender relations. In male dreams about the archetypal woman, she appears to occupy a special centrality,

¹⁰¹Ibid., 300.

¹⁰²On pederasty in the Mamluk period, see Everett Rowson, "Two Homoerotic Narratives from Mamluk Literature," in *Homoeroticism in Classical Arabic Literature*, 158–91.

¹⁰³Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 301.



appearing as an awesome figure, unfamiliar in the bird text where she is depicted more in a subordinate relationship to the male. In this narrative the archetypal woman is perceived as the earth with all its earthly things and concerns. She is the source of fertility and movement in life because "she adorns herself, brings forth children, and pours milk."¹⁰⁴ She has tremendous power over man, leading him either to temptation (*fitnah*) or salvation. As in the bird text, woman is also depicted in oppositional terms: she is either good or evil, the force behind the world of material pleasure, as well as the world of the spirit. She is described as beautiful, virginal, smiling, corpulent, clean, and adorned as opposed to old, ugly, emaciated, dirty, hairy, unkempt, and nude. As we have seen in the bird text, physical attributes seem to be crucial in defining the female body, and once again feminine beauty appears to be the most important attribute of female power. Conversely, male repugnance at female ugliness is reflected in the way it is used, signifying reversal of matters (*inqilāb al-umūr*).¹⁰⁵ Thus the old, ugly, or defective woman is used as a metaphor of the deceptive material world, the source of all temptation and evil. On the other hand, the good, beautiful, and clean woman signifies the spiritual world and the hereafter.¹⁰⁶ We are repeatedly reminded that the good accruing from woman is determined by the degree of her beauty, adornment, and perfume, for we are told that in the ugly one there is no benefit, but only harm.¹⁰⁷ Male fear of the threatening power of woman may also be seen in dreams about the frowning, or the quarrelsome, woman. Here, Ibn Shāhīn warns the dreamer that if "he dreams that he saw many women quarreling, this is predictive of strange events, resulting in social confusion."¹⁰⁸

Male dreams of the archetypal man occupy a shorter narrative space than that on woman. One could even argue that man, as a dream symbol, does not seem to evoke the strong emotions of fear, desire, admiration, hate, and love that are reserved for woman in male dreams. In this text, he is depicted in a straightforward manner, for he appears primarily in the role of bestowing wealth, benefit, and security. Age is significant, for the old man seems to be a more positive masculine symbol, signifying at once benefit, grace, wisdom, knowledge, fulfillment of needs, and security.¹⁰⁹ Unlike the bird text, physical looks seem to be an important attribute of the male in this narrative. Hence terms indicating both beauty (*jamāl*)

¹⁰⁴ Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 259.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 56–57. The female slave is often used as a feminine symbol, but what has been said of the free-born woman may apply to her as well.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 258.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 259, 57. See also Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 62, who states that a beautiful and smiling woman signifies joy, benefit, and a fertile year.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 63.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 62.



and good looks (*ḥusn*) are used to describe the male figure. And while ugliness is equally disliked in men, signifying the male enemy, the language used here does not betray the same intense fear and anxiety reserved for the ugly woman. In addition to physical appearance, other attributes seem to constitute the male image; thus traits such as social or cultural refinement (*al-adab*) seem to be more typically masculine.¹¹⁰ To sum up, while this dream narrative seems to betray the typical gender construct of woman as nature versus man as culture, it strongly reflects a male anxiety regarding woman's awesome power.

THE DYNAMICS OF GENDER INVERSION

Earlier, we have seen how the bird text negatively constructs the images of the wild dove and the crow, reinforcing their otherness or marginality as social actors. The notion of social or gender inversion will be further examined here, for it allows us to examine gender relations beyond the simple dichotomy of the "ideal" or "evil" man or woman. What happens when gender roles are reversed or undergo transformation? More imagery of gender reversals appear in dreams relating to man, woman, marriage, and sexual acts than in the bird dreams: women in male dress, women with a beard or penis, menstruating men, or men giving birth to children, bisexuals, homosexuals, eunuchs, and hermaphrodites.

Unable to cast the latter in either role, interpreters do not know what to do with the figure of the hermaphrodite.¹¹¹ And whereas Ibn Shāhīn is ready to entertain several interpretations in relation to the hermaphrodite, Ibn Sīrīn gives a gloomy image of this socially ambivalent figure, for he tells us that "if a man becomes a hermaphrodite it is predictive of a great catastrophe and grief."¹¹² Ibn Shāhīn's interpretation, though less gloomy, still points to a lack, for he asserts that "dreaming of becoming a hermaphrodite may be interpreted in several ways: absence of sexual intercourse and progeny, lowering of status (*ta'khīr manzilatihī*), weak power, but also affection and sympathy."¹¹³ Predictably, low status here is juxtaposed to two defective attributes: lack of sexual potency and of children. Hence, the hermaphrodite is a symbol of a low social status, lacking in what our interpreters consider to be two of the most important ingredients of male social power. This reminds us of what we already know from the bird text: the close connection constructed between male power and sexual potency, and between male social status and male children. Attributing other positive traits to the hermaphrodite, however, compensates for this lack of social status and social

¹¹⁰ Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 56.

¹¹¹ Paula Sanders "Gendering the Ungendered Body: Hermaphrodites in Medieval Islamic Law," in *Women in Middle Eastern History*, 74–98.

¹¹² Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 266.

¹¹³ Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 65.



power: the more affective, perhaps feminine, traits of affection and sympathy.

In a different vein, the eunuch, presumably a male figure without phallic power, is perceived as an angelic and spiritually virtuous being who possesses knowledge and wisdom.¹¹⁴ But instead of the positive qualities of affection and sympathy found in the hermaphrodite, the dream text assigns the eunuch the masculine spiritual qualities of knowledge and wisdom. Like the hermaphrodite, however, he seems also to be perceived as a marginal social figure; the eunuch here corresponds to the bat, the male ascetic that we have encountered in the kingdom of birds.

As for the bisexual male, he is seen as both an outsider to the household and a trespasser of social boundaries, corresponding perhaps to the crow in the bird text, a figure who disrupts boundaries. But he is not perceived as an inherently defective social figure, for as the dream text tells us, he needs only to repent in order to return within such boundaries.¹¹⁵ Similarly, a woman who dreams of having a lesbian relationship signifies that she will be widowed or separated from her husband, suggesting again that reversal or subversion of "normal" sexual roles leads to disruption of the domestic order.¹¹⁶ Conversely, Ibn Sīrīn tells us that male homosexuality signifies both victory and impoverishment, depending on sexual posture and social status. Therefore, if a man dreams that he is penetrated or mounted by his male slave, this would signify a drastic decline in both power and wealth, but if the sultan or an older man penetrates him, this would signify receiving benefit or enhancement of power.¹¹⁷

While the dream texts allow a positive interpretation of male homosexuality, it is less so for female homosexuality. The image of the masculine woman, who grows a beard or a penis or who dresses in men's attire, inspires various interpretations. According to one, a woman turning into a man signifies a loss of her femininity and therefore the impossibility to relate in a "normal" fashion to the male. As in a lesbian relationship, this gender reversal is perceived in terms of social displacement, and hence threatening to acceptable social relations. Another interpretation of the masculine woman signifies the acquisition of masculine behavioral traits, allowing her to assume a position of dominance, but still perceived as violating the normative power relationship between man and woman.¹¹⁸ Similarly,

¹¹⁴Ibid., 64.

¹¹⁵Gouda, *Dreams and Their Meanings*, 85.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 258.

¹¹⁷On homosexual acts in dreams see Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 263, 266; Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 130. See Oberhelman on homoerotic acts in dream texts in "Hierarchies of Gender, Ideology, and Power," 70.

¹¹⁸For instance, if a man dreams that he is "holding firm a woman's vagina with his hand, which turns into a penis, her morals will change. If it remains a penis, she will remain authoritarian,



the image of a woman who imitates men (*al-tashabbuh bi-al-rijāl*), who behaves socially like men or adopts their attire, may signify improvement in her status, but on condition that "this dress or behavioral reversal is not exercised in excess" (*ghayr mujāwiz lil-qadr*); otherwise, as Ibn Sīrīn tells us, it will bring grief and fear for the woman.¹¹⁹ This note of warning against excess is significant because it cautions against the complete blurring of gender boundaries, which according to Ibn Sīrīn is a prescription for social disaster. Even though we could argue that these different interpretations of gender reversals may signify gain in status and power for the woman, it is power illegitimately gained, and hence its negative portrayal.

How does the man fare if he becomes more like a woman? Here also we have different and sometimes contradictory interpretations. Thus if a man dreams that he has a vulva (*farj*), it signifies freedom from social restraints. According to one interpretation, the dream interpreter is making use of the literal meaning of the Arabic term *farj*, a derivative of the root *faraj*, which carries the multiple meanings of freedom from grief, release from suffering, joy, pleasure, and relaxation. Thus the vulva, metaphor of femininity par excellence, signifies a state of freedom and joy for the male dreamer. Conversely, the same dream may also be interpreted as loss of status and humiliation; thus "a man with a vagina does not fare well and is humiliated."¹²⁰ The dream text also depicts men as pregnant or delivering children. Pregnancy, symbol of feminine fertility, signifies benefit for both men and women. Thus if a man dreams that he is pregnant, he receives benefit in the world.¹²¹ Less accommodating of the image of the pregnant male, Ibn Shāhīn offers conflicting interpretations, for while pregnancy may signify wealth for women, it may bring grief for men. But then he quickly adds that pregnancy may also signify wealth and benefit for either man or woman, suggesting gain of status for the male as well.¹²² Such textual uncertainties are important to note, for they always reveal moments of conflict in the interpreter's mind, where both mixed feelings and value judgments color his perceptions. Even though women may sometimes be perceived in a secondary relationship to men, feminine fertility here is viewed as an attribute of immense power in both the dream and social world of our interpreters. Imagery of gender inversions or changeability in the dream text seem to point to areas of tension in which different forms of gender transformation are depicted in conflicting terms, sometimes as experiences of grief, strife, and humiliation, but in other instances as experiences of benefit and gain. More importantly, they seem to point to experiences of social rupture: women or men who experience some

impudent, loud, and impossible to tame." Gouda, *Dreams and Their Meanings*, 431.

¹¹⁹ Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 266.

¹²⁰ Gouda, *Dreams and Their Meanings*, 431.

¹²¹ Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 262.



sort of gender transformation or reversal are more often than not perceived as transgressors of social boundaries. And since such transgressions often result in non-procreative practices, they often seem to be judged in our texts by the potential social disorder that they may cause.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The simplistic formula of gender hierarchy, which normally portrays man in a dominant relationship to woman, does not receive consistent confirmation in our analysis, for the advantage does not seem to be completely with the male. Conflicting messages can be detected in the dream narratives that have been examined. And whereas gender hierarchy seems to privilege male power in the more structured kingdom of birds, this is not the case in dream narratives relating to marital and sexual acts, or to those relating to men, women, children, and slaves. Textual ambivalences can certainly be revealing, even if they occupy less narrative space or can only be read between the lines. Moments of textual hesitations, backtracking, or silence must be further examined in future studies of the dream text to show the plurality of practices and perceptions that may otherwise be left undetected if such textual ambiguities are ignored.

It seems to me that woman's loss in the kingdom of birds is compensated for by her gain in other dream narratives. Cryptic, almost unnoticeable references in the dream text refer to the generic term "woman" as equivalent to power. Thus in a short but significant reference in his chapter on marital relations, Ibn Sīrīn sets for us the most important principles that constitute the symbol of woman in dreams: "Woman signifies *sulṭān* (power) in accordance with her status, her political importance (*khaṭaruhā*), the meaning of her name, and her beauty."¹²³ Here woman is not considered in abstract terms; her power is qualified by specific attributes: economic and political status, as well as beauty. Furthermore, the notion of woman as the conquered object or sacrificial object of male power, a predominant trope in the bird text, is paradoxically reversed by Ibn Sīrīn who tells us in the following passage that it is ultimately woman who rules over man who, in turn, emerges as her slave. It is important to note here that while I found no corresponding passages or similar views on woman in Ibn Shāhīn's dream text, I found al-Nābulusī's text on *al-mar'ah* to be more in line with Ibn Sīrīn's. Can it be argued then that in the more militaristic society of the Mamluks, male dream interpretation developed an increasingly more fearful stance of, or hesitation in, recognizing woman's symbolic power and her crucial role in holding together the threads of the social order?

The perfect woman (*al-mar'ah al-kāmilah*) is simultaneously of

¹²²Ibn Shāhīn, *Ishārāt*, 133.



this world, because she is the world (*al-dunyā*), joy and pleasure, and of the hereafter (*al-ākhirah*) because she improves spirituality. She may also signify power (*sulṭān*) because woman rules over man (*ḥākimah* ‘*alā al-rajul*) through love and passion. And he, in his toil and pursuit after her good, is like a slave.¹²⁴

According to this interpretation, the perfect woman symbolizes both the sensual as well as the spiritual world. She stands for joy and bliss, for spiritual enlightenment, for expansion and release of tension, and also for sexual pleasure; and man is perceived as her slave working to satisfy her needs. In this short but significant narrative attributed to Ibn Sīrīn, the notion of woman as the mistress of man reverses the conventional construct of gender hierarchy in which it is always assumed that man is favored over woman, revealing instead a construct in which woman is placed in a dominant relationship to man. Following Ibn Sīrīn’s rationale, if the man is dependent on the woman for his pleasures in this world and the hereafter, he is inevitably bound to become her slave. In retrospect, this male perspective of the feminine may help us understand the background of man’s fear of woman, and hence his strong desire to possess and control her in both his social and dream worlds. She happens to be at the source of both his pleasures and his pains. Though we can argue that women’s desires and fears may also be inextricably linked to those of men, we have less to say about them here, for we have only been able to examine man’s constructed dreams about woman.

¹²³ Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 262.

¹²⁴ Al-Nābulusī, *Ta’rīf*, 254; Ibn Sīrīn, *Muntakhab*, 258–59.



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Notes on the Contemporary Sources of the Year 793

I will leave to others the responsibility of speaking about Donald P. Little's career and the pivotal place he occupies in the field of Mamluk studies. As for me, perhaps the most appropriate way to pay tribute to him is to provide readers with the results of a study¹ which uses the method that he pioneered and which has ever since been identified with him.

In Little's words,

The nature of the method is disarmingly simple; it is nothing more than comparison, close word-by-word comparison of individual accounts of topics within annals and biographies,² with a threefold aim. One, given the fact that historians followed in most cases the conventions of the annalistic and biographical genres almost slavishly, what variations can be found in the treatment of individual authors? It is obvious that the variations constitute the author's originality, whether they consist of stylistic innovations, departures from the conventions of the genres, or the introduction of original subject matter. . . . A second, related, purpose is to characterize Mamlūk historiography in general . . . ; in other words, having pointed out variations, I would attempt to establish the similarities in approach, technique and subject matter. Included under this purpose is the desire to indicate the type of data which can be gleaned from Mamlūk sources, both as to the quantity and quality, so that the beginner in Mamlūk studies can readily discover what variety of subjects the historians both discuss and omit, as well as the difficulties which he can expect to encounter as a result of the mode of presentation. Third and most importantly, I am trying to

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¹The study presented here is culled from my on-going Ph.D. research, which deals with the historiography of the early Circassian period, and particularly from Chapter Two, the topic of which is the year 793. Chapter One deals with the year 778 and is still unpublished, but I will be making systematic reference to it throughout this article.

²In this article, I will be dealing only with *ḥawādith*.



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establish what Claude Cahen calls a “repertorium”³ of the sources of the period, by which I mean an analytical survey of the sources which aims at classifying them in terms of their value to modern historians. All the goals can be achieved by comparison, which, in the last analysis, aims at disentangling the inter-relatedness and inter-dependence of the sources so as to discover the original contribution of each historian. . . .⁴

Little chose to compare annals, by means of textual collation, in order to identify similarities and variations that would explain the complex of borrowings and indebtedness amongst the historians he studied and their works. One advantage of such a “micro” approach to historiography is the detailed knowledge it gives researchers into the events of a given year. Such intimate knowledge will help in exploring, when possible and relevant, the scope and impact of some given events, and their interrelations; in other words, what do the sources tell us about important historical occurrences and how do they impact on our knowledge and understanding of them? This endeavor overlaps with the third objective highlighted above by Little, namely the relative merit of a given source not only on historiographical, but also on historical grounds.

The choice of the year 793/1390–91 as the focus of my research is not accidental. Chronologically, this year falls almost in the middle of the early Circassian period, which ran roughly from the late 770s/1370s until the early ninth/fifteenth century.⁵ From the standpoint of historiographical production, this span of time is truly crucial as it witnessed the withering away of an entire generation of historians, those who had lived through and beyond the reigns of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn (d. 741/1341). Thus, Ibn Kathīr’s (d. 774/1373) *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah* does not extend beyond 768/1367,⁶ and the two works

³Claude Cahen, “Editing Arabic Chronicles: A Few Suggestions,” *Islamic Studies* 1, no. 3 (September 1962): 4.

⁴Donald P. Little, *An Introduction to Mamlūk Historiography: An Analysis of Arabic Annalistic and Biographical Sources for the Reign of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn* (Wiesbaden, 1970), 2–3 (hereafter cited as *An Introduction*).

⁵This would correspond roughly to the reign of Barqūq as *amīr kabīr* (779–84/1378–82) then sultan (784–91, 792–801/1382–89, 1390–99).

⁶The last entry of the book is the report about the murder of Yalbughā al-‘Umarī; *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah*, ed. Aḥmad Abū Milḥīm (Beirut, 1987), 14:338–39. On the later parts of Ibn Kathīr’s chronicle see Ashtor’s contention, originally advanced by Laoust, that the last part of *Al-Bidāyah* was written not by Ibn Kathīr himself but by one of his students, probably Ibn Ḥijjī: “Études sur quelques chroniques mamloukes,” *Israel Oriental Society* 1 (1971): 284. Al-‘Umarī had led a revolt in 762 against his *ustādh* and sultan al-Nāṣir Ḥasan (d. 762/1361), which resulted



of another Syrian historian who was not connected to the Syrian school,⁷ Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī's (710–79/1310–77) *Tadhkirat al-Nabīh fī Ayyām al-Manṣūr wa-Banīh*⁸ and *Durrat al-Aslāk fī Mulk Dawlat al-Atrāk*⁹ end respectively in 770 and 777. As for Egypt, the other major pole of the Mamluk Sultanate, the *Naṭr al-Jumān fī Tarājim al-A'yān*, the chronicle of al-Muqrī (who was still alive in 766/1364–65), the last of the Egyptian historians to have been a contemporary of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, ends in 745/1345.¹⁰ It is true that a new generation of historians like Ibn Khaldūn¹¹ (732–808/1332–1406), Ibn al-Furāt¹² (735–807/1335–1404–5), Ṣārim al-Dīn Ibrāhīm Ibn Duqmāq¹³

in the latter's assassination. See al-Maqrīzī's *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma'rifat al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk*, ed. Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāh 'Āshūr (Cairo, 1970), 3:1:155 (hereafter cited as *Al-Sulūk*) for a brief summary of Barqūq's travels and activities following the murder of Yalbughā al-'Umarī in 768/1366; see also Walter J. Fischel, "Ascensus Barcoch (I) and (II): A Latin Biography of the Mamlūk Sultan Barqūq of Egypt (d. 1399) Written by B. de Mignanelli in 1416," *Arabica* 6 (1959): 64ff.

⁷On the debate concerning the appropriateness of differentiating between Syrian and Egyptian "schools" of historical writing, see Little, *An Introduction*, 46, 95, 98; Li Guo, "Mamluk Historiographic Studies: The State of the Art," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 1 (1997): 29–33, 37–39; and David Reisman, "A Holograph MS of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's *Dhayl*," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 2 (1998): 24–25, 27–28 and the references therein. See also below.

⁸Edited by Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn with an introduction by Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāh 'Āshūr, (Cairo, 1976–86) (hereafter cited as *Tadhkirah*). This work covers the years 687 to 770.

⁹Of the three manuscripts available of this work, two, MSS Bodleian Marsh 591 and Bodleian Marsh 223, start at the year 648, and the third, Bodleian Marsh 319, at the year 762. The three manuscripts end respectively in 777, 714, and 801. It is MS Bodleian Marsh 319 which will be used throughout this research since it is the only one to include the annals 778 to 801 (fols. 134a ff) ostensibly written by Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir (after 740–808/1340–1406), Ibn Ḥabīb's son. Contrary to what 'Āshūr claims in his introduction to the *Tadhkirah*, this *dhayl* (hereafter cited as *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk*), at least MS Bodleian Marsh 319, ends in 801 and not 802; see his introduction to the *Tadhkirah*, 1:20. More on Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir below. The *Durrat al-Aslāk* and its *dhayl* were apparently edited and translated by A. Meursinge and H. F. Veijsers in the middle of the nineteenth century, but I have not been able to get hold of their work; see *Orient* 2 (1840–46): 195–491.

¹⁰On this author and his work, see Little, *An Introduction*, 40.

¹¹*Kitāb al-'Ibar wa-al-Mubtada' wa-al-Khabar* (Beirut, 1971) (hereafter cited as *Al-'Ibar*); *Al-Ta'rīf bi-Ibn Khaldūn wa-Riḥlatihi Gharban wa-Sharqan*, ed. Muḥammad ibn Tāwīt al-Ṭanjī (Cairo, 1951).

¹²*Tārīkh al-Duwal wa-al-Mulūk*, ed. Quṣṭanṭīn Zurayq and Najlā' 'Izz al-Dīn (Beirut, 1936–38) (hereafter cited as *Tārīkh al-Duwal*); "Al-Muntaqā min Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt," MS Chester Beatty 4125, fols. 2b–178b (hereafter cited as "Al-Muntaqā min Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt").

¹³Three editions of *Al-Jawhar al-Thamīn fī Siyar al-Khulafā' wa-al-Mulūk*, the lesser of the two extant histories written by Ibn Duqmāq, are available: Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāh 'Āshūr's edition (Mecca, 1983) (hereafter cited as *Al-Jawhar 'Āshūr*); Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn 'Izz al-Dīn 'Alī's edition in two volumes (Beirut, 1985) (hereafter cited as *Al-Jawhar 'Alī*); and 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmurī's edition entitled *Al-Nafḥah al-Miskīyah fī al-Dawlah al-Turkīyah* (Sidon and



(745–809/1349–1407), Ibn Hījī (751–816/1350–1413),¹⁴ Badr al-Dīn al-‘Aynī¹⁵ (762–855/1361–1451), al-Maqrīzī¹⁶ (766–845/1364–1441), Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī¹⁷ (773–852/1372–1449), Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah,¹⁸ and others would insure a solid transition in historical writing from the Turkish to the Circassian period. But globally, whereas Bahri Mamluk historiography has been subjected to rigorous and comprehensive source analysis,¹⁹ with the exception of a certain number of studies of a limited scope,²⁰ nothing of the sort has been undertaken with regard to the early Circassian period.²¹ Consequently, beyond general historiographical surveys, we still have not established the value of Burjī²² historical works in their

Beirut, 1999) (hereafter cited as *Al-Nafḥah*), which corresponds to volume two of ‘Izz al-Dīn ‘Alī’s edition, namely the Mamluk period. The appellation of *Al-Nafḥah al-Miskīyah* was given by Tadmūrī to the MS of *Al-Jawhar* that he edited and which extended, contrary to the other two, to the year 805. Throughout this article, it is this latter version of *Al-Jawhar* which will be used since its edition is more recent and since also the overlapping sections do not differ significantly from one edition to the other (*ibid.*, 18–19). Also by Ibn Duqmāq is the more substantial *Nuzhat al-Anām fī Tārīkh al-Islām*, ed. Samīr Ṭabbārah (Beirut, 1999) (hereafter cited as *Nuzḥah Ṭabbārah*) and MS Gotha Orient. A 1572, fols. 1b–137a. More on Ibn Duqmāq below.

¹⁴“Tārīkh Ibn Hījī,” MSS Köprülü 1027, Chester Beatty 4125, Chester Beatty 5527, and Berlin Ahlwardt 9458; see below for relevant folio numbers.

¹⁵“Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān” (hereafter cited as “Iqd”), MSS Ahmet III 2911/B2, Ahmet III 2911/19, and Dār al-Kutub 1584 *Tārīkh*, fols. 160–476.

¹⁶*Al-Mawā‘iz wa-al-I’tibār bi-Dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa-al-Āthār* (Beirut, n.d.); *Al-Sulūk*, vol. 3.

¹⁷*Al-Durar al-Kāminah fī A’yān al-Mī’ah al-Thāminah* (Beirut, 1993) (hereafter cited as *Al-Durar*); *Inbā’ al-Ghumr fī Abnā’ al-‘Umr* (Beirut, 1986) (hereafter cited as *Inbā’*).

¹⁸Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, *Tārīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah*, ed. ‘Adnān Darwīsh (Damascus, 1977–97) (hereafter cited as *TIQS*).

¹⁹Notably Little, *An Introduction*; Ulrich Haarmann, *Quellenstudien zur frühen Mamlukenzeit*, *Islamkundliche Untersuchungen* 1 (Freiburg, 1969).

²⁰To my knowledge, there are studies that do just that, but they are very much limited in scope: Amalia Levanoni, “Al-Maqrīzī’s account of the Transition from Turkish to Circassian Mamluk Sultanate: History in the Service of Faith,” in *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt (c. 950–1800)*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden, 2001), 93–105; Reisman, “A Holograph MS,” 19–49; Donald P. Little, “A Comparison of al-Maqrīzī and al-‘Aynī as Historians of Contemporary Events,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 7, no. 2 (2003): 205–15; Sami G. Massoud, “Al-Maqrīzī as a Historian of the Reign of Barqūq,” *ibid.*, 119–35. In his “Circassian Mamluk Historians and their Quantitative Economic Data,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Cairo* 11–12 (1974–75): 75–87, Jere L. Bacharach does survey and compare Circassian sources but his focus is entirely on economic data.

²¹Donald P. Little, “Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Epochs,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt 640–1517*, ed. Carl Petry (Cambridge, 1998), 433.

²²Notwithstanding David Ayalon’s argument in favor of not using the term Burjī to describe the Circassian period, I will use this word interchangeably with that of Circassian to describe the



own right and in relation to one another. But even at this level, the key period which witnessed the end of Qalāwūnid rule and the rise of Barqūq and the Circassians is particularly understudied: with the exception of a few words scattered here and there in scholarly articles and monographs, and in the introductory notices of editions of primary sources, nothing compares with the surveys authored by Linda S. Northrup²³ on the early Bahri period, and by Carl S. Petry on the late Circassian era.²⁴

Beyond these historiographical considerations, other factors also weighed into the selection of the year 793 for analysis. On the political level, it is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable years of the reign of al-Zāhir Barqūq (784–91, 792–801/1382–89, 1390–99).²⁵ It represents the culmination of a series of events that started with the rebellions of Miṭāsh²⁶ and Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī,²⁷ respectively at the end of 789 and in Ṣafar 791,²⁸ his eviction from power by the latter pair in

Mamluk polity which came into existence with the advent of Barqūq and ended in 922/1517 with its defeat at the hands of the Ottomans; Ayalon, "Baḥrī Mamlūks, Burjī Mamlūks—Inadequate Names for the Two Reigns of the Mamluk Sultanate," *Tārīkh* 1 (1990): 3–53.

²³Linda S. Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan: The Career of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamluk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678–689A.H./1279–1290A.D.)*, Freiburger Islamstudien 18 (Stuttgart, 1998), 25–61.

²⁴Carl S. Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1981), 8–14; idem, *Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of Mamluk Sultans Al-Ashraf Qāytbāy and Qanṣūh al-Ghawrī in Egypt* (Seattle, 1993), 5–14; idem, *Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamluk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power* (Albany, 1994), 5–12.

²⁵On Barqūq, see Gaston Wiet, "Barqūq, al-Malik al-Zāhir Sayf al-Dīn," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 1:1082; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Manhal al-Ṣafī wa-al-Mustawfā ba'd al-Wāfī*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn et al. (Cairo, 1986), 3:285–342 (hereafter cited as *Al-Manhal*). See also references in The Chicago Online Bibliography of Mamluk Studies: <http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/mideast/mamluk>.

²⁶Tamurbughā al-Ashrafī, also known as Miṭāsh, was a mamluk of al-Ashraf Sha'bān who succeeded in finding himself a place in the sun in the first part of Barqūq's reign, a period whose political history still needs to be written. It was his rebellion at the end of 789 in the city of Malaṭya where he was viceroy, and the subsequent rallying of Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī to his cause, which eventually led to the downfall of Barqūq in 791. On Miṭāsh, see *Al-Manhal*, 4:94–99, no. 782.

²⁷Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī was a member of Yalbughā al-'Umarī's inner circle (*khāṣṣakīyah*) but was superseded in the quest for power by al-'Umarī's younger mamluks, chief among them Barqūq. He joined the rebellion against the sultan in 791 when he was the viceroy of Aleppo, the very city where he would meet his maker in 793. On him, see "Al-Manhal," Dār al-Kutub MS 13475 *Tārīkh*, fols. 842a–845a (hereafter cited as "Al-Manhal").

²⁸Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shams al-Dīn (Beirut, 1992), 11:206ff, 210ff. Within the framework of this article, I will make use of *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah* when making casual references to political events that took place



Jumādā II 791,²⁹ his exile to al-Karak and his escape therefrom in Ramaḍān,³⁰ his military feats and defeats in Syria in late 791 and early 792,³¹ and his return to the throne in the middle of Ṣafar 792.³² After 793, Barqūq was not to suffer from any *major* threat until his death in 801/1399.

What also stands out in the year 793 is the Syrian dimension of a large proportion of the events that were the object of reports. What took place in Syria in 793 ran the gamut of problems often encountered by Mamluk rulers in that part of their empire: intrigue on the part of former and present foes and friends, the involvement of Arab and Turcoman nomadic formations in the political and military affairs of the region, the power relations between the Mamluk polity and its vassal states, etc.³³ To this one ought to add Barqūq's own visit to Syria from Ramaḍān until Dhū al-Ḥijjah, because of the inability of Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī³⁴ to score a decisive victory against Miṭāsh, let alone capture him. Last but not least is the particular state of war brought about by the quasi-"siege" of Damascus by Miṭāsh and his allies, from the beginning of Rajab until the middle of Sha'bān. During this period, the Miṭāshīs, who were entrenched outside the western wall of Damascus, fought against the loyalists under the command of Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī, while the links of both groups to the Syrian hinterland remained uninterrupted.³⁵

A few words concerning the sources are in order here. First, we are clearly dealing with two different sets of sources which will be studied as such: one group comprises the Egyptian Ibn Duqmāq, Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir,³⁶ Ibn Khaldūn,

during the period at hand. Three editions of *Al-Nujūm* will be used here: Shams al-Dīn's edition mentioned above (hereafter cited as *Al-Nujūm*); *The History of Egypt, 1382–1467 A.D.*, part 1, 1382–1399 A.D., trans. William Popper, University of California Publications in Semitic Philology 13 (Berkeley, 1954); and *Abū l-Mahāsin Ibn Taghrī Birdī's Annals*, ed. idem, University of California Publications in Semitic Philology 5, pts. 1–3 (746–800 A.H.) (Berkeley, 1932–35).

²⁹ *Al-Nujūm*, 11:234ff.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 268ff, 287 ff.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 294ff.

³² *Ibid.*, 12:3ff.

³³ On all this, see below.

³⁴ After they had taken power in Cairo following their successful rebellion against Barqūq, Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī and Miṭāsh ended up fighting it out as a result of the coup undertaken by the latter against the former. Upon the return of Barqūq to power, Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī was released from prison and later nominated viceroy of Damascus, a position that entailed, among other things, the prosecution of the war against Miṭāsh. More on this below.

³⁵ See especially Ibn Ṣaṣrā, *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah fī al-Dawlah al-Ẓāhirīyah*, ed. and trans. William M. Brinner as *A Chronicle of Damascus, 1389–1397* (Berkeley, 1963), 76–91 (hereafter cited as *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah* and as *A Chronicle of Damascus* for the English text); and "Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī," MS Köprülü 1027, fols. 94b–99b (hereafter cited as "Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī").

³⁶ More on the nature of Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir's *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk* below.



and Ibn al-Furāt, and the other, the Syrian Ibn Ḥijjī and Ibn Ṣaṣrā. As will become apparent below, the distinction established between the two groups has more to do with the geographical home-base of these writers than with the existence of Syrian and Egyptian “schools” of historical writing. Second, all the above-mentioned historians were contemporaries of the events of 793 and included in their works original data.³⁷ While al-‘Aynī at thirty-one years of age, al-Maqrīzī at twenty-seven, and al-‘Asqalānī at twenty were young men, they were old enough to have heard of, followed, or been impressed by the events of that year. Two of them, al-‘Aynī and al-‘Asqalānī, actually intervened directly in the main body of their respective works as self-conscious narrators: the former in signaling his return from Aleppo to Cairo³⁸ and the latter in mentioning his trip to Qūs in the Ṣa‘īd.³⁹ But despite the importance of these “newcomers” and the fact that their works merit systematic analysis in their own respect,⁴⁰ they and later historians like Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, Ibn Taghrībirdī (812–74/1409–70), al-Jawharī al-Ṣayrafi⁴¹ (819–900/1416–94), Ibn Iyās⁴² (852–930/1427–97), ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ Ibn Khalīl al-Malāṭī⁴³ (844–920/1440–1515), and others were yet to make their mark in terms of producing primary historical data *for this particular year*: globally, with the notable exception of al-‘Aynī, who presented in his *Iqd* reports about Syria that are not found elsewhere,⁴⁴ all these historians owe the overwhelming majority of their *akhbār* either to Ibn al-Furāt and, possibly, to Ibn Duqmāq,⁴⁵ or to al-Maqrīzī, whose *Al-Sulūk*, though written differently, is nothing but a shorter yet almost identical copy of *Tārīkh al-Duwal*. It is for this reason that the works of these newcomers will not be studied here, even though reference to them will be made when needed.

³⁷Even though some of them did rely on other histories in the elaboration of their own work.

³⁸“*Iqd*,” MS Ahmet III 2911/B2, fol. 99a.

³⁹*Inbā’*, 3:77.

⁴⁰This is indeed what I have embarked upon in Chapter Two of my dissertation.

⁴¹*Nuzhat al-Nufūs wa-al-Abdān fī Tawārīkh al-Zamān*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī (Cairo, 1970).

⁴²*Badā’i’ al-Zuhūr fī Waqā’i’ al-Duhūr*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā (Wiesbaden, 1974–75).

⁴³*Nayl al-Amal fī Dhayl al-Duwal*, ed. ‘Umar Tadmurī (Beirut, 2002) (hereafter cited as *Nayl al-Amal*).

⁴⁴See for example the details he gave about the execution of Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī at the hands of Barqūq in the citadel of Aleppo at the end of Dhū al-Qa‘dah: “*Iqd*,” MS Ahmet III 2911/B2, fol. 98a, “*Iqd*,” MS Dār al-Kutub 1584 *Tārīkh*, fols. 433–34. Al-‘Aynī’s account is similar, though not identical, to Mignanelli’s for the same event; see Fischel, “*Ascensus Barcoch* (II),” 161.

⁴⁵See below.



Ibn Duqmāq is undoubtedly one of the most original historians of the early Circassian period. Already in the opening pages of his *Inbā'*, Ibn Ḥajar readily stated that "most of what I have copied [in the *Inbā'*] is from [Ibn Duqmāq] or from what Ibn al-Furāt had copied from him."⁴⁶ On the same page, Ibn Ḥajar also noted that al-'Aynī had so extensively borrowed from Ibn Duqmāq that he copied entire pages from his work, spelling mistakes and all.⁴⁷ Ibn al-Furāt and al-'Aynī's indebtedness to Ibn Duqmāq, alluded to by Ibn Ḥajar, has been confirmed by my own study: at least for the year 778, the *Tārīkh al-Duwal*⁴⁸ is more copious in terms of sheer data than Ibn Duqmāq's major work *Nuzhat al-Anām fī Tārīkh al-Islām*,⁴⁹ but the accounts of the latter form the backbone of the former to which Ibn al-Furāt added his own original material; as for al-'Aynī, the annal of the year 778 in his *'Iqd al-Jumān* is basically an identical copy of Ibn Duqmāq's *Nuzhah*.⁵⁰

⁴⁶1:3.

⁴⁷Ibid. Ibn Ḥajar wrote that al-'Aynī "mentions in his description of some events what indicates that he actually witnessed them . . . [but] the event would have taken place in Egypt while he was still in 'Ayntāb. . ." (ibid.). The maliciousness displayed here by Ibn Ḥajar towards al-'Aynī can be attributed to the academic clash between them concerning diverging ways of interpreting al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*; on this, see Anne F. Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt: Al-'Aynī, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 3 (1999): 98–101; and Aftāb Aḥmad Raḥmānī, "The Life and Works of Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī," *Islamic Culture* 47 (1973): 59–61, 172–74.

⁴⁸The *Tārīkh al-Duwal* annal of the year 778 is found in MS Chester Beatty 4125, fols. 28a–45b; on the "survival" of parts of Ibn al-Furāt's work in excerpts made by Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, see Reisman, "A Holograph MS," 26–27, 31–32.

⁴⁹See previous note.

⁵⁰The value of Ibn Duqmāq as a major historian of the period at hand is corroborated by a host of other factors. For example, the secondary sources that deal with his works (Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn 'Izz al-Dīn 'Alī, *Arba'at Mu'arrikhīn wa-Arba'at Mu'allafāt min Dawlat al-Mamālīk al-Jarākisah* [Cairo, 1992], 122–23; Tadmurī's introduction to *Al-Nafḥah*, 16–17; Eliyahu Ashtor, "Some Unpublished Sources for the Bahrī Period," in *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization*, ed. U. Heyd [Jerusalem, 1961], 28–29) mention a host of people whose historical writings he used as sources, but none of these save three, namely Badr al-Dīn Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī, his son Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir, and al-Nuwayrī al-Iskandarī (still alive in 775/1372), the author of a history of Alexandria (*Kitāb al-Ilmām bi-al-I'lām fīmā Jarat bi-hi al-Aḥkām wa-al-Umūr al-Maqḍīyah fī Wāqī'at al-Iskandarīyah*, ed. 'Azīz Suryāl 'Aṭīyah [Hyderabad, 1968–76]), lived during this period nor wrote about it. One then might assume that Ibn Duqmāq relied on oral information or eyewitness accounts, his and other people's, to write "the history of events of his own time" (Ashtor, "Études," 28). This might actually explain the absence, in his historical narrative, of references to sources which are nevertheless to be found in the text of his obituaries, where Badr al-Dīn Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī, his son Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir, and the poet al-'Aṭṭār are very frequently copied and, more often than not, acknowledged; on al-'Aṭṭār, see *Al-Manhal*, 2:177–79.



If one were to place the Egyptian historians of the year 793 in descending order of importance, circumstantial factors would however place Ibn Duqmāq at the bottom of the list. The only extant work by Ibn Duqmāq that deals with this year is his *Al-Jawhar al-Thamīn fī Siyar al-Khulafā' wa-al-Mulūk*,⁵¹ a dynastic history covering the entirety of the Burji period until 805,⁵² which is however poorer in information than his more detailed annalistic history, the *Nuzhat al-Anām fī Tārīkh al-Islām*, upon which it is based.⁵³ As a matter of fact, there is nothing in the meager, slightly more than two pages⁵⁴ of *Al-Nafḥah* dealing with 793. The existence in this work of a cluster of "meaty" *akhbār* that deal with Barqūq's stay in Aleppo at the end of Dhū al-Qa'dah⁵⁵ will allow us to formulate tentative conclusions regarding the genealogy of accounts found in Ibn al-Furāt's *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, but there is hardly anything original in the rest of the text except the mention by the author of the sultan's stop, unreported by others, at Irbid on his way to Damascus.⁵⁶ To be able to reconstruct the major events of the year, especially those taking place in Syria, one has to turn to sources other than *Al-Nafḥah*.

More informative than Ibn Duqmāq's *Al-Nafḥah* is *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk*.⁵⁷ In his introduction to the edited text of *Tadhkirat al-Nabīh*, a work written by Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī, Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr advanced the hypothesis that Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir had not only written a continuation of his father's *Durrat al-Aslāk*, from 778 until 801, *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk*,⁵⁸ but that the whole of the former work as well as its *dhayl* were actually authored by none other than Zayn al-Dīn

⁵¹ See above, n. 13.

⁵² Both *Al-Jawhar* 'Āshūr and *Al-Jawhar* 'Alī end in 797, and *Al-Nafḥah* in 805.

⁵³ According to Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr, two manuscript volumes of the *Nuzḥah* that start respectively in 659 and 777 are available at Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah in MS 1740 *Tārīkh (Al-Jawhar* 'Āshūr, 13). No indication of the year with which volume two ends is provided. However, in his introductory comments to his edition of the *Nuzḥah* covering the years 628–59, Samīr Ṭabbārah wrote that Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyah has an eighty-page manuscript of this work which starts with the reign of al-Manṣūr 'Alī in 778 and ends in 804 (*Nuzḥah* Ṭabbārah, 15). Whether or not he is referring to the second volume of Dār al-Kutub MS 1740 *Tārīkh* is not clear. Regardless, all attempts to get hold of this *Nuzḥah* manuscript, which supposedly contains the annal of the year 793, have led to naught as it was apparently lost! Incomplete sections of the years 804–5/1401–3 from the *Nuzḥah* have been preserved in selections made by Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah in "Al-Muntaqā min Tārīkh Ibn Duqmāq," MS Chester Beatty 4125, fols. 197a–206a; see Reisman, "A Holograph MS," 27, 31, 39, 40.

⁵⁴ *Al-Nafḥah*, 262–64.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 263–64.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 263.

⁵⁷ See above, n. 9.

⁵⁸ MS Bodleian Marsh 319, fols. 134a ff.



Ṭāhir himself.⁵⁹ Both external⁶⁰ and internal⁶¹ evidence seem to indicate a certain consensus which goes against ‘Āshūr’s reasoning, namely that Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī wrote *Durrat al-Aslāk* and that his son continued it as a *dhayl* from 778 onward. But perhaps the strongest evidence against the principal argument advanced by ‘Āshūr in support of his contention, namely the striking similarity between *Durrat al-Aslāk* and its *dhayl* in terms of the heavy and systematic use of *saj’*,⁶² is to be found in the *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk* itself. My research on the annal of the year 778 has shown that the narrative of political events was dwarfed by the sheer quantity of biographical data, principally obituaries.⁶³ But starting with the year

⁵⁹According to ‘Āshūr, many aspects of the subject matter of both *Tadhkirah* and *Durrat al-Aslāk*, notably the overlapping years from 678 to 770, are so similar that it is more likely than not that the former served as the *muswaddah* for the latter: the text of *Tadhkirah* was subjected to *tasjī’*, and the years 648 to 677 and 771 to 777 were added to it in order to produce *Durrat al-Aslāk*. Furthermore, ‘Āshūr commented that the similarity between that section of *Durrat al-Aslāk* attributed to Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī, and *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk*, which was written by his son Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir, is so evident in terms of style and tone that it is difficult to differentiate between the two (Introduction to the *Tadhkirah*, 28–29).

⁶⁰Ibn Ḥajar commented in his obituary of Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī that one of his literary productions consisted of the adaptation in *saj’* of another author’s work, and that he had written *Durrat al-Aslāk* in the same style, something which “is indicative of great knowledge and proficiency in verse and prose, even though he was not of the highest caliber in either one;” *Al-Durar*, 2:29, no. 1534. This might indicate that Ibn Ḥabīb was *capable* and *willing* to use *saj’* and/or other styles of writing: it is possible then that he wrote the two works, that is *Tadhkirah* and *Durrat al-Aslāk*, for different audiences, and that he wanted in the latter work to show what a *littérateur* he was. ‘Āshūr did fault Ibn Ḥajar for having said in his *Inbā’* (1:250) that both works were written in prose, and in his *Al-Durar* (2:30), that Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī used the same method in writing *Tadhkirah* as in *Durrat al-Aslāk*: “the study [?] proved that what Ibn Ḥajar advanced is far from the truth, as the style of the *Tadhkirah* is far removed from heavy [*mutakallif*] *saj’* and prose, so that such a statement applies only to the *Durrat al-Aslāk*” (Introduction to *Tadhkirah*, 30). ‘Āshūr did not, however, take into consideration the passage written by Ibn Ḥajar and quoted at the beginning of this footnote that highlighted Ibn Ḥabīb’s editorial prowess and versatility, which could have undermined his own line of argument.

⁶¹In the obituary he wrote of two of his brothers in the annal of the year 777 of *Durrat al-Aslāk*, Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī specifically referred to them as “*ikhwatī*” (MS Bodleian Marsh 319, fols. 132b–133a); see also *Al-Durar*, 2:65, no. 1607, 4:104, no. 284. In support of ‘Āshūr’s contention, one might have argued that Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir wanted his father to assume the authorship of something he himself had produced. This is possible but very unlikely especially since none of the contemporary sources saw fit to mention such a feat of filial love and loyalty. Last but not least, if Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir were indeed the author of all of *Durrat al-Aslāk*, why would he not have laid claim to the authorship of the entire work instead of simply stating in the margin of the first folio of the 778 annal that he was continuing his father’s history?

⁶²MS Bodleian Marsh 319, fols. 134a ff.

⁶³The section of *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk* comprising appointment and political reports covers



788,⁶⁴ and especially with 789,⁶⁵ one notices a propensity on the part of Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir to use less and less *saj'* in his reports, save for those with some degree of biographical content,⁶⁶ and to make more and more space for political events.⁶⁷ This trend is evident in the annal of the year 793: of a total of about twenty-four folios, eleven report political and military events as well as appointments.⁶⁸

These reports do not cover the whole range of events included by, say, Ibn al-Furāt and Ibn Ḥijjī. Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir does not seem to have departed from the fundamental format he adopted from his father's *Durrat al-Aslāk*, in that he paid little attention to issues which were unimportant to the eyes of the Aleppo-born-and-raised Egyptian *littérateur*⁶⁹ and civil servant that he was.⁷⁰ Thus, with

twelve folios (ibid., 133b–139), while obituaries take up nineteen folios (ibid., 139b–148b). However, much of the appointment reports are basically long biographical sketches, and the narrative of what could be construed as "political events" *per se* covers only four folios out of a total of thirty-one.

⁶⁴In the annal of the year 788, the account of the completion of Barqūq's Bayn al-Qaṣrayn madrasah complex contains no discernible signs of *saj'* ("Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk," MS Bodleian Marsh 319, fols. 220b–221a). The same cannot be said of the other non-biographical account, that relating the plague in Alexandria (fols. 222b–223a), which is replete with *saj'*; maybe its very topic, one that deals with such a great calamity, made it prone to such a stylistic treatment. Regardless, a scientific edition of *Durrat al-Aslāk* and its *dhayl* is needed before any conclusions about the modality of the use of *saj'* by Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir and his father can be formulated; see above, n. 9.

⁶⁵Ibid., fols. 228a–b, the account of the expedition sent by Barqūq to the northern marches of Syria to deal with Miṣṣāsh's rebellion and Tamerlane's incursions in Anatolia.

⁶⁶Namely those dealing with appointments and obituaries. There are parts of reports concerning events of a political nature where Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir did use *saj'*, but these are confined to *akhbār* prone to stylistic licence: for example, those dealing with a characteristic "villain" such as Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī in the annal of 791 (ibid., 237b–238a; 239a; etc.) or where the author utilized panegyrics to relate something about the sultan, such as his entry into Damascus in Ramaḍān 793 (ibid., 268a–b), etc.

⁶⁷To the extent that important events worthy of reporting did take place during a year, given Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir's lack of interest in stories which were however faithfully noted by historians such as Ibn al-Furāt and others. Thus, the annal of 790, an admittedly uneventful year, contains nothing but appointments and obituaries; see ibid., fols. 233b–236b.

⁶⁸Appointment reports that contain a core of historical data but which are submerged by the usual stock formulae used by Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir have not been included in the calculation. See for example the *khbar* concerning the appointment of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qayṣarī as chief Hanafī qadi in Cairo: ibid., fols. 264b–265a.

⁶⁹The obituaries written about him are replete with verses he composed on a variety of occasions; see *Al-Manhal*, 6:366–68, no. 1220; al-Sakhāwī, *Al-Daw' al-Lāmi' li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tāsi'* (Beirut, 1992), 4:3–5 (hereafter cited as *Al-Daw'*).

⁷⁰*Al-Manhal*, 6:366–68, no. 1220; *Al-Daw'*, 4:3–5.



the exception of religious appointments which took place in both regional poles of the Mamluk empire, there are no reports that deal specifically with Egypt. All three military appointments are to Syrian *niyābāt*⁷¹ and most⁷² of the political/military events that are reported by Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir take place in Syria.⁷³ He also recounted military operations in Syria,⁷⁴ details about the itinerary of the sultan from Egypt thereto,⁷⁵ his arrival and stay in Damascus at the end of Ramaḍān,⁷⁶ his trip to Aleppo and his stay there,⁷⁷ and his return to Cairo by way of Damascus at the end of the year.⁷⁸

The Syrian "dimension" of much of the reports in *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk* is likely due to the position of Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir. It is probable that he received his Syrian data, limited as they may be,⁷⁹ from an extended network of acquaintances he maintained in his land of origin,⁸⁰ an endeavor made easier by the position he occupied in the chancellery, the department of the Mamluk bureaucracy responsible,

⁷¹See "Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk," MS Bodleian Marsh 319, fols. 263a–b, 266a–b, and 266b–267a. Interestingly, these appointments and those of religious figures occur haphazardly in the main body of the text and their appearance does not seem to obey any chronological consideration.

⁷²Only a handful of events, such as the few details about the preparations for the sultan's departure to Syria, took place in Egypt; see *ibid.*, 267a–b.

⁷³Many of these reports were noted by Syrian sources only, and by Ibn Khaldūn; more on this below.

⁷⁴These would include, among others, the skirmishes between the forces of Syrian *nuwwāb* and those of Miṭāsh ("Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk," MS Bodleian Marsh 319, 263a–b); the arrival of Miṭāsh to Damascus at the very beginning of Rajab and the beginning of warfare around the city (264a); the encounter between the loyalists and the rebels at al-Kiswah, a village located south of Damascus, at the end of Sha'bān, following the lifting of the siege of Damascus by Miṭāsh earlier in the middle of the month (268a); the raids ordered by the sultan against the Turcomans following his arrival to Aleppo at the end of Shawwāl (269a–b), etc.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, 268a.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, 268a–b.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 269a–270a.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 270a–271a. The two *akhbār* of the sultan's arrival to Ḥamāh and Homs (270a) on his way back to Damascus are unique to *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk*.

⁷⁹His reports are limited in terms of both their quantity and depth when compared to the rich and dense narratives in Ibn Ṣaṣrā's and Ibn Ḥijjī's works. There is nothing, for example, in his *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk* about the siege of Damascus, save for the report about Miṭāsh's arrival to the city and the mention of the raid his lieutenant Shukr Aḥmad launched inside the city; see above, n. 74.

⁸⁰Such a network could have been established by members of his own family, namely his father and his uncle Sharaf al-Dīn Ḥusayn, whose biographies mention their travels between Syria and Egypt during their lifetime; see *Al-Durar*, 2:29, no. 1534, and 4:104, no. 284, and "Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk," MS Bodleian Marsh 319, fol. 132b.



among other things, for the correspondence of the sultan.⁸¹ It is also possible that he himself was part of Barqūq's expedition to Syria. Even though he made no mention of himself, he did note in his work that most men of the sword and of the pen accompanied the sultan at the end of Sha'bān 793 on his expedition to Syria, and that only a very few functionaries and amirs remained behind in Egypt in the service of Kumushbughā al-Ḥamawī, the *nā'ib al-ghaybah*.⁸² That he might have been part of the movement of the court to Syria⁸³ is a possibility since he was probably still in the employ of the state in 793.⁸⁴

It is unlikely that Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir used for his Syrian reports any of the sources that are available to us. His writing style is unique, and a collation of reports which have a common theme, found in the *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk* and in contemporary works, shows no convincing evidence of similarity amongst them.⁸⁵ Thus, he either had access, as was argued above, to special sources of information about Syria,⁸⁶ or he disguised, whether willfully or not, data that he borrowed from contemporary works.

In light of what was said above, what is the historiographical significance of *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk*? The annal of 793 in this chronicle does give us a certain picture of this year's events, but it is far from complete. The overall paucity of data in Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir's work has two consequences: first, even though he might have relied on written sources, it is less than likely that his work would have preserved important data from an otherwise no-longer-extant history; and second, there are no indications that his non-biographical reports have found

⁸¹On those attributes of the *dīwān al-inshā'*, where Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir is reported to have worked, which are relevant here, see Petry, *Civilian Elite*, 204–5, and Bernadette Martel-Thoumian, *Les civils et l'administration dans l'État militaire mamluk (IXe/XVe siècle)* (Damascus, 1992), 40–1.

⁸²"Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk," MS Bodleian Marsh 319, fols. 267a–b.

⁸³This would not have been the first visit he made to his homeland after his installation in Egypt at an unknown date: as late as 791, he recorded in his work that he was in the company of Yūnus al-Nawrūzī, Barqūq's *dawādār*, when the latter, on his way to Egypt after his defeat at the hands of Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī, was killed in Syria in Rabī' II 791 by the Arab tribal leader 'Anqā' Ibn Shaṭī; see *ibid.*, fol. 239a, and the obituary of Yūnus in *Al-Nujūm*, 11:320.

⁸⁴Even though it is impossible to ascertain Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir's presence in the chancellery in the year 793, it is probable that he was working in this office, because as late as 795 he is placed there by one of the sources: Ibn al-Furāt cited a written *khavar* from Ibn Duqmāq (an echo of which can be found in *Al-Nafḥah*, 269–70) where the latter reported hearing the information from Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir, who is presented as one of the secretaries of the *dast* and the scribe of an Amir Qulumṭāy al-'Uthmānī (*Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:247–48).

⁸⁵With the exception of one report whose wording is close to one found in Ibn al-Furāt's *Tārīkh al-Duwal*; on this see below, and also n. 110.

⁸⁶These might have included written sources not available today; on this see below.



their way into the works of other historians.⁸⁷ He did however have an impact on other historians as he is one of the most often-quoted sources in the obituaries section of contemporary and later chronicles.⁸⁸ Ultimately, the originality of *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk* lies in the person of Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir, a man with a foot in both his homeland of Aleppo and his Cairene place of residence, a situation which greatly influenced him and his work. The whole purpose of *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk* appears to have been to inform the reader in a peculiar literary style, from a Syro-Egyptian perspective, about the civilian *a'yān* of the Mamluk Sultanate, while providing information about the military elite, without however dwelling upon the vicissitudes of political history.

Another émigré, but from the Maghrib this time, was to succeed better than Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir in linking together in an uninterrupted narrative the events taking place in Egypt and Syria. So much has been said about Ibn Khaldūn and his important contributions to many fields of knowledge that it is unnecessary within the framework of this article to embark upon the exploration of ground better covered elsewhere.⁸⁹ Suffice it to note that by the year 793, nine years after his arrival to Egypt,⁹⁰ he had integrated well into Cairene society: he had befriended a number of important personalities such as Alṭunbughā al-Jūbānī⁹¹ (d. 792/1389)

⁸⁷There is however the possibility that some small sections, words really, from some of his reports might have found their way into the works of others. For example, the expression “*alā hīn ghaflah*” used by Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir (“*Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk*,” MS Bodleian Marsh 319, fol. 263b) to describe the arrival of Minṭāsh to the province of Aleppo before he headed for Damascus and laid siege to the city, is to be found in Ibn Taghrībirdī’s *Al-Nujūm* to explain the speed with which al-Nāṣirī left Damascus to confront Minṭāsh when news of his arrival reached him (11:21); see also below, n. 110.

⁸⁸See below. Attested borrowings from *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk* are too numerous to be mentioned. Suffice it here to say that for the year 778, Ibn Duqmāq quotes Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir numerous times in his obituaries section where he sometimes confuses him with his father, Ibn Ḥabīb al-Ḥalabī; see for example for the year 778, Ibn Duqmāq’s “*Nuzhah*,” MS Gotha Orient. A 1572, fols. 122a–b, and for the year 793, Ibn al-Furāt’s *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:286–87 (unless the confusion is the copyist’s mistake).

⁸⁹There are four hundred seventy-eight entries under Ibn Khaldūn’s name in the Chicago Online Bibliography of Mamluk Studies and one hundred ten under al-Maqrīzī’s versus seven under al-‘Aynī.

⁹⁰He arrived in Cairo during Shawwāl 784/December 1382; Walter J. Fischel, *Ibn Khaldūn in Egypt: His Public Functions and his Historical Research (1382–1406): A Study in Islamic Historiography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), 15.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 20, 36, 38–39, 76, 164. On Alṭunbughā al-Jūbānī, see *Al-Manhal*, 3:57–61, no. 536.



and Barqūq himself,⁹² had been appointed chief Maliki qadi in 786–87/1384–85,⁹³ but had lost favor with al-Zāhir after he had signed, in Rajab 791, a Miṭāsh-inspired *fatwā* requiring the execution of the sultan then in exile at al-Karak.⁹⁴

Any mention of Ibn Khaldūn's contribution to the field of historiography invites the inevitable comparison of the introduction of *Al-ʿIbar*, the seminal *Muqaddimah*, to the rest of the work. With regard to the relationship between these two parts, opinions among scholars are divided: some see in the latter the continuation of the original thinking found in the former,⁹⁵ while others have argued that those parts of *Al-ʿIbar* that cover earlier periods have little originality.⁹⁶ An analysis of the passages of *Al-ʿIbar* which deal with the year 793 reveals nothing of the powerful thinking behind the writing of the *Muqaddimah*: here as elsewhere,⁹⁷ Ibn Khaldūn presented an uninterrupted narrative of political events unencumbered by religious appointments and similar reports.⁹⁸

The reporting of the events of 793 starts with a long passage about the tribulations of the career of Kumushbughā al-Ḥamawī (d. 801/1399), an amir of Yalbughā al-ʿUmarī,⁹⁹ and his arrival to Cairo during the month of Ṣafar.¹⁰⁰ This is then followed by a very similar report dealing this time with the summoning from Syria of yet another leading amir, Aytamish al-Bajāsi (d. 802/1399).¹⁰¹ And whereas in other chronicles the news of the arrival of the emissary of the ruler of Tunis is covered in two to three lines,¹⁰² in *Al-ʿIbar* it occupies half a page and

⁹²Fischel, *Ibn Khaldūn in Egypt*, 20–22, 71–81.

⁹³Kamal Salibi, *Listes chronologiques des Grands Cadis de l'Égypte sous les Mamlouks* (Paris, 1957), 112–13.

⁹⁴Fischel, *Ibn Khaldūn in Egypt*, 34–36; see also *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:1:112.

⁹⁵See for example Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Ziyādah, who claimed that Ibn Khaldūn was the founder of a school of historical writing that blossomed in Egypt and attracted many thinkers such as al-Maqrīzī: *Al-Mu'arrikhūn fī Miṣr fī al-Qarn al-Khāmis 'Ashar al-Mīlādī/al-Qarn al-Tāsi' al-Hijrī* (Cairo, 1954), 6.

⁹⁶Little, in his *An Introduction*, has shown that those parts of *Al-ʿIbar* that deal with the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Muḥammad had simply been culled from other histories (75–76); see also his "Historiography," 435.

⁹⁷This is certainly the case with the sections of *Al-ʿIbar* dealing with the year 778.

⁹⁸*Al-ʿIbar*, 5:499–503.

⁹⁹See "Al-Manhal," fols. 112b–114a. On Yalbughā al-ʿUmarī, see above, n. 6.

¹⁰⁰*Al-ʿIbar*, 5:499–500.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, 500. On Aytamish al-Bajāsi, see *Al-Manhal*, 3:143–151, no. 588. The arrival of Aytamish and Kumushbughā, noted Ibn Khaldūn, reflected Barqūq's renewed confidence and came as the result of the strengthening of his rule: *Al-ʿIbar*, 5:499, 500.

¹⁰²*Al-ʿIbar*, 5:501; *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:248–49; *Al-Sulūk*, 3:2:735; *Nayl al-Amal*, 2:300.



details the long links between the two rulers.¹⁰³ The rest of the reports of the year deal with *the* political story of 793, Miṭāsh's on-going rebellion against the sultan, and contain, with the exception of details about the siege of Damascus, all its key events: the arrival of Miṭāsh to Damascus; the departure of the sultan for Syria; news about the major battles outside of Damascus between Yalbughā and his foes; the sultan's arrival to Damascus and later to Aleppo;¹⁰⁴ the events taking place in and around Aleppo leading to the arrest and execution of Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī; then the sultan's return to Egypt.¹⁰⁵ For these, Ibn Khaldūn relied both on *Tārīkh al-Duwal* and on a source or sources depicting in some detail political and military events in Syria. Even though Ibn Khaldūn sometimes summarized and/or reworded Ibn al-Furāt, the influence of the latter on the former¹⁰⁶ can clearly be seen in the following passage:

Ibn al-Furāt: "... wa-nazala [Miṭāsh] bi-al-Qaṣr al-Ablaq wa-nazala al-umarā' alladhīna ma'ahu fī buyūt alladhī ḥawl al-Qaṣr wa-anzala jamā'ah min aṣḥābihi fī Jāmi' Tankiz wa-jamā'ah fī Jāmi' Yalbughā." (*Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:255)

Ibn Khaldūn: "... fa-nazala [Miṭāsh] bi-al-Qaṣr al-Ablaq wa-anzala al-umarā' alladhīna ma'ahu fī al-buyūt ḥawālī al-Qaṣr wa-fī Jāmi' Shakan [*sic*] wa-Jāmi' Baybuqā [*sic*]." (*Al-'Ibar*, 5:501)

In other passages,¹⁰⁷ it is less blatant but still discernible in terms of the choice of items and their order of appearance. For example, contrary to Ibn al-Furāt, Ibn Khaldūn did not describe the present sent to the sultan on his way to Aleppo by the Turcoman chief Sūlī Dūlghādir,¹⁰⁸ but he did note, like the author of *Tārīkh*

¹⁰³ Here Ibn Khaldūn showed his interest in things diplomatic and in matters pertaining to his region of origin, the Maghrib.

¹⁰⁴ *Al-'Ibar*, 5:501–2.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 502–3.

¹⁰⁶ I am not ruling out the possibility that both used a common source. As I noticed in the case of the year 778, Ibn Khaldūn's accounts are so close to Ibn al-Furāt's, and the latter's to Ibn Duqmāq's, that it is difficult to establish with great certainty the indebtedness of *Al-'Ibar* to either *Nuzḥah* or *Tārīkh al-Duwal*. In the absence of the *Nuzḥah* annal for the year 793, it will be impossible to completely rule out a common source for Ibn Khaldūn and Ibn al-Furāt.

¹⁰⁷ *Al-'Ibar*, 5:500/*Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:250–51; 5:501/ 9:2:255; 5:502/9:2:266–67, etc.

¹⁰⁸ Along with Sālim al-Dūkārī, Dūlghādir is frequently mentioned in the events of the year 793. On Sūlī and his family, see J. H. Mordtmann and V. L. Ménage, *Encyclopédie de l'Islam*, 2nd ed., 2:246–47, and *Al-Manhal*, 6:183–86, no. 1164. As to Sālim al-Dūkārī, apart from the obituary of a person, Dimashq Khuḡā ibn Sālim al-Dūkārī, who appears to be his son (*Al-Manhal*, 5:324–25, no. 1028) and the scattered references throughout contemporary and later histories, I have not as of yet



al-Duwal, the arrival of a delegation from the tribe of ʿIsā and Muḥannā¹⁰⁹ pledging loyalty to Barqūq. The wording is somewhat different, but the contents are the same.

Things become more problematic, however, when dealing with the reports of Syrian origin and/or dealing with Syria. The problem lies in the fact that despite a number of similarities between them and those of other historians, namely Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir, it is nearly impossible to determine their genealogy. For example, contemporary reports about al-Nāṣirī's meeting with the sultan when the latter entered southern Syria on his way to Damascus in the middle of Ramaḍān have a word or words in common, particularly those used to describe Barqūq's behavior towards al-Nāṣirī,¹¹⁰ but Ibn Khaldūn said that the meeting took place at the fortress of Qāqūn,¹¹¹ Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir¹¹² at al-Lujūn,¹¹³ and Ibn Ṣaṣrā at al-Ghawr!¹¹⁴ Finally, adding to the confusion, there is the problem of chronological inconsistency in a report mentioned only by Ibn Khaldūn, Ibn Ṣaṣrā, and Ibn Ḥijjī. According to what can be gleaned from the Syrian sources, on the sixteenth of Sha'bān Tumāntamur, a pillar of the Miṭāshī camp, deserted and joined al-Nāṣirī. This desertion and the fear that more would take place led Miṭāsh to

located detailed information about him. On the general topic of the Turcomans during the Mamluk period, see Barabara Kellner-Heinkele, "The Turkomans and *Bilād al-Shām* in the Mamluk Period," in *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in The Middle East*, ed. Tarif Khalidi (Beirut, 1984), 169–80.

¹⁰⁹The tribal formation of renegade Arab amir Nuʿayr Ibn Ḥayyār; on him see "Al-Manhal," fols. 812a–813a. On the Arab tribes during this period see M. A. Hiyari, "The Origins and Development of the Amirate of the Arabs During the Seventh/Thirteenth and Eighth/Fourteenth Centuries," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 38, no. 3 (1975): 508–24; A. S. Tritton, "The Tribes of Syria in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," *ibid.* 11 (1943–46): 567–73.

¹¹⁰For example, the verb *tarajjala* used by Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir and Ibn Khaldūn.

¹¹¹Qāqūn was located off the coast half way between Gaza and northern Palestine; see *A Chronicle of Damascus*, 245, n. 1481. In *Al-ʿIbar*, the name of this locality is given as Qānūn.

¹¹²Al-ʿAynī, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Taghrībirdī also placed the meeting at the same location as Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir; see, respectively, "ʿIqd," MS Ahmet III 2911/B2, fol. 97b; "ʿIqd," Dār al-Kutub MS 1584 *Tārīkh*, fols. 431–32; *Al-Sulūk*, 3:2:748; *Al-Nujūm*, 11:26. More importantly, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah in his *TIQS* also referred to al-Lujūn; it might very well be that this report was taken from Ibn Ḥijjī, even though, in the light of what will be argued below, it is impossible to confirm.

¹¹³Al-Lujūn is located about twenty miles north of Qāqūn; see William Popper, *Egypt and Syria under the Circassian Sultans, 1382–1468 A.D.: Systematic Notes to Ibn Taghrībirdī's Chronicles of Egypt* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1955–57), 1:48 and map no. 13.

¹¹⁴A region of the Jordan valley located south of Lake Tiberias; see *A Chronicle of Damascus*, 87, n. 511. All the locales mentioned here are part of one of the routes from Gaza to Damascus; see Popper, *Egypt and Syria Under the Circassian Sultans*, 1:48 and map. no. 13. This route includes a stop at Irbid, a city where, according to Ibn Duqmāq, the sultan stopped on his way to Damascus; see above, n. 56.



lift his siege of the Syrian capital; on the following day, al-Nāṣirī's forces would experience a crushing defeat at the hands of Nu'ayr at Ḍumayr.¹¹⁵ Curiously, Ibn Khaldūn placed the desertion of Tumāntamur¹¹⁶ *after* the battle of Ḍumayr, contrary to what the Syrian sources maintain. What is to be made of all this? With regards to the report concerning the arrival of Barqūq to Syria, because of the variety of locales, we might posit the following: either all the authors used a common source¹¹⁷ but played around with historical truth and thus made al-Nāṣirī welcome the sultan to Syria in three different places[!], or we are in the presence of three different strains of *akhbār*, namely Ibn Khaldūn's unknown source (Qāqūn), Ibn Ṣaṣrā's own eyewitness and/or first-hand account (al-Ghawr), and Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir's (al-Lajjūn).¹¹⁸ This of course is pure conjecture: beyond establishing the existence of a Furātian and Syrian strain of *akhbār* in *Al-'Ibar*, there is no way of ascertaining the identity of the latter group of reports.¹¹⁹

Ibn al-Furāt's *Tārīkh al-Duwal* is the most copious and comprehensive of all the surviving historical works produced during this period. For the year 793, it contains the overwhelming majority of all those reports concerning Egypt and the general political/administrative/religious appointments mentioned by all histories. All the historians who wrote about this period¹²⁰ are either directly indebted to him or, knowingly or unknowingly, incorporated his *akhbār* by means of a third party.¹²¹ as was noted earlier, al-Maqrīzī's *Al-Sulūk*, for example, which is nothing but a "slimmer" rewritten version of *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, was to become the foundation for the works of historians such as Ibn Taghrībirdī, Ibn Iyās, and others.

However, *Tārīkh al-Duwal* contains none of the wealth of information found in the works of the Syrian authors about the nearly two months¹²² of fighting in and around Damascus between the Miṭāshīs and Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī. This aspect of the war in Syria was very well "covered" by Ibn Ṣaṣrā and Ibn Ḥijjī, and one has to wait until Barqūq's departure from Cairo¹²³ before the appearance in *Tārīkh*

¹¹⁵See below.

¹¹⁶In *Al-'Ibar*, it is Yamāztamur (5:502).

¹¹⁷Maybe unknown Syrian source(s) or Ibn Duqmāq's *Nuzhah*? See below.

¹¹⁸We could be dealing with four strains of *akhbār* if we include al-'Aynī, who alone provided details not found elsewhere, namely the description of the horse on which Barqūq made Yalbughā ride; see n. 110.

¹¹⁹See below the discussion about the possible nature and identity of this or these Syrian source(s).

¹²⁰Save for Ibn Ṣaṣrā and possibly Ibn Ḥijjī; see below.

¹²¹See above.

¹²²Rajab and Sha'bān; see above and below.

¹²³*Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:259ff.



al-Duwal of *akhbār* from or about Bilād al-Shām, sometimes paralleling those of the two Syrian authors, especially his stay in Aleppo and the events surrounding it.¹²⁴ Before Barqūq's arrival in Syria, Ibn al-Furāt's reports about this region lacked detail and were of a second-hand nature since they were brought to Cairo by post-riders or by representatives of both Syrian and Egyptian military office-holders shuttling between the two regions. The analysis of these reports in *Tārīkh al-Duwal* might help clarify the reasons behind certain inconsistencies between this chronicle on the one hand, and mainly Syrian sources on the other. There is a systematic difference between the way Ibn al-Furāt's reports from Syria via post-riders and messengers described what was going on in Syria, and the evidence presented by Ibn Ḥijjī and Ibn Ṣaṣrā.

The first report about events in Damascus was that brought on 5 Rajab by Kumushbughā al-Ṣaraytamurī, the *dawādār* of Qarādamurdāsh al-Aḥmadī¹²⁵ (d. 794/1392), then viceroy of Aleppo, who informed people in Cairo about the arrival of Minṭāsh to the Syrian capital.¹²⁶ The second report¹²⁷ arrived on 27 Rajab by means of a post-rider with news that Minṭāsh had been defeated and was besieged at Qaṣr al-Ablaq¹²⁸ after the arrival of loyalist soldiers from Gaza and of Arghūn Shāh al-Ibrāhīmī,¹²⁹ the amir whom Barqūq had recently nominated *ḥājib al-ḥujjāb* of Damascus.¹³⁰ The Syrian sources do not agree with this turn of events. First, if one considers that it takes about four days for a post-rider to ride the Damascus–Cairo route,¹³¹ the only victory the messenger could have been referring to was the retaking on the twenty-third of this month of an important landmark, the building of Bahādur,¹³² by al-Nāṣirī and his forces; but no mention is made of a defeat of the rebels significant enough to lead to their flight from the city, which is one of the claims of the messenger.¹³³ Even more surprising is that

¹²⁴Ibid., 266–71.

¹²⁵On him see "Al-Manhal," fols. 589b–590b.

¹²⁶*Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:256; *Al-Nafḥah*, 262–63.

¹²⁷*Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:256–57.

¹²⁸A palace built by al-Zāhir Baybars outside of the city's western wall; see *A Chronicle of Damascus*, 36, n. 216.

¹²⁹On him see *Al-Manhal*, 2:323–34, no. 376, and *Al-Ḍaw'*, 2:367, no. 825.

¹³⁰*Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:254.

¹³¹Popper, *Egypt and Syria Under the Circassian Sultans*, 1:45.

¹³²This building was probably located just west of the city's walls in an area which included Yalbughā's mosque, al-Maydān, and Qaṣr al-Ablaq, where the Minṭāshīs were conducting their siege of the city.

¹³³A similar inconsistency can be found in another report dated 5 Sha'bān brought to Cairo by a mamluk of the viceroy of Ṣafad with news, yet again, of Minṭāsh's escape from Damascus and his pursuit by Yalbughā. Not only do the Syrian sources *not* mention any flight on the part of Minṭāsh



no mention is made of the defeat¹³⁴ at ‘Aqabat al-Tīnah¹³⁵ on 6 Rajab, at the hands of Miṭāshīs and Yamanī tribesmen,¹³⁶ of a Barqūq party from the Biqā‘ comprising Ibn al-Ḥanash,¹³⁷ Tankizbughā (the Barqūqī viceroy of Baalbek), and Qaysī tribesmen and others, on its way to help al-Nāṣirī.¹³⁸

Even more at odds with events on the ground in Syria are two reports dated at the beginning of Ramaḍān. On the first of that month, a letter was brought to Cairo by a messenger from the sultan who was on his way to Syria but had not yet reached Qaṭyā, at the gates of the Sinai peninsula, the contents of which were that Miṭāsh had been defeated and had escaped from Damascus.¹³⁹ A few days later, on the fourth, an Amir Sūdūn al-Ṭayyār al-Zāhirī arrived in Cairo with briefs from the sultan confirming to those in Cairo the veracity of this news, and informing them that Miṭāsh was under siege¹⁴⁰ at the citadel of al-Zur‘ah.¹⁴¹ The most striking aspect of these last two reports is that while it was true that Miṭāsh had finally fled Damascus¹⁴² on 16 Sha‘bān¹⁴³ and that Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī had managed to beat a party of Miṭāshīs at al-Kiswah¹⁴⁴ eleven days later on the twenty-seventh,¹⁴⁵ the sultan and the Cairenes had not yet been informed about the crushing defeat suffered by Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī at the hands of Nu‘ayr near the village of Ḍumayr on the seventeenth of that month.¹⁴⁶ News concerning this

and his Turcomans, but they even note that the latter retook from the loyalists the building of Bahādur, thus causing them great loss! See *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:257; “*Tārīkh Ibn Hījī*,” fol. 96b; *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī‘ah*, 86; and *TIQS*, 1:374.

¹³⁴ *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī‘ah*, 80–81; “*Tārīkh Ibn Hījī*,” fols. 96a–b; and *TIQS*, 1:374.

¹³⁵ A spot probably located halfway between Baalbek and Damascus in the Anti-Lebanon range; see *A Chronicle of Damascus*, 112, n. 676.

¹³⁶ This party was led by Shukr Aḥmad (a.k.a. Aḥmad Shukr; more on him below) and Ibn Hilāl al-Dawlah, a Yamanī leader from al-Zabadānī region west of Damascus; see *ibid.*, 106, n. 632.

¹³⁷ Son of Ibn al-Ḥanash, an important tribal chief from the Biqā‘ who had been viceroy of Baalbek and was executed by Miṭāsh in 792; see *ibid.*, 16, n. 106, and the sources cited therein.

¹³⁸ On this battle, see below.

¹³⁹ *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:262.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ A town in the Hawrān region of Syria; see *A Chronicle of Damascus*, 128, n. 759, and the references therein.

¹⁴² News about Miṭāsh’s flight was again brought to Cairo on 6 Sha‘bān and 13 Ramaḍān, respectively: *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:262–63 and 264.

¹⁴³ Because of the betrayal of one of his right-hand men, Tumāntamur; see above.

¹⁴⁴ A village south of Damascus; see *A Chronicle of Damascus*, 74, n. 453, and the references therein.

¹⁴⁵ *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī‘ah*, 93; *Al-‘Ibar*, 5:502; *TIQS*, 1:379.

¹⁴⁶ *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī‘ah*, 91–92; “*Tārīkh Ibn Hījī*,” fols. 99a–b; *Al-‘Ibar*, 5:502; *TIQS*, 1:379.



battle, in which one of the sons of Manjak al-Yūsufi¹⁴⁷ was killed,¹⁴⁸ reached Cairo, according to Ibn al-Furāt, only during the first third of Ramaḍān,¹⁴⁹ at a time when Barqūq was in Palestine on his way to Syria.

It is tempting to impute the inconsistencies pointed out above to the vicissitudes of historical writing or to mere coincidence. In other words, Ibn al-Furāt simply included in his work the material that was available to him,¹⁵⁰ and that material brought to Cairo by messengers simply did not mention the defeat at Ḍumayr. But equally plausible is the view that the contents of the messages arriving to Cairo, at least until Barqūq reached Syria, were consciously altered by their senders, either to downplay defeats and to camouflage them as victories for fear of incurring the wrath of the sultan, or as a delaying tactic. Even though Barqūq had strengthened his hand in the cut-throat environment of Mamluk politics, there were still people who resented his return to power, and a number of those were in Syria. In Damascus itself, there were many parties who actually supported Miṭāsh during the disturbances of 791–92, and one ought to keep in mind that back then the city did not fall to the besiegers led by Barqūq because of the steadfastness of its defenders.¹⁵¹ In 793, yet again, the Syrian sources talk about the sympathy felt by certain sections of the population for Miṭāsh: the *‘āmmah*, the inhabitants of the neighborhoods of al-Shuwaykah and al-Shāghūr,¹⁵² and most importantly, the members of the household of Baydamur al-Khawārizmī (d. 789/1386). Baydamur had assumed the viceroyalty of Damascus a total of six

¹⁴⁷A former viceroy of Syria and a “mentor” of Barqūq during his youth; see Fischel, “*Ascensus Barcoch* (I),” 65–66. According to Mignanelli, three sons of his, Ibrāhīm, ‘Umar, and Faraj, had supported Barqūq’s bid to return to power in 791 after he came out of al-Karak; *ibid.*, 155.

¹⁴⁸The sources are not too clear about the casualties of this battle. Ibn Ṣaṣrā claimed that one thousand two hundred sixty people were killed on both sides while Ibn Khaldūn mentioned the figure of fifteen Syrian amirs (*Al-Durrah al-Muḍī’ah*, 93; *Al-Ibar*, 5:502). The same confusion exists as to which one of Manjak’s sons died at Ḍumayr: Ibn al-Furāt and Ibn Khaldūn noted that it was Ibrāhīm, while Ibn Ṣaṣrā stated that it was ‘Umar (*ibid.*, and *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:263). The only reference in the sources to Faraj is that of Ibn Ḥijjī, who noted that on 12 Sha‘bān his house was looted by the populace during the battle of the Qanawāt, a neighborhood west of the city center (“*Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī*,” fols. 98b–99a).

¹⁴⁹*Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:263.

¹⁵⁰Even if these reports were originally authored by somebody else, say Ibn Duqmāq, the inconsistencies pointed out above would still hold, unless it can be shown that Ibn al-Furāt falsely claimed that post-riders and the like brought these *akhbār* to Cairo when in reality they had a different history.

¹⁵¹The defenders were mostly members of the populace, but they included amongst them prominent citizens such as Ibn al-Qurashī, who was going to be executed on the orders of Barqūq; see *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:256, and his obituary, 284–85.

¹⁵²Two neighborhoods located just outside the city’s southern walls.



times¹⁵³ and had died in custody after Barqūq had ordered him removed from office in 788.¹⁵⁴ Contrary to the sons of Manjak al-Yūsufī, that other viceroy of Damascus, who sided with Barqūq during 791–93, Muḥammad Shāh ibn Baydamur (d. 793/1391) and the supporters of his household fought alongside Minṭāsh even when the latter moved against Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī in Sha‘bān 791.¹⁵⁵ He was nominated *atābak* of Damascus by Minṭāsh in Ramaḍān 791¹⁵⁶ and participated in numerous confrontations with the forces loyal to Barqūq, until his capture in 792¹⁵⁷ and his execution in Cairo by Kumushbughā al-Ḥamawī in 793.¹⁵⁸ It was also Shukr Aḥmad, a former Baydamurī amir, who led the raid into Damascus the day of his arrival with Minṭāsh on 1 Rajab 793, and rode to his *ustādh*’s home where he was joined by another one of Baydamur’s sons, Aḥmad, whose execution by Barqūq on 21 Dhū al-Ḥijjah was movingly described by Ibn Ṣaṣrā.¹⁵⁹ Last but not least, the viceroy of Damascus Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī stands out as the official with the most reasons and with the capability to mislead the sultan and his court back in Egypt. He had often been at odds with Barqūq when the latter was an “‘Umarī” mamluk,¹⁶⁰ then *atābak*,¹⁶¹ and when he became sultan.¹⁶² It would not be surprising then that Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī would have used his powers as the head of the Syrian political apparatus to propagate false news in Egypt. In the sources rumors about his treachery abound.¹⁶³ Eventually, when he reached Aleppo, Barqūq became assured about his suspicions when Sālim al-Dūkārī, who allegedly had captured Minṭāsh and had promised to release him into the custody of the sultan,

¹⁵³ Ibn Ṭūlūn, *I’lām al-Warā bi-man Wuliya Nā’ iban min al-Atrāk bi-Dimashq al-Shām al-Kubrā*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Duhmān (Damascus, 1984), 53 (hereafter cited as *I’lām*); *Al-Manhal*, 3:498–99.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*; and *Al-Nujūm*, 11:201. This was not the first time Baydamur had been removed from this office by Barqūq; see *Al-Nujūm*, 11:135 [780] and 147 [782].

¹⁵⁵ See *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:292; *Al-Nujūm*, 11:274ff.

¹⁵⁶ *A Chronicle of Damascus*, 39–40.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁵⁸ On Muḥammad Shāh ibn Baydamur’s tribulations in 793, see *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī’ah*, 74; *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:252, 268.

¹⁵⁹ *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī’ah*, 103–9.

¹⁶⁰ Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī was one of the few amirs not to rebel against al-Ashraf Sha‘bān in ‘Aqabah during the events of the year 778, whereas Barqūq was, as a former mamluk of Yalbughā al-‘Umarī, very much involved in the coup; see Fischel, “*Ascensus Barcoch* (I),” 67–68.

¹⁶¹ *Al-Nujūm*, 11:129–30.

¹⁶² See above, n. 27.

¹⁶³ *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī’ah*, 76; “*Tārīkh Ibn Hījī*,” fol. 95b; *Al-Ibar*, 5:501–2; “*Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk*,” MS Bodleian Marsh 319, fols. 264a–b.



sent him a letter detailing the extent of the relations between al-Nāṣirī and Miṭāsh.¹⁶⁴ This led to the execution of Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī on 27 Dhū al-Ḥijjah.¹⁶⁵ The best summary of the situation described here can be found in the words of Mignanelli, who, we are told by Fischel, knew Barqūq personally. Of the events in Syria, he remarked that

[The sultan] was told that Nāṣirī was concealing much and so he was inwardly worried. Nāṣirī was said to be doing this to avoid being himself slain by Barqūq or becoming of little value when once Miṭāsh was destroyed or slain. Of this Nāṣirī was very much afraid. Barqūq sent many letters to Nāṣirī, but they availed little. Nāṣirī excused himself for his weakness against Miṭāsh and Nu‘ayr. Wherefore, the sultan girded himself for a journey to Syria. [Upon Barqūq’s arrival there] Nāṣirī excused himself, claiming he could not do more. Barqūq accepted his excuses [but inside] he thought that Nāṣirī was in collusion with Miṭāsh so that they might be able together to usurp control of Syria.¹⁶⁶

Here, as elsewhere, in light of the available sources, we are dealing with sheer conjecture. As a matter of fact, one of the reports brought to Cairo on 5 Sha‘bān by the mamluk of the viceroy of Ṣafad, announcing the escape of Miṭāsh from Damascus,¹⁶⁷ might very well weaken the hypothesis advanced above. The viceroy of Ṣafad, Iyās al-Jirjāwī (d. 799/1396),¹⁶⁸ was a supporter of Barqūq throughout the period of 791–93,¹⁶⁹ and it would be curious that he would have “fed” the court in Cairo information that did not correspond to the reality on the ground. Of course, there are ways with which one can circumscribe this issue: maybe al-Jirjāwī, who entered Damascus on 8 Rajab and participated in the fighting alongside al-Nāṣirī,¹⁷⁰ felt he could not afford to inform Barqūq about the inability of his forces to break the stalemate; maybe he considered the loss of the building of Bahādur on the part the Miṭāshīs as a major setback for the rebels, and a troop movement on their part as a retreat; maybe he was in on the conspiracy;

¹⁶⁴*Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:270–71; *Al-Ibar*, 5:503; “Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk,” MS Bodleian Marsh 319, fol. 296b.

¹⁶⁵See the references in the preceding note, and *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī‘ah*, 101. Also see above, n. 44.

¹⁶⁶Fischel, “*Ascensus Barcoch* (II),” 160.

¹⁶⁷See above, n. 133.

¹⁶⁸See *Al-Manhal*, 3:124–25.

¹⁶⁹See for example *A Chronicle of Damascus*, 13, 20, 62, etc.

¹⁷⁰*Al-Durrah al-Muḍī‘ah*, 81; “*Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī*,” fol. 96b.



or maybe, even at the risk of pushing the conspiracy theory to its limits, the mamluk who brought the news to Cairo was "briefed" by Yalbughā's men, etc. However, the fact remains that many of the *akhbār* reported in *Tārīkh al-Duwal* as having arrived between 27 Rajab and the first ten days of Ramaḍān, some through the sultan, who, while on his way to Damascus, was probably still getting his information from post-riders from Syria, simply do not correspond to what was going on according to sources "on the ground." Generally, the nature of the reports used by historians depends on such factors as the format of their work, their own intellectual aptitudes and interests, their geographical location, their sources, etc. In light of the discussion above, attention ought also to be paid to the channels through which information transited before it reached the historian, and more importantly to the agenda of those military figures, bureaucrats, and others who controlled its flow and content: a tall order indeed in view of the paucity of data that would allow for such an investigation.

Apart from the issue raised above, structurally and from the point of view of the nature of their contents, Ibn al-Furāt stuck to an annalistic format with reports following one another in a strict chronological order and the obituaries placed at the very end. But as for the potential sources of *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, the absence of Ibn Duqmāq's *Nuzhah* will not permit us to ascertain the genealogy of Ibn al-Furāt's reports. This problem is somewhat alleviated by the fact that *Tārīkh al-Duwal* does contain references to other authors. Ibn Duqmāq is quoted five times by Ibn al-Furāt, twice in the main text of *Tārīkh al-Duwal*,¹⁷¹ and three times in the obituaries.¹⁷² Although, unfortunately, neither of the first two reports are mentioned in *Al-Nafḥah*, there is still the possibility of comparing those "meaty" passages¹⁷³ in the latter work with the corresponding ones in *Tārīkh al-Duwal*. The following report describes Miṭṭāsh's descent from the north towards Damascus:¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹*Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:254–55, 261.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, 275, 282, 285.

¹⁷³These were probably reduced in size by Ibn Duqmāq to fit *Al-Nafḥah*, which is a summary of *Nuzhah*.

¹⁷⁴Words and sentences that are not italicized indicate similarities between the two texts. Punctuation mine.



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| Ibn Duqmāq: "Minṭāsh <i>haḍara</i> min Mar'ash 'alā al-'Imq 'alā Sarmīn ilā qarīb Ḥamāh; <i>fa-haraba</i> nāyib Ḥamāh, fa-dakhala <i>Minṭāsh</i> fa-lam yushawwish 'alayhim; | Ibn al-Fūrāt: " <i>Tawajjaha al-amīr</i> Minṭāsh min Mar'ash 'alā al-'Imq 'alā A'zāz 'alā Sarmīn ilā qarīb Ḥamāh; <i>fa-sami'a</i> nāyib Ḥamāh <i>bi-ḥuḍūrihi</i> , <i>fa-akhadha harīmahu wa-tawajjaha ilā Tarāblus</i> , <i>fa-lammā waṣala Minṭāsh ilā Ḥamāh</i> , <i>lam yajid bi-hā aḥadan yudāfi'ahu</i> fa-dakhalahā <i>bi-al-amān wa-al-iṭmān fa-tazaghratū lahu al-nisā'</i> <i>fa-nādā la-hum bi-al-amān</i> wa-lam yushawwish 'alayhim; |
| thumma kharaja minhā ilā Ḥimṣ fa-dakhalahā wa-lam yushawwish 'alayhim; | thumma kharaja minhā <i>wa tawajjaha</i> ilā Ḥimṣ <i>fa-lam yajid bi-hā man yudāfi'ahu</i> , <i>wa-kāna nāyibuhā qad sami'a bi-quḍūmihi</i> , <i>fa-tawajjaha ilā Dimashq</i> fa-dakhala <i>Minṭāsh</i> ilayhā wa-lam yushawwish 'alā aḥad min ahlihā; |
| thumma tawajjaha ilā Ba'albak wa-kāna nāyibuhā qad sami'a bi-quḍūmihi ayḍan, fa-tawajjaha ilā Dimashq; | thumma tawajjaha <i>minhā</i> ilā Ba'albak wa-kāna nāyibuhā qad sami'a bi-quḍūmihi ayḍan, fa-tawajjaha ilā Dimashq, <i>fa-dakhala Minṭāsh ilā Ba'albak</i> , <i>thumma kharaja minhā wa-qaṣada Dimashq</i> ; |
| fa-lammā sami'a al-Nāṣirī ḥuḍūrahu kharaja ilayhi min al-Zabadānī." (<i>Al-Nafḥah</i> , 263) | fa-lammā sami'a al-Nāṣirī <i>bi-ḥuḍūrihi</i> kharaja ilayhi min <i>ṭarīq</i> al-Zabadānī." (<i>Tārīkh al-Duwal</i> , 9:2:255) |



The similarities between the two texts is self-evident, and one might safely assume that it was Ibn al-Furāt who borrowed from Ibn Duqmāq rather than the other way around,¹⁷⁵ since *Nuzhah* would have probably provided a larger account than that of *Al-Nafḥah*.

Another possible source for *Tārīkh al-Duwal* is Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir and his *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk*, which is frequently quoted by Ibn al-Furāt. Zayn al-Dīn noted in his narrative of the events leading to the siege of Damascus that as Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī left the city to confront the rebels who were reported in Baalbek, Minṭāsh headed to the Syrian capital so that they unknowingly crossed each other's path.¹⁷⁶ The words he used for that last bit of information, *fa-takhālafū fī al-ṭarīq wa-sabaqahu Minṭāsh*, are almost identical to those of Ibn al-Furāt, *fa-khālafahu fī al-ṭarīq wa-atā ilā Dimashq*.¹⁷⁷ Even though the narratives of Ibn al-Furāt and Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir are clearly not identical, they do appear at more or less the same point in the narration in both *Tārīkh al-Duwal* and *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk*. If one discounts the randomness of the appearance of this cluster of words, the issue of the direction of the borrowing, small as it may be, still has to be addressed, but it is more likely than not that it was Ibn al-Furāt who borrowed from Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir. Up until the arrival of the sultan in Damascus, the reports concerning Syria reported in *Tārīkh al-Duwal* arrived, as we noted above, with post-riders or with representatives of military office-holders. A notable exception is the *khavar* which appears under the heading "News about Minṭāsh's

¹⁷⁵In his obituary of the qadī al-Qurashī, where Ibn al-Furāt quotes Ibn Duqmāq directly (9:2:275), the contents of the citation appear, edited, in two different reports in the main body of *Tārīkh al-Duwal* (253, 254). In another obituary (281–82), Ibn al-Furāt quotes Ibn Duqmāq jointly with Walī al-Dīn Abū Zar'ah ibn al-'Irāqī (762–826/1360–1422), but since the latter is not known to have written a history that extended that late in the century, we are probably dealing here with material culled from a work of a biographical nature. Ibn al-'Irāqī's *Al-Dhayl 'alā al-'Ibar fī Khavar Man 'Abar* was edited by Ṣāliḥ Maḥdī 'Abbās in three volumes (Beirut, 1989). On Ibn al-'Irāqī's life and works, see this edition, 1:7–32; *Al-Daw'*, 1:336–44; Moḥammad ben Cheneb and J. de Somogyi, "Al-Dhahabī," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., 2:214–16; and Caesar E. Farah, *The Dhayl in Medieval Arabic Historiography* (New Haven, 1967), 20–21.

¹⁷⁶"Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk," MS Bodleian Marsh 319, fol. 264a.

¹⁷⁷*Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:255. Similar wordings can be found in the works of other historians such as Ibn Khaldūn ("*fa-khālafahu Minṭāsh ilā Dimashq*," *Al-'Ibar*, 5:501), Ibn Ḥajar ("*fa-khālafahu Minṭāsh ilā Dimashq*," *Inbā'*, 3:55), and Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah ("*fa-tafāwatū fī al-ṭarīq wa-jā' a Minṭāsh bi-'askarihi*," *TIQS*, 1:373). The reliance of these three authors on Ibn al-Furāt has already been established above; see also Reisman, "A Holograph MS." As to the sense of the verb *khālafa* in this particular context, which can be read as "preceded," the meaning that was imparted to it here, namely the crossing of paths, is probably the right one since Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah used a synonym, the verb *fāwata*.



heading toward Bilād al-Shām,¹⁷⁸ in which Ibn al-Furāt took a break from presenting dated reports one after the other, and offered the reader a long, unencumbered narrative dealing with the itinerary of Minṭāsh from northern Syria until his arrival in Damascus on 1 Rajab. Perhaps he used parts of Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir's account along with that of Ibn Duqmāq to construct this particular paragraph. After all, as I have noticed in the case of the year 778, Ibn al-Furāt copied almost word for word a great deal of the reports in *Nuzhah* and used them as the foundation of his annal without ever citing Ibn Duqmāq. It is thus not impossible that he placed Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir's sentence construction and other information in his text and added to it the data he gleaned from *Nuzhah*. Last but not least, no mention is made of Ibn al-Furāt in *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk*, whereas between 791 and 796 Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir is mentioned in the edited text of *Tārīkh al-Duwal* eleven times, including nine direct quotations in the obituaries section.¹⁷⁹

Tārīkh al-Duwal remains indispensable reading for those interested in the events of the year 793, but one cannot get a sense of all that happened in the Mamluk realm, and certainly of the events of the siege of Damascus, by relying solely on it. The Syrian sources are therefore essential to any attempt at reconstructing the events of the year.

Very little if anything is known about Ibn Ṣaṣrā, one of two Syrian historians who were contemporaries to the events of the year 793, since there is no mention of him or of his works in the available primary sources. All that can be ascertained about him is that he was part of a scholarly Damascene family with long academic and religious credentials, that he lived at the end of the eighth/fourteenth century and at the beginning of ninth/fifteenth century, and that he finished his *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah fī al-Dawlah al-Zāhirīyah* sometime between Sha'bān 799 and Shawwāl 801.¹⁸⁰ It is thus not the details of his biography that make him and, more precisely, his work so important: their significance lies elsewhere.

Even though Ibn Ṣaṣrā claimed in the opening pages of his work that he had abridged the biography of Barqūq in order to produce *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, this work nonetheless provides detailed first-hand eyewitness descriptions of years (791–99/1389–97)¹⁸¹ pivotal in the life and career of the sultan, notably the period running from 791 through 793, and it does so from a purely Syrian, and particularly Damascene, perspective. This Damascene perspective is reflected at a very basic

¹⁷⁸*Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:255.

¹⁷⁹See references in the index prepared by Zurayq and 'Izz al-Dīn, 9:2:527.

¹⁸⁰All of the data contained in this and the following paragraphs was taken from Brinner's comments in his Preface to *A Chronicle of Damascus*, mainly x–xix.

¹⁸¹According to Brinner, *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah* might have actually begun earlier with the accession of Barqūq, but the only extant manuscript deals with the years mentioned here; *ibid.*, xv.



level in the myriad references to the topography of Damascus, whether buildings, mosques, neighborhoods, etc., a mass of information about landmarks, some gone, others still extant, that does not appear to have been subjected to any analysis beyond the rich commentaries and information provided by Brinner in the footnotes of the English translation. This, when combined with the highly unconventional style and format of this work, makes it all the more important for our purposes here.

Even though its basic division is the year and its narrative is arranged according to the chronological unfolding of days and months, *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah* owes little else to the annalistic format used by most major historians. In Brinner's words, the author's "major concern was not, obviously, the bare recounting of the events of a year, but the dramatization and highlighting of some of these events, using them as the points of departure for moralizing sermons comparing this transient world with the Hereafter, on the duties of rulers and their subjects, and on the evil of the times."¹⁸² This moralizing dimension of the text of *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah* can be seen in a large number of its passages where Ibn Ṣaṣrā reflects upon the ephemeral nature of worldly events in the overall scheme of things;¹⁸³ more than one third of the work is made up of non-historical material, stories, anecdotes, etc. Moreover, *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah* contains no biographical and appointment reports of any type,¹⁸⁴ save for information about people and leaders

¹⁸²Ibid.

¹⁸³The following passage in which Ibn Ṣaṣrā decries the regime set up by Miṭāsh upon his arrival to Damascus on 1 Rajab, is typical: "Aḥmad Shukr [the leader of the Miṭāshī raid into Damascus] summoned Iyās, the mamluk of Ibn al-Ghāwī, and made him governor of the city. Ibn al-Zu'ayfirīnī rode with them, desiring to become chief cadī of Damascus; for Miṭāsh had promised that to him and that Aḥmad Shukr would be viceroy of Damascus. Aḥmad Shukr made a circuit of the city and left Bāb al-Farādīs for the Maydān. The Miṭāshīs followed and had a great feast [celebrating] their entry into the city. God the Exalted erased their hearts, and they did not remember the consequences of deeds, because all of this [happened] so that he might execute [His] judgment and decree. In the *Ḥadīth* it is [written] that when God the Exalted desires to execute His judgment and decree, he deprives wise men of their intelligence. Praise be to Him, there no god but He. Their rule over the city lasted less than a day, for affairs came into the hands of people not suited to them, and for this reason their term was brief. . . . [Those appointed by Miṭāsh] wrote out many paper-patents for amirs and chief officials, for people are covetous, and the love of this world destroys them." (*A Chronicle of Damascus*, 107–8).

¹⁸⁴Very little of the religious life of Damascus is reflected in *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, as opposed to "Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī," which contains a fair number of biographies and reports about the learned class of the city; see below. Reference to religious figures or religious life was made by Ibn Ṣaṣrā only when it was part of his general narrative on political events (see below, the references to the role played by men of religion during the struggle for Damascus) or when it allowed him to sermonize; see, for example, *ibid.*, 87–88. The only exception to this rule is when he reported a few appointments made by Barqūq upon his return to Damascus, notably that of al-Bā'ūnī (d. 816/1413) as chief



presented *in* and as an *integral* part of a basically uninterrupted narrative. In many ways, this work reads like a historical novel whose reports have a “hot off the press” feel to them.¹⁸⁵ But it is the details about the military engagements between Miṇṭāsh and Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī, their locale and what they tell us about Syrian society at the end of the eighth/fourteenth century, that make *Al-Durrah al-Muḍīʾah* essential reading. Here one ought to mention the dramatic descriptions¹⁸⁶ Ibn Ṣaṣrā gives of the battles which took place in and around Damascus and their consequences: trench¹⁸⁷ and siege¹⁸⁸ warfare, artillery exchanges,¹⁸⁹ the strategic placing of artillery pieces,¹⁹⁰ street fighting,¹⁹¹ the state of mind of the fighters and its impact on the prosecution of the war,¹⁹² etc.

Al-Durrah al-Muḍīʾah also contains more specific information about the configuration of the groups involved in the unrest and in fighting one another, details that are conspicuously absent from most of the Egyptian sources. For example, in depicting Miṇṭāsh’s flight from the city after the defection of Tumāntamur,¹⁹³ Ibn Ṣaṣrā mentions in detail the names of the different groups

Shafi’i qadi, a man obviously liked by Ibn Ṣaṣrā despite (or because of!) what he said about him concerning his mistreatment of his fellow jurists; *ibid.*, 103.

¹⁸⁵This can be seen in the recounting of the events concerning Miṇṭāsh’s dash from the Anatolian marches southward. Ibn Ṣaṣrā provides glimpses of his descent from the northern districts to Damascus interspersed with commentaries: the fleeing viceroy of Ḥamāh is mentioned by name; Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī is made to swear when news about Miṇṭāsh’s arrival there reached him, and his alleged verbal recommendation to the *nāʾib al-qalʾah* to fortify the citadel was noted, and so was his request that lantern-men call upon the soldiers to prepare for war; as the viceroy left the city, people reacted with fear and moved *intra-muros*, while news about Miṇṭāsh and his allies, whose names and whereabouts are dutifully noted, located him nearer and nearer to the provincial capital; and with the arrival of the bulk of the rebel troops to al-Mizzah in the evening of the last day of Jumādā II, the fear and sense of insecurity of the population increased, worked as it was by rumors and memories of the siege at the hands of Barqūq; *Al-Durrah al-Muḍīʾah*, 75–76.

¹⁸⁶See Ayalon’s comment that these were “perhaps the most vivid picture of artillery in action throughout Mamluk history,” in *Gunpowder and Firearms in the Mamluk Kingdom: A Challenge to a Mediaeval Society* (London, 1956), 27. Also quoted in *A Chronicle of Damascus*, xix.

¹⁸⁷*Al-Durrah al-Muḍīʾah*, 78.

¹⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁸⁹*Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁹⁰*Ibid.*, 79–80.

¹⁹¹*Ibid.*, 78, 84, 86.

¹⁹²In his long account of the battle of Ḍumayr alluded to on a number of occasions above, one can clearly see the attention to detail shown by Ibn Ṣaṣrā as he attributed the crushing defeat of al-Nāṣirī to the utter state of fatigue of his troops of which Nuʾayr, his foe and victor, was well aware; *ibid.*, 91–92.

¹⁹³See above.



(the populace, Turcomans from Tripoli, tribesmen from Jubbat ‘Asāl,¹⁹⁴ Turks and soldiers from Şafad, and others) who were involved in the looting that took place in al-Maydān and al-Şālihiyah. More important still are the data concerning the various military forces on the ground during this period. Ibn Şaşrá talks, for example, about the defeat of ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ibn al-Ḥanash,¹⁹⁵ the leader of the Qaysīs, at the hands of Shukr Aḥmad and a party of Yamanī tribesmen,¹⁹⁶ on 6 Rajab, at ‘Aqabat al-Tīnah;¹⁹⁷ he notes that one thousand of the *fallāḥūn* who accompanied ‘Alā’ al-Dīn Ibn al-Ḥanash were killed, two hundred Qaysīs and eight soldiers (ostensibly Mamluks from the garrison of Baalbek)¹⁹⁸ were captured, while the Yamanī *‘ushrān* prevailed upon the Qaysī *‘ushrān*.¹⁹⁹ Are we dealing here with four (peasants, Qaysīs, Mamluks, and Qaysī *‘ushrān*), three (peasants, Qaysīs=Qaysī *‘ushrān*, and Mamluks) or two (Qaysīs=Qaysī *‘ushrān*=peasants and Mamluks) categories of fighters in the loyalist camp? Any one of the three classifications can be read into the text. Any attempt at clearing the confusion would require pondering the term *‘ushrān*, which has been rendered in English in a variety of ways: tribesmen, by Brinner;²⁰⁰ Druze tribesmen and/or clansmen living in the highlands of southern Lebanon and northern Palestine who sometimes divided along Qays and Yaman lines, by Popper; great agricultural tribes of Syria, by Poliak;²⁰¹ etc. Generally, argues Irwin, the term “seem[s] to have been used to describe semi-nomadic or sedentarized tribal groups, in contradistinction

¹⁹⁴ A district in the Anti-Lebanon range; see *A Chronicle of Damascus*, 124, n. 735.

¹⁹⁵ Son of Ibn al-Ḥanash, an important tribal chief from the Biqā’ who supported Barqūq during the disturbances of 791–93 and was executed by Miṭāsh in Rabī’ II 792; see *ibid.*, 16, n. 106 and the sources cited therein, and 83. ‘Alā’ al-Dīn would in his turn meet his maker on 16 Sha‘bān at the battle of Ḍumayr; *ibid.*, 80–81, 91–93. On the al-Ḥanash family, see Francis Hours and Kamal Salibi, “Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥanash, muqaddam de la Biqā’, 1499–1518, un épisode peu connu de l’histoire libanaise,” *Mélanges de l’Université Saint-Joseph, Beyrouth* 43 (1968): 3–23, esp. 3–5 for the period studied here.

¹⁹⁶ For a concise overview of the Qays and Yaman tribal mythology as it impinged on Syrian politics during the years 791 to 793, see Robert Irwin, “Tribal Feuding and Mamluk Factions in Medieval Syria,” in *Texts, Documents and Artefacts: Islamic Studies in Honour of D. S. Richards*, ed. Chase Robinson (Leiden, 2003), 253–54.

¹⁹⁷ See above.

¹⁹⁸ The viceroy of this city, Tankizbughā (in the text of *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī’ah*, Dankizbughā) was accompanying Ibn al-Ḥanash with his men; see *A Chronicle of Damascus*, 112 and n. 675.

¹⁹⁹ *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī’ah*, 80–81.

²⁰⁰ *A Chronicle of Damascus*, 11, n. 71.

²⁰¹ This sentence, with the exception of the reference to Brinner, is a paraphrase of Irwin, “Tribal Feuding,” 255–56; see references in nn. 11–16 therein.



to more purely nomadic tribes, such as the Banū Faḍl.²⁰² With this in mind, and with the help of Ibn Ḥijjī's *Tārīkh*²⁰³ and Ṣāliḥ Ibn Yaḥyá's²⁰⁴ *Tārīkh Bayrūt*, we can argue the following: one group consisted of Ibn al-Ḥanash and his Qaysī followers who were either mounted or on foot,²⁰⁵ a distinction which would *probably* correspond to a division between, respectively, more sedentarized (peasants) and less sedentarized nomadic (tribal chieftains) components within this group;²⁰⁶ according to Ṣāliḥ Ibn Yaḥyá's history, the Druze feudal chiefs of the Lebanese mountains, his ancestors at least, were also involved in battles around Damascus including that of Ḍumayr²⁰⁷ and presumably that of 'Aqabat al-Tīnah, and they could correspond to the Qaysīs mentioned by Ibn Ṣaṣrā in the text;²⁰⁸ finally, one finds the mamluks of the viceroy of Baalbek. Evidently, to echo Irwin's comments, much still needs to be done before a clearer picture of what constituted the Syrian army at the end of the eighth/fourteenth century can

²⁰²Ibid., 256.

²⁰³"Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī," fols. 96a–b. On Ibn Ḥijjī, more below.

²⁰⁴An early fifteenth-century historian from the mountains of Lebanon, his work is *Akhbār al-Salaf min Dhurriyat Buḥtur ibn 'Alī Amīr al-Gharb bi-Bayrūt*, a.k.a. *Tārīkh Bayrūt*, ed. Kamal Salibi et al. (Beirut, 1969) (hereafter cited as *Tārīkh Bayrūt*), a history of his Druze feudal family based in the vicinity of Beirut.

²⁰⁵This distinction was made by Ibn Ḥijjī; "Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī," fol. 96a.

²⁰⁶This *could* correspond to the *fallāḥūn* and to the Qaysī *'ushrān* of the first classification of fighters. Hours and Salibi note, with reference, it is true, to Muḥammad, an early tenth/sixteenth-century member of the Ibn al-Ḥanash family, that his leadership smacked more of that of a bedouin chief than that of a Lebanese mountain feudal (read sedentary) lord, because of the little concern he showed for building enduring symbols of attachment to the land, such as roads, bridges, and the like ("Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥanash, muqaddam de la Biqā'," 23). It is probable that in addition to his immediate mounted entourage of retainers, 'Alā' al-Dīn Ibn al-Ḥanash had armed peasant clients.

²⁰⁷*Tārīkh Bayrūt*, 209–12, 215–16. A member of his family died during this encounter; see 209–10.

²⁰⁸The Qaysī Druze chieftains of Lebanon and 'Alā' al-Dīn Ibn al-Ḥanash might have commandeered the same pool of armed peasants of the southern Lebanese highlands, even though I have not come across any evidence for that.



be seen; *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah* would be a strong starting point for such an endeavor.²⁰⁹

Reading *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah* is not however without its problems. From a historical perspective, the dating of its events is dismal in many parts of the text at hand. Whether it is Ibn Ṣaṣrā's fault or that of the copier of the manuscript, it is impossible to tell, but one still has to rely on both *Tārīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah* and *Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī* in order to set straight the chronological unfolding of events.²¹⁰

²⁰⁹Ibn Ṣaṣrā also provides historians with detailed insight into an interesting aspect of warfare in a densely populated urban environment, namely the way various groups fared under extraordinary circumstances. Beyond the description of the fear and suffering experienced by the civilian population (see, for example, *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, 78–79) and the sometimes forced mobilization of popular groups in the battles that were fought (ibid., 79, 81–82, 83, 88), Ibn Ṣaṣrā's chronicle deals as well with the everyday details of life in a city at war. For example, there is a story from the beginning of the siege (ibid., 78–79) which relates that in the Miṭāshī-held areas, located mostly outside the western walls of the city, it was, literally, business as usual as trade in foodstuffs went on unhindered, so much so that, in a figure of speech, "anyone could eat as much meat as he desired" (*A Chronicle of Damascus*, 110). In the same vein, he describes how the necessity of some inhabitants to go back and forth between the areas held by the "other side" and their place of residence had repercussions on the very psychology of the fighters in terms of their fear of spies and fifth columns heading into the areas they controlled, and consequently, on the problems the people who shuttled faced in terms of abuses, unwarranted suspicions, mistaken identities, and tragedies. All of these elements can be seen in a story (*Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, 86–87) about a boy placed by al-Nāṣirī on guard duty at Bāb al-Naṣr, a gate located near the citadel in the western wall, in order for him to squeal on those he could identify as pro-Miṭāshīs from amongst the people who went back and forth between the areas held by Miṭāsh and those held by the loyalists. The words of Ibn Ṣaṣrā are worth quoting: "When he said of anyone, 'seize him!' they [the Barqūqī police] would seize him immediately and take everything on him and with him. If they had any concern for him, they imprisoned him, otherwise they killed him. Fear overcame the people because of the lad, [both] the one who had gone out and the one who had not, [the latter] fearing that he would identify him as someone else, be burned immediately and perish in the fire. . . . He aroused dread in the hearts of the people who feared him more than they did the viceroy of Syria." (*A Chronicle of Damascus*, 119–20).

²¹⁰For example, the last complete date that appears in the narrative before dating becomes erratic for a few pages is 12 Rajab (*Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, 80). The following date to appear in the narrative is the Monday that follows Friday 12 Rajab, which would be the fifteenth of the month (ibid., 81). The report that comes after, the one about the great fires that ravaged numerous neighborhoods and buildings west of the city, is simply introduced with the mention "*wa-rakiba thānī yawm Iyās wa-al-Nāṣirī . . .*," which would have to correspond to 16 Rajab (ibid.). After the mention of an event taking place on "*thālith yawm*" (ibid., 81–82), the next two dated reports are from Thursday 15 Rajab (ibid., 83), yet another impossibility, and from the eighteenth of the same month (ibid.); only then did Ibn Ṣaṣrā date a *khabar* on Saturday 20 Rajab (ibid.), which does correspond to the actual calendar of the year 793. An even more blatant dating error is the story relating the alleged departure of Barqūq from Cairo to Syria in Rajab, while in fact he did not leave Cairo until 22 Sha'bān (ibid., 84).



This shortcoming of *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, as well as those associated with the very style of the text,²¹¹ does not temper in any way its undeniable value for modern historians interested in the history of Damascus during this troubled period. But did his fundamental concern with his home-town influence the way Ibn Ṣaṣrā recounted some important events? The question is relevant on at least two levels. The first has to do with historical consistency. In a *khbar*²¹² dated from the first third of Rabī' II, Ibn Ṣaṣrā described the departure to Cairo of a party of amirs and other personalities who had been imprisoned in Damascus as a result of their involvement in anti-Barqūq politics in Damascus during the siege of the city in 792. The leader of this party was one Alābughā al-'Uthmānī²¹³ (d. 793/1391) who, according to *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, accompanied the group to Gaza. Other contemporary historians claim, contrary to Ibn Ṣaṣrā, that Alābughā al-'Uthmānī went all the way to Cairo with his prisoners; they also made much of the arrival, along with this group, of Aytamish al-Bajāsī, whose return to Cairo and more-than-warm reception on the part of Barqūq was dutifully highlighted.²¹⁴ Does this mean that the "coverage" available to Ibn Ṣaṣrā in terms of his sources did not extend beyond Gaza? It is highly unlikely, since his work does contain reports, though few in number, of things Egyptian,²¹⁵ but even then, one still cannot account for the absence of Aytamish from his report.²¹⁶ The second level has to do with the sources Ibn Ṣaṣrā used for extra-Damascene events. Following the departure of the sultan from Damascus to northern Syria around 8 Shawwāl, only five *akhbār* dealing with Aleppo are reported: the news about the sultan's arrival there, which reached Damascus via one of al-Nāṣirī's mamluks;²¹⁷ another about a military expedition to al-Bīrah²¹⁸ which Barqūq had

²¹¹See *A Chronicle of Damascus*, xix–xxv.

²¹²*Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, 74.

²¹³See his obituary in *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:278.

²¹⁴*Ibid.*, 250–51; *Al-'Ibar*, 5:500.

²¹⁵See, for example, the news about the execution in Cairo of a number of amirs: *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, 74.

²¹⁶The same overall ignorance of events which occurred far from Damascus was noted by Popper with regards to other Syrian locales (*A Chronicle of Damascus*, xv). Maybe most revealing of Ibn Ṣaṣrā's "world view" is a report in which he relates the appointments made by Barqūq while in Aleppo: of all the detailed information concerning the appointments made by the sultan to Syrian viceroys (Damascus, Aleppo, Ḥamāh, Tripoli, and Ṣafad) after the execution of Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī, only the appointee to that of Damascus, Buṭā al-Ṭulūtāmūrī, is mentioned by name; on Buṭā (d. 794/1391) see *Al-Manhal*, 3:375–80, no. 671.

²¹⁷*Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, 99.

²¹⁸A town located slightly northeast of Aleppo; see *A Chronicle of Damascus*, 135, n. 797.



ordered early on in his stay;²¹⁹ a report about the execution of Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī as it was communicated to him by “one of the prominent people;”²²⁰ and another about his arrest, brought to Damascus by a post messenger.²²¹ All of these reports can be accounted for, save for the one relating the expedition to al-Bīrah which is of unknown origin, but which can be found, written differently, in Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir’s *Dhayl Durrat al-Aslāk*. Did the two historians use a common source or two different sources concerning the same event? So far, it is impossible to ascertain.²²²

The other Syrian contemporary source for the year 793 is Ibn Ḥijjī, the author of an annalistic chronicle identified throughout this research as *Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī*. In the introduction²²³ to his *Tārīkh*, Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah states that his teacher Ibn Ḥijjī wrote a history which covered the years 741–47 and 769–815 minus the year 775. Ibn Ḥijjī, before his death, asked him [“*awṣānī*”] to fill in the chronological gap from 748 to 768, but when he embarked upon this endeavor, he noticed that his master had failed to include in his work a large number of obituaries and events mostly from outside of Syria. This led Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah to write a long *dhayl* in which he expanded his master’s text while following his methodology, namely the monthly presentation of the events and obituaries. The end result was a *dhayl* to Ibn Ḥijjī’s history identified in this research as *Al-Dhayl al-Muṭawwal*,²²⁴ which came into existence as a result of a two-stage process. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah started with an initial recension of his teacher’s history by copying it and often²²⁵ annotating it with marginalia, and then later incorporated these annotations as

²¹⁹ *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī’ah*, 99–100. Ibn Ṣaṣrā notes that the amirs sent to al-Bīrah were Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī, Aytamish al-Bajāṣī, one Kumushbughā, and Buṭā al-Ṭūlūtāmūrī. In n. 795 of his *Chronicle of Damascus*, Brinner refers the reader to another footnote, n. 220, which indicates that the Kumushbughā in question here is none other than Kumushbughā al-Ḥamawī. The problem is that, according to all other sources, al-Ḥamawī was in Egypt as *nā’ib al-ghaybah*. Ibn Ṣaṣrā might have been referring to Kumushbughā al-Ṣaghīr, whom sources say had been part of the expeditionary force which accompanied the sultan to Syria; see *Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:260.

²²⁰ *A Chronicle of Damascus*, 136; *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī’ah*, 101.

²²¹ *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī’ah*, 100.

²²² See below.

²²³ All the information in this paragraph is based on Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah’s introduction to his work, 2:111–12, and on Darwīsh’s French translation of it on pages 29–30 of the French introduction.

²²⁴ In doing this, I only follow Adnān Darwīsh’s characterization of this work; see *TIQS*, 2:27.

²²⁵ These annotations are sometimes absent from large numbers of folios. In the case of the annal of the year 804 which I have examined, out of a total of sixteen and a half folios, about a third are more or less systematically annotated; see Chester Beatty 4125, fols. 252b–261a. In the annal of the year 793, six folios out of fifteen are for all intents and purposes devoid of marginalia; “*Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī*,” fols. 93b–100b.



well as passages taken from *Al-Muntaqá min Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt*²²⁶ and other sources²²⁷ into a second recension, i.e., *Al-Dhayl al-Muṭawwal*.²²⁸ This latter work was then summarized into a smaller one; it is this shorter work, about one third of the original, which was edited in four volumes by ‘Adnān Darwīsh as *Tārīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah*.²²⁹

Since the sections of *Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī* that are still extant in MS Berlin Ahlwardt 9458 do not include the year 793,²³⁰ one has no choice but to turn to the two recensions of Ibn Ḥijjī’s work made by Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah. The problem in this endeavor has to do with the existence of a plethora of texts, all written in Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah’s distinctive and highly unreadable handwriting, scattered in a var-

²²⁶This can be ascertained from the results of Reisman’s article and my own research on the year 778; see “A Holograph MS,” 32–37. “*Al-Muntaqá min Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt*” (MS Chester Beatty 4125, fols. 2b–178b) is ostensibly composed of selections from *Tārīkh al-Duwal* made by Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah covering the years 773–93/1371–90. However, at least for the year 793 (ibid., 166a–178b), we are dealing here with much more than mere selections: all save a few of the reports of the edited version of Ibn al-Furāt’s chronicle can be found in Chester Beatty MS 4125. The main difference between the two is that Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah did “manipulate” Ibn al-Furāt’s text by placing the obituaries at the end of the events of each month, very much like his mentor Ibn al-Ḥijjī had done in his “*Tārīkh*.” One still needs to determine how much of Ibn al-Furāt’s obituaries Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah kept in “*Al-Muntaqá min Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt*.”

²²⁷See Reisman, “A Holograph MS,” 39–42.

²²⁸Ibid., 32; 47, fig. no. 2. For example, the annal of the year 804 in MS Chester Beatty 5527 (fols. 235a–253b) is based on the recension made by Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah (MS Chester Beatty 4125, fols. 252b–261a) of “*Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī*” (MS Berlin Ahlwardt 9458, fols. 129a–140a), to which were added passages from “*Al-Muntaqá min Tārīkh Ibn Duqmāq*” (MS Chester Beatty 4125, fols. 197a–203a). This pattern for the elaboration of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah’s second recension has already been established by Reisman; see above, the many references to his “A Holograph MS.”

²²⁹However, as Reisman noted in his review of Darwīsh’s edition, since *TIQS* is actually an abridgement of *Al-Dhayl al-Muṭawwal*, it could more aptly be titled *Al-Mukhtaṣar*. See Reisman, *Mamlūk Studies Review* 5 (2001): 175; idem, “A Holograph MS,” 29.

²³⁰MS Berlin Ahlwardt 9458 covers the years 796 to 815, minus 805 and 808.



iety of manuscripts, notably Chester Beatty 4125 and 5527, and Köprülü 1027.²³¹ Reisman's research and my own cursory examination of the MS Chester Beatty 5527 indicate that it does contain a certain number of years from the second recension, but not the annal of 793. Köprülü 1027 on the other hand does contain an annal of the year 793.²³²

This annal²³³ is peculiar in a number of respects. First, it does not cover the whole year, as there is a hiatus, with no change in the numbering of the folios, from the final third of Sha'bān²³⁴ to the last of the obituaries of Dhū al-Ḥijjah.²³⁵ Second, there is no heading for the months of Ṣafar, Rabī' II, and Jumādā I, and no reports are to be found under the months of Muḥarram and Rabī' I, except for obituaries.²³⁶ Third, the text is marred not only by the difficult handwriting of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, but also by the very bad state of the manuscript itself which often makes it impossible to decipher, especially, but not exclusively, the marginal annotations. Despite these difficulties, there are many factors which indicate that we are most probably dealing with a text originally authored by Ibn Ḥijjī. First, there is the available textual evidence. Compared to that of *Tārīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah*, the annal of 793 in Köprülü 1027 includes none of the passages easily

²³¹MSS Chester Beatty 4125, Chester Beatty 5527, and Köprülü 1027 were kindly lent to me by David C. Reisman.

²³²Based on my own *cursory* exploration of this manuscript and on Reisman's research, Köprülü 1027 appears to contain the following, in this order: 787–88 (fols. 2a–22b); notes on 789–91 (fols. 47b–51a); 791–97 (fols. 50b–187a); notes on 797–99, 801, 803–11, 799–801, 803, 808, 811 (fols. 187b–193a); 791 (fols. 193b–230b; these correspond to the text of "Al-Muntaqā min Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt" until the month Ramaḍān). I have been able to determine that at least annals 792 and 793 are *not* part of the second recension. The emphasis on the uncertainty concerning the contents of this manuscript is warranted because it includes numerous pages of text and notes whose identity cannot be ascertained; this and other manuscripts from the hand of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah await thorough investigation.

²³³"Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī," fols. 93b–100b.

²³⁴The last report is dated 22 Sha'bān and is to be found at the bottom of fol. 99b.

²³⁵Ibid., fols. 100a–b.

²³⁶With regard to the last characteristic, one might assume one of two things: that Ibn Ḥijjī saw nothing in the first three months of 793 that needed to be recounted, or that Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah purposely decided, when doing his recension of this year, to bypass some of the data in "Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī." Either one of these possibilities might then explain the fact that for the months of Muḥarram, Ṣafar, and Rabī' I *all* the reports in *TIQS* were culled from Ibn al-Furāt's *Tārīkh al-Duwal* (*TIQS*, 1:368–69). There is also the possibility that Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah in the admittedly smaller *TIQS* wanted to emphasize the reports dealing with or originating in Egypt by relying on Ibn al-Furāt, but the presence of a very large number of Syrian reports in the rest of the annal goes against such a view.



traceable to Ibn al-Furāt's *Tārīkh al-Duwal*,²³⁷ but contains either longer versions of Syrian reports found in *Tārīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah*²³⁸ or, again, Syrian *akhbār* totally absent from the latter.²³⁹ This, plus the presence of a number of *hawāshī*²⁴⁰ in the margins, lead me to conclude that the folios at hand are part of the first recension made by Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah of his teacher's history, and thus a fairly exact, although incomplete,²⁴¹ reproduction of Ibn Ḥijjī's work.²⁴²

²³⁷In both its edited and "Al-Muntaqá min Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt" forms.

²³⁸See, for example, the longer description made by Ibn Ḥijjī of the aftermath of the battle of Dumayr; "Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī," fols. 99a–b; *TIQS*, 1:377.

²³⁹See, for example, the story of the capture by the Qaysīs of a Yamanī grandee inside the city of Damascus during the struggle for the city; "Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī," fol. 96b. On this report, see below.

²⁴⁰The question of the nature and origin of the marginal annotations, most of them unreadable, is of great importance. To follow Reisman's reasoning ("A Holograph MS," 31–32), we might assume that those that end with *h* for *hāshiyah* and are embedded in *TIQS* were those reports added by Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah to the text of "Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī" in order to produce the second recension. In the case of the annotations which end with *ṣ* for *ṣaḥḥ*, two hypotheses can be advanced: either Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah was correcting Ibn Ḥijjī's reports or he was adding to the text information he simply omitted by mistake from the latter's work. In the absence of the original "Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī" annal for 793 and of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's second recension for that same year, and in view of the sorry state of the folios being studied, it is not possible to establish with certainty the nature of these annotations. For the purposes of this study, only those marginal annotations that are readable, are long enough to constitute full-fledged *akhbār*, are clearly identified with a *ṣ* for *ṣaḥḥ*, and do not appear in an obituaries section of the text will be taken into account in the analysis that follows. This amounts to only one report found in the margin of fol. 96b, which deals with the battle that allowed the loyalists to remove the Minṭashīs from the house of Bahādūr; on the battle(s) for the house of Bahādūr, see above.

²⁴¹It is more than probable that most of the non-Furātian material in *TIQS* from the end of Sha'bān to the obituaries of Dhū al-Ḥijjah originated in "Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī," so well established is Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's indebtedness to his teacher, but to be on the safe side, they will not be used since there is uncertainty regarding them. Moreover, even though fols. 93b–100b in MS Köprülü 1027 do contain marginalia whose genealogy one cannot ascertain, these are not overwhelming in number and many of them are located in the obituaries sections of the annals. The extant folios for the year 793 in MS Köprülü 1027 will suffice for our purposes here since they cover most of the important events of the siege of Damascus.

²⁴²It is thus likely that the text at hand is from the first recension. However, in light of its peculiarities noted above and as a result of the collation I have undertaken of the text of the first recension and that of the original "Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī" for the year 804, it is more than possible that we are dealing with yet a different stage of the process of Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's writing of his *Al-Dhayl al-Muṭawwal*.



Even though its first “real”²⁴³ reports deal with the execution of a number of amirs in Egypt,²⁴⁴ *Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī* is a chronicle whose entire focus is on Syria, more precisely Damascus, very much like Ibn Ṣaṣrā’s *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī’ah* with which it shares many characteristics. The concern for things Syrian can be seen at many levels. All the appointments, religious and political, mentioned in it deal specifically with Syria, and more particularly with Damascus. Ibn Ḥijjī for example notes in four different reports the whereabouts of Arghūn Shāh al-Ibrāhīmī (d. 801/1398),²⁴⁵ an amir whose claim to fame, during the early parts of the year 793, was his appointment to the *ḥujūbīyah* of Damascus at the end of Jumādā II.²⁴⁶ In the same vein, the only two religious appointments noted in this work are those of Syrian qadis, one to Tripoli and the other to Damascus.²⁴⁷ Interestingly, the attention paid to things religious by Ibn Ḥijjī, a member of the learned class of Damascus, intersects with the very large body of reports that deal with the battles that took place in his city throughout Rajab and Sha‘bān. On numerous occasions, he noted the role played by the qadis in the fighting,²⁴⁸ their role as moral authorities in the city,²⁴⁹ the use of *zakāt* money in the war effort,²⁵⁰ etc. But the war for Damascus was not only an occasion for Ibn Ḥijjī to talk about his peers: it occupies in its own right a pivotal position in his work.

In this respect, *Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī* provides very rich data, some of it unique, concerning, for example, the positions of the Minṭāshīs at the very beginning of

²⁴³This is if one disregards the first report, which is basically a list of military, administrative and religious officials in Egypt and Syria; “*Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī*,” fol. 93b.

²⁴⁴*Ibid.*, fol. 94a. Many of the Egyptian *akhbār* are of a political nature and deal with the execution of amirs and personalities who were identified with or worked for the Minṭāshī regime in both Syria and Egypt; see *ibid.*, fols. 96b, 97a.

²⁴⁵On him, see *Al-Manhal*, 2:223–24.

²⁴⁶See “*Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī*,” fols. 94b, 96a, 96b–97a, 99a. The only other nomination of a member of the military class in this annal is that of a Qarābughā al-‘Alā’ī as *shādd al-awqāf* (*ibid.*, fol. 94b).

²⁴⁷*Ibid.*, fols. 94a–b.

²⁴⁸For example, as guardians of those gates located in the western wall of the city which were exposed to Minṭāshī attacks (*ibid.*, fol. 95b; see also fol. 98b).

²⁴⁹On two occasions during the siege of the city, the qadis listened to letters sent to them from Cairo, one from the caliph and the other from the sultan, respectively urging the people to fight on in favor of Barqūq and thanking them for their steadfastness (*ibid.*, fols. 96b, 97b). In two other *akhbār*, Ibn Ḥijjī reports the involvement of two religious figures in anti-Barqūq activities, one as purveyor of fodder to the Minṭāshīs, and the other for having corresponded with the sultan’s enemies (*ibid.*, fols. 97b–98a).

²⁵⁰This, notes Ibn Ḥijjī, weakened the four *madhāhib* financially, especially since they had incurred many losses as a result of the destruction of *awqāf* which occurred as a result of the fighting; see *ibid.*, fols. 97a–b.



the siege,²⁵¹ troop movements²⁵² and actual encounters between the protagonists,²⁵³ etc. However, in most of its reports concerning the war, this chronicle provides data that either complements or parallels that found in *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, even though generally the latter is richer in details.²⁵⁴ all the important military engagements²⁵⁵ are recorded in both works and some even elicited similar responses on the part of the two authors. The crushing defeat of the loyalists at Ḍumayr²⁵⁶ prompted both Ibn Ṣaṣrā and Ibn Ḥijjī to muse, in admittedly different styles,²⁵⁷ about the humiliation, disarray, and physical destruction of Barqūq's troops following this battle. Last but not least, *Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī*, here again like *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, also presents glimpses of a social environment in the grips of a brutal war. Among other things, it sheds light on the crystallization of the population's loyalties around one of the two warring camps,²⁵⁸ and especially on the deep-rooted antagonisms between Qays and Yaman displayed during the conflict.²⁵⁹ The description of the degree of violence, often wholesale slaughter, that accompanied the encounter between the two camps is certainly not peculiar to Ibn Ḥijjī. Ibn Ṣaṣrā gives a much more vivid and dramatic description than Ibn

²⁵¹Ibid., fol. 96a.

²⁵²For example, ibid., fol. 97a.

²⁵³For example, ibid., fols. 98a, 98b, 99a.

²⁵⁴For example, as was noted above, Ibn Ṣaṣrā gives a detailed description of the various groups involved in the looting of al-Maydān, following Minṭāsh's precipitous departure from his encampment, whereas Ibn Ḥijjī simply says it was the populace who were responsible for this deed (ibid., fol. 99a; *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, 90–91).

²⁵⁵See "Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī," fols. 95b, 96a–b, 98b–99b; *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, 78, 79, 80–81, 83, 89–93.

²⁵⁶"Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī," fols. 99a–b; *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, 91–92. In this particular report, Ibn Ḥijjī includes a small, albeit interesting piece of information concerning warfare: the fact that the bedouins initiated combat by literally encircling the forces of Yalbughā al-Nāṣirī ("fa-dāra 'alayhim al-'arab ḥalqah").

²⁵⁷Ibn Ṣaṣrā uses a measure of derision ("the troops returned and entered the city after having recovered somewhat from their condition, each two riding one donkey . . ." [A *Chronicle of Damascus*, 125]) but lets 'Alā' al-Dīn Aybak (d. 803/1400) speak through his verse; on this poet see references in ibid., 34, n. 207 and "Al-Manhal," fols. 496a–497a. Ibn Ḥijjī, on the other hand, devotes half a folio to describing the sorry state of the troops as they returned to the city in groups, through mountains, streams, and valleys, some "wounded or missing some limb . . .," etc.; "Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī," fols. 99a–b.

²⁵⁸Ibn Ḥijjī refers specifically to the 'aṣabīyah that overtook the population of Damascus: the populace (the people of al-Shuwaykah and al-Shāghūr, and a few of the inhabitants of Maydān al-Ḥaṣā) supported Minṭāsh ["fa-ṣāra fī al-'awām 'aṣabīyah ma'a Minṭāsh"], while the elite ["jumhūruhum"] supported al-Nāṣirī ("Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī," fol. 95b).

²⁵⁹See Irwin, "Tribal Feuding."



Ḥijjī of the killing of Qaysīs from the Biqā' valley at the hands of Ibn Hilāl al-Dawlah and his Yamanīs at al-Maydān following the encounter at 'Aqabat al-Tīnah,²⁶⁰ but Ibn Ḥijjī provides for the same incident a more tragic dimension: two of the Qaysīs who had managed to flee and sought refuge in a mosque were caught and killed inside the religious edifice. In another report,²⁶¹ Ibn Ḥijjī reports that when Qaysīs arrested a well-respected Yamanī dignitary at Sūq al-Muṭarrizīn,²⁶² the population, presumably of that neighborhood, released him from custody. Ibn Ḥijjī not only mentions this man's name, Ibn 'Abd al-Dā'im, but also notes that he lived within the city and that he was one of the grandees of Jubbat 'Asāl, a rural area west of Damascus.²⁶³ What is of interest in this last account is that even though the distribution of groups, sects, and communities in the urban setting of Damascus is broadly known,²⁶⁴ this "living" geo-topographical detail and others found in this chronicle and *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah* might provide us with further sociological data on the interaction of Damascus and its hinterland in terms of population movement and urban settlement. In the same vein, this report echoes, if only obliquely, a story by Ibn Ṣaṣrā²⁶⁵ that tribesmen from Jubbat 'Asāl participated in the sack of al-Ṣāliḥīyah and al-Maydān following Miṭāsh's hasty withdrawal therefrom.²⁶⁶

What is one to make of the presence, in both *Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī* and *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, of such a large body of common reports? In other words, what is the likelihood of mutual borrowings or interdependence? Beyond the existence of certain minute common elements found in the narration of a number of these reports, we cannot establish a pattern of borrowing between the two. One might then postulate the existence of a common source, either oral or written, which possibly recounted events that neither of them had witnessed and whose *akhbār* they then reported differently. The similarity might ultimately be no more than circumstantial, and thus the end product of the sheer "Syrianness" of the events of the year and that of the two authors themselves: Ibn Ḥijjī and Ibn Ṣaṣrā lived

²⁶⁰See "Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī," fols. 96a–b; *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, 80–81.

²⁶¹See "Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī," fol. 96b.

²⁶²There is one reference to this market in H. Sauvaire, "Description de Damas: La conclusion," *Journal Asiatique* (November–December 1895): 433. Its location is probably somewhere in the northeastern quarter of the city; see Émilie E. Ouéché, *Index Général de la "Description de Damas" de Sauvaire* (Damascus, 1954), 97.

²⁶³See above, n. 194.

²⁶⁴See, for example, Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1967), 85–88, 90–91, 93–94.

²⁶⁵"Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī," fol. 99a; *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah*, 90–91.

²⁶⁶In this case, we are probably dealing with Qaysīs hailing from the same region.



through difficult times and wrote, as eyewitnesses, about the ordeal of their city, each in his own style and according to his personal concerns.

To be sure, the two works are dissimilar in many respects. As was noted by Brinner,²⁶⁷ *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah* appears to owe nothing to other sources in terms of overall format and style, and it is perhaps this "insularity" of Ibn Ṣaṣrā's work that most distinguishes it from Ibn Ḥijjī's. *Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī*, despite its basic Syrianness, is a typical example of Mamluk historiography, an annalistic chronicle which includes socio-political and religious reports, along with obituaries. Ibn Ḥijjī himself, unlike Ibn Ṣaṣrā, whose conspicuous absence in the sources of the period amounts to sheer "invisibility," was very much part of the Mamluk Syro-Egyptian socio-intellectual scene. According to al-Sakhāwī, he visited Cairo on numerous occasions and apparently interacted with people such as Ibn Ḥajar and al-Maqrīzī.²⁶⁸ Maybe this exposure to Egyptian scholarly circles can account for the possibility that he might have relied on Egyptian sources directly for some of his few Egyptian reports. Thus, we can observe similarities between both Ibn Ḥijjī's and Ibn al-Furāt's accounts of the nomination of a new chief Hanafī qadi in Cairo:

Ibn al-Furāt: ". . . wa-nazala qarīb al-maghrib wa-kāna yawman mashhūdan. . . ." (*Tārīkh al-Duwal*, 9:2:258–59)

Ibn Ḥijjī: ". . . wa-nazala qarīb al-maghrib fī haybah 'aẓīmah." (*Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī*, MS Köprülü 1027, fol. 99a)

Undoubtedly, the most important characteristic of the year 793 is the Syrianness of most of its events and the way these impinged on historiographical production. All the contemporary authors included in varying degrees reports dealing with Syria and/or originating there. But as was demonstrated above, despite the fact that some of these common reports contain similar elements, one cannot establish definite patterns of filiation amongst the sources: the historians either had access to each other's works, say for example, Ibn Khaldūn using either Ibn Ḥijjī's or Zayn al-Dīn Ṭāhir's chronicle, and then reworded whatever they took; or they drew upon another source or sources which are no longer extant.

With regard to this or these "other" Syrian source(s) assumed to be lurking in the background, even though we lack the evidence to make a decisive identification, there are some clues as to what the environment in which they were produced might have been. In his introduction to the English translation of *Al-Durrah*

²⁶⁷See *A Chronicle of Damascus*, xv–xvi.

²⁶⁸*Al-Ḍaw'*, 1:270–71.



al-Muḍī'ah, Brinner notes that the list of the *nuwwāb* of Damascus presented by Ibn Ṣaṣrā within the framework of the annal of 799²⁶⁹ is similar to that of Ibn Ṭūlūn (d. 953/1546) in his *I'lām al-Warā bi-man Wuliya Nā'iban min al-Atrāk bi-Dimashq al-Shām al-Kubrā*.²⁷⁰ The section of the *I'lām* which dealt with the period between 658–863/1260–1458 is basically the recension of a work on the same topic, namely the viceroys of Damascus, written by a Shams al-Dīn al-Zamalkānī,²⁷¹ to which Ibn Ṭūlūn added comments and corrections.²⁷² Brinner hypothesizes that al-Zamalkānī's "work, which has not otherwise been preserved, seems to have been based on the same source as that used by Ibn Ṣaṣrā considerably earlier."²⁷³ The point here is that there appears to have been in Syria a number of authors who were not particularly famous but whose historical works or oral reports were nevertheless used either by their contemporaries or by later historians.

One last question needs to be tackled. Beyond a Syrianness born out of circumstance, to what extent, if any, do the works of Ibn Ḥijjī and Ibn Ṣaṣrā belong to such a thing as a Syrian school?²⁷⁴ For the sake of clarification, I shall quote David Reisman, who has managed to effectively and concisely summarize the whole question of the dichotomy between "Egyptian" and "Syrian" schools of historical writing:

²⁶⁹ *A Chronicle of Damascus*, 235–52.

²⁷⁰ See above, n. 153; see also *Les Gouverneurs de Damas sous les Mamlouks et les premiers Ottomans*, ed. and trans. Henri Laoust (Damascus, 1952) (hereafter cited as *Gouverneurs*).

²⁷¹ The only thing known about al-Zamalkānī is that he died in or after 863/1458.

²⁷² *I'lām*, 30.

²⁷³ *A Chronicle of Damascus*, xviii. Another historian is mentioned by Ibn Ṭūlūn in the first pages of *I'lām*, one 'Alī al-Yaldānī (d. 814/1412), yet another Damascene who also wrote about the same topic. Ibn Ṭūlūn notes that he had not used that source even though the historian Taqī al-Dīn al-Asadī [Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah?] notes its existence in his *Tārīkh*; see *I'lām*, 29–30; *Gouverneurs*, xvii. This al-Asadī was quoted four times in *I'lām*: in one instance it was his *Dhayl* (*I'lām*, 66, year 836), and in the rest his *Tārīkh* (ibid., 29, year 814; 60, lines 1 and 14, year 817). Is the historian Taqī al-Dīn no other than Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah, one of whose *nisab* is al-Asadī? In light of what we know about him (see Darwīsh's French introduction, 2:19–27), we might assume so, since Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah did write histories covering the years noted above. One comment concerning the introduction to the French translation of the *I'lām*: Laoust was wrong in assuming that the Sayyid al-Ḥusaynī whose *Dhayl* 'alā 'Ibar al-Dhahabī Ibn Ṭūlūn used to complement the data presented by al-Zamalkānī, was Ḥamzah Ibn Aḥmad al-Dimashqī al-Ḥusaynī (d. 874/1469) (see *Al-Ḍaw'*, 3:163–64), since the Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Ḥamzah al-Ḥusaynī who actually wrote the *Dhayl* 'alā 'Ibar al-Dhahabī died in 765/1364; see Duhmān's introduction to the *I'lām*, 13, and Darwīsh, 2:36.

²⁷⁴ See above, n. 7.



Broadly speaking, [Egyptian histories] are chiefly political histories while [Syrian histories] are intellectual histories. Such intellectual histories are by no mean concerned with the history of ideas (which is a distinctly modern concept); rather the primary intention of intellectual histories of the Mamluk period is to produce a record of events and people connected to the institutions and fields of religion, law and education. Moreover, the "Syrian school" of historians, as distinct from its Egyptian counterpart, produced works which, in terms of their structure, devote much more attention to biographies and specifically to biographies of people from the intellectual class. While the division of historical writing into *ḥawādith* (report of events) and *tarājim* (biographies) is common to both genres, the differences that allow us to speak of the "Egyptian school" and the "Syrian school" are really those of emphasis.²⁷⁵

Notwithstanding its fundamental Syrianness, the factors noted in the above quotation lead one to safely disregard *Al-Durrah al-Muḍī'ah* as belonging to the "Syrian histories" category. Things are more problematic with regard to *Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī*. The nagging uncertainty that obscures the true nature of this work²⁷⁶ prevents one from making too many sweeping statements regarding the respective importance in it of *ḥawādith* and *tarājim*. However, if the contents of the existing text are any indication, out of its thirteen folios, only a little more than three consist of obituaries,²⁷⁷ compared to the thirty-one pages devoted by Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah in his *Tārīkh* to obituaries out of a total of fifty-three. In terms of the parameters set out by modern-day scholars, the relatively smaller space Ibn Ḥijjī devotes to obituaries places his work outside of the so-called "Syrian school."

Perhaps the whole distinction between the two schools no longer holds with regard to the period at hand. After all, it was formulated with regard to histories written during more or less the first half of the fourteenth century by two important groups of scholars, one Egyptian and the other Syrian, with different career paths, ethnic, ideological, intellectual backgrounds, and working relationships.²⁷⁸ While it is true that Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah's *Tārīkh*, and, consequently, *Al-Dhayl al-Muṭawwal*, belong, from the point of view of Reisman's citation, to the Syrian school, the categorization of the works of Ibn Ḥijjī, Ibn Ṣaṣrā, and even Zayn

²⁷⁵"A Holograph MS," 24.

²⁷⁶See above.

²⁷⁷A cursory look at the "Tārīkh Ibn Ḥijjī" annal for the year 804 in MS Chester Beatty 5527 reveals similar proportions.

²⁷⁸Guo, "Mamluk Historiographic Studies," 29–32.



al-Dīn Ṭāhir will probably have to follow different considerations which will take into account the entirety of Ibn Ḥijjī's œuvre, notably the original extant annals of his *Tārīkh*, sources not yet published such as Ibn Khaṭīb al-Nāṣirīyah's (d. 843/1440) *Durr al-Muntakhab fī Takmilat Tārīkh Ḥalab*,²⁷⁹ and, most importantly, the clear decline of Syrian historical writing in later parts of the Burjī period.

²⁷⁹See Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden, 1968), 170.



The al-Nashw Episode: A Case Study of "Moral Economy"

Contemporary Mamluk sources contain reports of the Mamluk sultans being forced to dismiss office-holders from their posts in order to placate the rioting masses. Such protests against *muhtasibs* (market inspectors) were quickly ended by their removal from office. In the event of a protest against a vizier, which is the subject of the present article, the sources depict him as the person inciting the sultan to injustice and thus his mere removal from office would not satisfy the public. Rather, the public demanded he be punished. Later, public festivities marked the meting out of punishment and the return of justice. The case of the protest against Shams al-Dīn Ibn Faḍl Allāh, known as al-Nashw, the *nāẓir al-khāṣṣ* (inspector of the sultan's private treasury) of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad between 733/1333 and 740/1339, is fully described in the sources.¹ Al-Nashw's image as villain is executed carefully and in great detail: he is accused of using *muṣāḍarah* (confiscation) against office-holders to extract money from them, forcing compulsory purchases (*ṭarḥ*, *rimāyah*) on merchants in a way that harmed the entire public, and plotting against amirs and extorting money from charities, thereby inflicting harm on the weaker sectors of the population. Therefore, his eventual removal from office and execution by torture was publicly celebrated with music and song for a whole week. Lollipops bearing the likenesses of al-Nashw and his family in humiliating scenes were sold in the markets in vast quantities.²

The characteristics of hate ritual that contemporary historians accorded the al-Nashw episode show that beyond depicting the actual event they also sought to convey a didactic message on a proper and binding sociopolitical order that must not be infringed. Indeed, the social historians Louise Tilly³ and Edward P. Thompson,⁴ who studied the food riots in eighteenth-century France and England,

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¹For this case see: Amalia Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History* (Leiden, 1995), 73–78, 149–55.

²Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf Abū al-Maḥāsin Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah fī Mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhirah* (Cairo, 1963), 9:139; Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma'rīfat Duwal al-Mulūk*, ed. Muṣṭafā Ziyādah and Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr (Cairo, 1942), 2:479; Boaz Shoshan, *Popular Culture in Medieval Cairo* (Cambridge, 1993), 57.

³Louise Tilly, "The Food Riots as a Form of Political Conflict in France," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2 (1971): 23–57.

⁴Edward P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century,"



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followed by Boaz Shoshan,⁵ who studied the food riots in Muslim society under Mamluk rule, have drawn our attention to the fact that food riots are not an impulsive act by a mob motivated only by an actual shortage of food, but rather “coherent political actions” expressing criticism of the government for its failure to fulfill social norms and traditional economic functions. These norms were perceived as the mob’s inherent collective right and infringing that right justified violent protest in order to motivate the government to restore order. Political sociologists and anthropologists who investigate the need to uphold sociopolitical frameworks and their *modus operandi* have termed these inherent rights “moral economy” and ascribed an important pseudo-constitutional role to them in creating equilibrium among interest groups working together within the same sociopolitical system.⁶ Winslow W. Clifford identifies moral economy as the basis for regulating relations within the Mamluk elite, which by its very nature is “conflict-oriented.” Upholding the inherent rights (*ḥuqūq*) of the Mamluks to universal and equal access to rank and economic resources ensured a “positive-sum exchange relationship” between the ruler and the amirs. This exchange policy obviated the fissionist tendencies inherent in unbridled competition among the Mamluks and set the rules for a dynamic reshuffle in government without damaging the state’s sociopolitical macrostructure and coherence.⁷

The story of al-Nashw’s rise and fall is a rather unique case of a conflict in which there was a coordinated demand from almost every sector of the Mamluk state, if not all of them, for the ruler to cancel his reform plan and restore the traditional and normative economic order. The fact that the public protest happened during the reign of a charismatic and authoritarian ruler like al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who could have imposed his authority by military power, but rather chose to give up his reform plan, and the tactics the protest groups used to solve the conflict without the actual use of violence, proves that the sociopolitical macrostructure of moral economy preserved the Mamluk state from disintegration by unregulated violent conflict. Therefore, the al-Nashw incident can serve as an effective case

Past & Present 50 (1971): 73–136.

⁵Boaz Shoshan, “Grain Riots and the ‘Moral Economy’: Cairo, 1350–1517,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 10 (1980): 459–78. See also: Ira Marvin Lapidus, “The Grain Economy of Mamluk Egypt,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 12 (1969): 1–15.

⁶William Barth and Robert Hefner, “Approaches to the Study of Social Conflict,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 1 (1957): 105–10; Seymour Martin Lipset, *Consensus and Conflict: Essays in Political Sociology* (New Brunswick and London, 1985); Ralph W. Nicholas, “Rule, Resources, and Political Activity,” in *Local Level Politics*, ed. Marc J. Swartz (Chicago, 1968), 295–321.

⁷Winslow W. Clifford, “State Formation and the Structure of Politics in Mamluk Syro-Egypt, 648–741 A.H./1250–1350 C.E.,” Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1995. This dissertation provides a very intriguing and useful survey of research in political sociology and anthropology.



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study to show the moral economy, the sociopolitical macrostructure of the Mamluk state, in action.

Despite the growth in the Egyptian economy during al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's reign, signs of a deep crisis were felt as early as 729/1328 when expenditure greatly exceeded revenues and threatened to spin out of control. This economic crisis was not accidental; it resulted from al-Nāṣir's ambitious construction policy and his prodigal generosity towards his amirs, mamluks, and other important figures inside and outside his state.⁸ As a result of low revenues (*min qillat al-wāṣil*) that year, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was forced to personally oversee government expenditure on a day-to-day basis.⁹ Under his personal supervision, the state's financial situation was ameliorated to the extent that all revenues derived from the sultan's private *iqṭā'* of the Jīzah province (a province on the west bank of the Nile) were saved that year. Sources tell us that office-holders became stressed. Indeed, a few months later, al-Nāṣir reviewed the clerks who administered tax collection in the amirs' *iqṭā'*s, probably for the purpose of selecting new officials to replace those he intended to dismiss from his own administration. The two inspectors of the sultan's *dīwāns*, al-Majd Ibn Lafītah and Ibn Qarwīnah, were dismissed and fined; al-Makīn Ibn Qarwīnah, the *mustawfī al-ṣuḥbah*, who controlled the accounts of the sultan's financial revenues, and Amīn al-Dīn Qarmūṭ, the *mustawfī al-khizānah* (in charge of the sultan's treasury accountancy), Uldamur, the *wālī* (prefect) of Jīzah, Ibn Saqrūr, the *mustawfī* of Jīzah, who controlled the district's revenue account, and the *mushidds* (concerned with the collection of revenues), were all dismissed from their posts and imprisoned, and were only released after paying the fines imposed on them. Al-Nāṣir's mistrust of office-holders went as far as his carrying out new registration of the Jīzah lands, relying on local chiefs rather than his own officials. These details leave no doubt that the mistrust between the sultan and the state office-holders reached a point far beyond the normal. Al-Maqrīzī, the fifteenth-century historian, mentions that this practice "had never been heard of in the past" (*wa-lam yusma' bi-hādhā fīmā salafa*),¹⁰ emphasizing al-Nāṣir's innovative approach of giving the peasants (*fallāḥūn*) a stand in tax administration through a direct connection between himself, as sultan, and their chiefs (*mashāyikh*). Al-Maqrīzī's comment reveals, in fact, that al-Nāṣir changed the rules of the game in relations between the sultan and the state officials. It was well known that office-holders informally augmented their incomes from state resources, taking a calculated risk that their embezzlement might be discovered

⁸On this policy, see in detail: Levanoni, *Turning Point*, 53–59. For gift exchange policy see: Marcel Mauss, *The Gift* (Glencoe, 1954).

⁹Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:312; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 9:77–78.

¹⁰Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:312–13.



and their fortunes confiscated. Furthermore, most cases of confiscation involved huge sums of money, which meant that officials accumulated fortunes during their service.¹¹ It should be noted that rivalries among the clerks over positions and their non-Muslim origin (many of them were Copts or converted Copts) facilitated the regulation of the confiscation policy.¹² The clerks' traditional professional status had never before been challenged as it was in al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's purges of that year.

While al-Nashw was still in the service of Ānūk, one of the sultan's sons, he had already raised the issue of the fiscal situation with the sultan and suggested various ways of increasing revenues, calling attention to those known habitually to disappear into office-holders' pockets. When al-Nāṣir Muḥammad appointed al-Nashw as his *nāẓir al-khāṣṣ* in 732/1331, it was with the express aim that "he would obtain much money for him" (*annahu yuḥaṣṣilu lahu māl kathīr*).¹³ Upon assuming office, al-Nashw implemented a full-scale confiscation policy on such an intensive and non-selective basis that both senior administrative office-holders in Cairo and all district officials responsible for tax collection in Upper and Lower Egypt suffered equally. After al-Nashw's brother, al-Mukhlīṣ, returned from his inspection tour of the sultan's irrigation wheels and sown fields in Upper Egypt, al-Nashw incited al-Nāṣir against his officials for neglecting their duty and wasting part of his wealth. Consequently, all office-holders from the highest to the lowest—the prefects (*wulāt*), inspectors (*shāddūn*, sing. *shādd*), keepers of revenue accounts (*'ummāl*, sing. *'āmil*), keepers of daily revenue lists (*shuhūd*, sing. *shāhid*), and others—were interrogated and fined or lost all their property.¹⁴ The huge sums of money that flowed into the sultan's treasury from confiscations attest that some of them were very wealthy while others were simply well off.¹⁵

These arrests, interrogations, fines, dismissals, and the large-scale confiscations of officials in the tax collection system, which stretched continuously and in descending order from the highest-ranking officials in the center, through senior district office-holders, to the low-ranking office-holders who actually implemented registration of land and yields in the villages and who were, as we have seen, in direct contact with the village headmen, the *mashāyikh*,¹⁶ reveal a ramified system

¹¹ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:347–49, 361, 381, 384, 486.

¹² See for example: *ibid.*, 347.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 348.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 358, 360, 361, 370, 469.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 360, 381.

¹⁶ On the bribe relationships between officials and villagers (*nās min al-aryāf*), most probably religious scholars, see: Shams al-Dīn al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn al-Ṣāliḥ wa-Awlādihi*, ed. Barbara Schäfer (Wiesbaden, 1977), 59.



of patronage that encompassed both urban and rural sectors, far beyond the urban social system that researchers of Mamluk history have exposed thus far. Hierarchical patronage is recognizable in the practice of interrogation and punishment; when a senior Cairo office-holder was imprisoned, interrogated, and underwent confiscation, all those who had connections with him suffered a similar fate. Thus, for example, when Ibn Hilāl al-Dawlah, who was al-Nashw's predecessor and rival, was imprisoned, all his clients (*alzāmuḥ*) were incarcerated with him.¹⁷ Purges of this kind did not bring officials' careers to an end; rather they were given new positions in the system when the patronage connections changed in their favor. While this practice symbolizes the individual vulnerability of officials in the fiscal system vis-à-vis the government, at the same time it displays the durability of the patron-client structure that survived the reshuffle. The stability of the patronage system in the administration derived from the fact that it was part of a wider system of patronage that was the backbone of the Mamluk state's sociopolitical structure. It was connected to the dominant Mamluk amirs in several ways: many of the senior officials in the Mamluk administration had previously served in the Mamluk amirs' *dīwāns*. These officials attained their senior posts through the amirs' mediation, and so long as the latter's patronage was in place, they continued in these posts.¹⁸ In return for patronage, the officials safeguarded the amirs' economic interests, which put another big slice of the state's resources into their pockets, above and beyond the part to which they were legally entitled. The rules of the game entailed, therefore, informal and covert patron-client exchange relationships between the officials and the amirs, which drew their stability from the assurance of mutual material benefits, and their being a long-term and widespread practice.

In a complaint he brought before the sultan (734/1334) about the amirs' evasion of taxes on trade and land, al-Nashw claimed that "they [the amirs Qawṣūn and Bashtāk] and their like had become accustomed to bribes from the sultan's officials amounting to half of the treasury's income. . . . If he [al-Nashw] was free [of their pressure] he would fill the sultan's treasury and grain stores, but he feared that they would change the sultan's attitude towards him."¹⁹ The contemporary historian Mūsá ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Yūsufī (d. 759/1358) includes in al-Nashw's complaint details that show that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad was well aware of the situation in the administration of the fiscal system but chose to ignore it, for it would not function otherwise. In the past, the amirs had exerted pressure on the sultan to dismiss any

¹⁷ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:370, 381, 383, 385.

¹⁸ See for example: *ibid.*, 244, 383.

¹⁹ Al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh*, 46; Mūsá ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyá al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāṣir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥuṭayṭ (Beirut, 1987), 179, 187; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:369.



official who intended to lay hands on their property or meddle in their business interests. Karīm al-Dīn, who had been appointed *nāẓir al-khāṣṣ* in 709/1310, was dismissed "because of the jealousy of the amirs and others at his increased control over the sultan. . . ." They simply informed al-Nāṣir that he had been using the sultan's resources for his own interests.²⁰ Al-Akuz, *shādd al-dawāwīn*, was dismissed when he investigated Qawṣūn's grain stores. Aydakīn, the prefect of Cairo, was dismissed when he tried to harm a merchant in Qawṣūn's service. When Qawṣūn complained to al-Nāṣir about his open conflict with Aydakīn and how he had conspired with al-Nashw to entrap wine-drinking nighttime revelers among the amirs and mamluks and had then used the damning evidence to extort money for the treasury,²¹ al-Nāṣir Muḥammad berated Qawṣūn in terms that revealed his weak position in his relationship with the amirs: "Whenever I appoint someone useful to me, you want him removed. But if he had been on your side [*min jihatikum*] you would be singing his praises to me."²² Several months later (Jumādā I 735/April 1335), Aydakīn was dismissed from his post and sent to Syria "because of Amir Qawṣūn's changed attitude toward him" (*li-taghayyur al-amīr Qawṣūn 'alayh*).²³

The amirs tried not to challenge al-Nāṣir's authority directly when al-Nashw submitted his plans to levy land and trade taxes, but tried old and accepted tactics to ameliorate al-Nashw's damage to their interests. Tankiz, the governor of Syria, for instance, advised the sultan to nominate Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn al-Turkmānī, a trusted clerk in Tripoli, as inspector of the flow of income to the treasury alongside al-Nashw.²⁴ Tankiz's purpose was to install his own trusted man in al-Nāṣir's administration in much the same way as al-Nāṣir installed his trusted persons in the amirs' *dawāwīn*. But when Ibn al-Turkmānī arrived in Cairo, he did not receive the post due to al-Nashw's opposition.²⁵ On the other hand, al-Nashw introduced his two brothers, Mukhlis and Rizq Allāh, into Alnaq's and Maliktamur al-Ḥijāzī's *dīwāns*.²⁶ When al-Nashw levied taxes on all raw sugar produced in 732/1332, despite the tax exemption al-Nāṣir had granted the amirs on sugar production, Qawṣūn, one of the biggest sugar producers in Egypt, protested. Al-Nāṣir did not relent and resorted to solving the conflict on an individual

²⁰ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:244, 247, 249.

²¹ Al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir*, 306; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:398–99.

²² Al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir*, 198; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:372.

²³ Al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir*, 231; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:377.

²⁴ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:381.

²⁵ Ibid., 383–84.

²⁶ Ibid., 369–70.



basis by compensating Qawṣūn personally.²⁷ This solution increased al-Nāṣir's authority in his relations with the amirs; sources reveal that henceforth they stopped appealing to the sultan on tax issues and al-Nashw's prestige rose.²⁸

Relations between the sultan and the amirs reflected by this stage of the al-Nashw episode expose details on how clientage relationships worked and their problematic nature. Luigi Graziano has addressed the problematic nature of such relations, indicating that this is a structure whose very nature undermines the foundations of true authority.²⁹ Therefore, both parties need to generate power from a relationship of this kind, not through their formal positioning but through indirect means, such as manipulation and intimidation. In the patron-client balance between al-Nāṣir Muḥammad and his amirs, these elements can be identified in the pendulum movement that changes the advantage that each of the parties achieves through the informal means of waiving rights, individual compensation, and indirect and mutual supervision by the parties. On the other hand, the abrogation of the sultanic decree releasing the amirs from payment of taxes on agricultural produce and income from trade, together with real tax collection, constitutes a significant change in the patron-client relationship between the sultan and the amirs, for these actions destabilize the balance that existed in their relations by reducing the conjunctive elements and expanding the institutional basis that reinforces the sultan's authority.

The relationship between the sultan and the amirs was further aggravated when al-Nashw started applying different rules by collecting damning evidence against the amirs themselves rather than their followers among the merchants and state clerks. The amirs' objections subsequently swelled into a direct protest against al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, to the extent that they set aside their internal rivalries and confronted him as a united body. Aqbughā 'Abd al-Wāḥid was accused of forging a seal bearing his and the sultan's names in order to increase his profits from glass production, over and above the quota allowed by the sultanic decree. He feared for his life for "he could not present a reasonable defense" against the charge of administrative misdemeanors in his *iqṭā'*.³⁰ The *khāṣṣakīyah* (the sultan's elite bodyguard), angered by the sultan's attitude towards their colleague, sided with Aqbughā, and it was Bashtāk, one of al-Nāṣir's most prominent amirs, who pleaded Aqbughā's case and even paid the sum Aqbughā owed the treasury. One of Aqbughā's officials responsible for public buildings admitted under interrogation that his

²⁷Ibid., 360–61.

²⁸Ibid., 361; al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh*, 58–59.

²⁹Luigi Graziano, "A Conceptual Framework for the Study of Clientelistic Behavior," *European Journal of Political Research* 4 (1970): 341–54; Clifford, "State Formation," 58.

³⁰Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:402; al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh*, 61; al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāṣir*, 316, 317.



master had constructed all his private buildings using the sultan's money—he could not deny acts committed in the public eye.³¹ Moreover, al-Nashw drew the sultan's attention to five thousand head of sheep belonging to Aqbughā that had been brought from Upper Egypt to graze on sown lands. The sultan reprimanded him, and but for Bashtāk's intervention would have had him punished.³² Bashtāk himself was accused of letting a merchant use his name each year to avoid paying taxes on merchandise. The merchant was punished by having his goods confiscated by al-Nashw, despite Bashtāk's defence.³³ In 737/1336, one of Qawṣūn's officials was arrested and charged with stealing sugar and honey valued at 100,000 dirhams. Qawṣūn came to his aid and would not yield until he was released, arguing vigorously with the sultan that he would not give up to the treasury a property that was his own but had by chance been found in the possession of one of his officials. Al-Nāṣir relented and gave Qawṣūn the stolen property. Clearly, Qawṣūn intended to sound a warning that the amirs would not tolerate interference in their personal affairs, which the sultan seems to have heeded. When al-Nashw tried to incite him against another of Qawṣūn's office-holders, al-Ṣafī, al-Nāṣir accepted the fact that al-Ṣafī owed the treasury taxes but allowed Qawṣūn to levy and keep them.³⁴ The sultan's inspection of the *dīwān* of Qawṣūn, in spite of the fact that he did not confiscate the embezzled money, meant that these inspections were no longer confined to his *dīwāns* alone, but in principle to all hierarchies of the administration (see below on his attempt to interfere in the administration of *awqāf*, pious endowments). It signaled a further one-sided change in the balance of the relationship between the sultan and the amirs.³⁵

An attempt was made on al-Nashw's life in Ramaḍān 737/April 1337. Although the assailant, 'Abd al-Mun'im ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sulāmī, was not a mamluk, the sultan linked the amirs to the attempt and his fury abated only when he was assured that the injury had not put al-Nashw's life in danger. To prevent further attempts on his life al-Nāṣir assigned him an around-the-clock bodyguard. The assassination attempt was an open challenge to al-Nāṣir's authority and signaled an acceleration in the amirs' tactics from private complaints and mediation to the use of violence, but not against the sultan.

In 738/1337–38, Egypt was stricken by a series of natural disasters. A severe hailstorm that hit the Gharbiyah district caused extensive damage to crops. In Manfalūt, a plague of mice destroyed both field crops and produce in storage. In

³¹ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:446, 455–56, 475. For another example see: 391.

³² Ibid., 466.

³³ Ibid., 439.

³⁴ Al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir*, 370; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:419–20, 435.

³⁵ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:422.



Upper Egypt, in the Qūṣ, Aswān, and Uqṣur (Luxor) areas, storms caused the destruction of homes and severe damage to date plantations. That year the Nile flood was late, but when it finally came, it was sudden and intense, and inundated grain stores.³⁶ These disasters were additional blows to the population at large, especially to the commercial sector and those effected by al-Nāṣir's fiscal policy and its tactics of confiscation and compulsory purchase. The merchants were the primary victims of this policy simply because their goods were easily accessible to the authorities in the customs stations along the roads and through the supervision of functionaries over market brokers. A more significant reason for the merchants' vulnerability was that they did not form a united front with similar interests, but rather acted on an individual basis under the patronage of strong local leaders, like Mamluk amirs, as noted above. Thus, in 733/1332, al-Nashw forced wealthy merchants to purchase quantities of cloth from the government at a price three times higher than its actual value.³⁷ In 737/1336, bean brokers were forced to sell only to the sultan, which caused financial losses to waterwheel owners on the Nile, who fed their animals beans.³⁸ By 739/1338 al-Nashw had refined the compulsory purchase system further. First he levied a real tax on a large shipment of cloth from Ba'albek, then obliged the merchants to sell the cloth to the government at a price of his own choosing, and coerced Cairene cloth merchants to re-purchase the cloth at a price three times higher than its true value.³⁹ In other instances, al-Nashw forced merchants, often by violent means, to purchase wood, iron, beans, clover, and even obsolete military uniforms and second-hand shoes from the government.⁴⁰ The rank-and-file mamluks suffered from delays in payment of their salaries and distribution of clothes, soap, and fodder.⁴¹ Al-Nāṣir could disregard complaints brought to him from the public by single mediators and even collective protests of market merchants and rank-and-file mamluks as long as they were not backed by the united action of a powerful group such as the amirs. Indeed, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad used the resources accumulated by al-Nashw to buy his amirs' loyalty by showering special grants and presents on them and granting them huge *iqṭā'āt*. Al-Maqrīzī summarized this policy in retrospect as follows: "Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad reached new heights with his munificence, generosity, benevolence, and open-handedness that exceeded all bounds" (*ghāya takhruju 'an*

³⁶Ibid., 454, 455, 456.

³⁷Ibid., 361; for other examples see: 369, 390.

³⁸Ibid., 408.

³⁹Ibid., 439.

⁴⁰Al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāṣir*, 128, 177, 350–53, 356–59, 372; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:360, 412, 413–14, 420, 435, 444, 469; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 9:116, 131.

⁴¹Al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāṣir*, 356–57; al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh*, 52–53; al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:414.



al-ḥadd).⁴² This exchange policy could not satisfy the amirs, however, because it was unpredictable, relying on the patron's monopoly on authority.

When al-Nashw submitted a plan⁴³ to the sultan in 740/1339 that would channel a million dinars to the treasury by means that threatened the sociopolitical structure of the state, the amirs organized an open and all-encompassing rebellion coordinated with the ulama. The first part of al-Nashw's plan dealt with abrogation of the practice of government distribution of seed allotments (*taqāwī*) among the *fallāḥūn* in the *iqṭa'* for the next year's cultivation, prevalent in Egypt since the Ayyubid period. The collection of the seed allotments, permanently held (*mukhalladah*) in the *iqṭā'āt* since the days of Baybars and Qalāwūn, was to bring to the sultan's granaries one hundred and sixty thousand *irdabbs*⁴⁴ of grain in addition to that coming from the sultan's lands.⁴⁵ Had this part of al-Nashw's plan been implemented, in addition to al-Nashw's activist tax-collecting policy, it would have created in one fell swoop the sultan's uncontested monopoly over the grain supply in the country and destroyed the great grain brokers, the amirs among them.

It is worthy of note that in the *rawk* (land survey) conducted in Egypt by al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in 715/1315, he increased the sultan's portion from tax revenue from four twenty-fourths to ten twenty-fourths of the Egyptian lands. He also revoked the *iqṭā'āt* granted in the past to four hundred mamluks on the grain stores at al-Maqs port in Būlāq, and transferred the taxation rights on it to the sultan. This was an extremely large source of revenue. Al-Nāṣir Muḥammad also converted the emerald mines (*al-zumurrud*) into a state monopoly.⁴⁶ Such monopolies might, in turn, create an unbalanced exchange relationship not only between the sultan and the amirs, but also between all sectors of the population.

In the second part of the plan, al-Nashw proposed a new distribution of the *al-rizaq al-aḥbasīyah* (revenues from pious endowments, *awqāf*). He claimed that part of the *awqāf* lands that had amounted to 130,000 feddans (a land measure of approximately one acre) was a fraud because the pious institutions for which they had been established (such as mosques, Sufi orders, and others) had ceased to exist, and their revenues were actually used for bribing amirs, governors (or

⁴² Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:535; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 9:174, 211.

⁴³ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:475–76; al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh*, 59–60; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 9:131–32.

⁴⁴ A measure of capacity used during the Middle Ages for weighing grain which varied by time and place from ca. 70 kg. See E. Ashtor, "Levantine Weights and Standard Parcels: A Contribution to the Metrology of the Later Middle Ages," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 45 (1982): 479–80.

⁴⁵ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 473, al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh*, 59.

⁴⁶ Hassanein Rabie, *The Financial System of Egypt A.H. 564–741/A.D. 1169–1341* (London, 1972), 87–88; Shoshan, *Popular Culture*, 59.



judges), and rural clerics. Hence, *awqāf* lands of this kind should be transferred to the sultan's ownership. With regard to existing institutions, the revenues should be divided—half to the *waqf* and half to the sultan at a rate of 100 dirhams per feddan.

Al-Nashw's plan attests to the vast economic power that had accumulated in the hands of the ulama through the *waqf* in Egypt alone. There can be no doubt that, in addition to the significant increase in the sultan's ownership of land in the aftermath of the land survey of 715/1315, this plan was intended to make the sultan the largest landowner in the country by dispossessing the ulama of *awqāf* lands—the traditional source of their economic power by which they supported their clients and followers. In this context, it is worth noting that when the Coptic Church lost its economic assets to the government in 217/832 and again in 755/1354, it brought about mass conversion to Islam, because the Church also lost its status as a source of economic support for its faithful.⁴⁷ It is therefore no wonder that in the protest against al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, as we shall see, the two important sectors of the amirs and the religious scholars would join forces.

The third part of al-Nashw's plan touches upon the recipients of charity from the *waqfs'* money. Al-Nashw claimed that the majority of the lists of charity recipients were fabricated, and only a few people were entitled to be on them. He demanded scrutiny of the lists and their verification by the personal attendance of the recipient with his entitlement document in order to prevent office-holders from registering their wives, slaves, and servants as recipients. These bogus recipients clearly could not have been listed without the cooperation of the ulama who managed the *awqāf*.

The fourth part relates to the lands of the Nile island of Rawḍah. In the past, it had belonged to the sultans and had been divided between their sons. Over the years, the land was leased or sold to office-holders in Cairo for prices far below its real value. Now al-Nashw intended to restore the land to the sultan and collect a retroactive and appropriate rent for the years that had elapsed since it had passed into private hands.

Al-Nāṣir was adamant to implement the plan. When the plan went into force, "Upper and Lower Egypt erupted."⁴⁸ Acting in concert with the ulama, the amirs decided to exert pressure on al-Nāṣir and use all available tactics to bring about al-Nashw's dismissal and elimination. They united and sent the amirs Yalbughā al-Yahyawī and Maliktamur al-Ḥijāzī, who were al-Nāṣir's close associates, to

⁴⁷Ira M. Lapidus, "The Conversion of Egypt to Islam," *Israel Oriental Studies* 2 (1972): 248–62. Donald P. Little, "Coptic Conversion to Islam under the Bahri Mamluks," in idem, *History and Historiography of the Mamlūks* (London, 1986), 552–69.

⁴⁸Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:475.



ask that al-Nashw stop harming the people and leave the amirs alone.⁴⁹ Anonymous letters warning al-Nāṣir of al-Nashw's extortion were found in the palace, implying that the sultan's security could be easily breached. Al-Nāṣir did not react immediately, but sent a message to Tankiz asking for his advice.⁵⁰ Prayers offered in the mosques included a curse on al-Nashw. It was no coincidence that office-holders, orphans, widows, and cripples—a cross-section of those who depended on charity stipends—gathered at the Citadel crying and demonstrating their misery on the very day Tankiz's reply arrived from Syria (26 Muḥarram 740/3 August 1339). Clearly, these protest actions were organized and coordinated by the amirs and the ulama. The amirs sent Yalbughā al-Yaḥyawī once again, not with an implicit threat but rather a warning of impending rebellion: "The best thing is to imprison al-Nashw, for if you do not imprison him an unbidden guest will come and visit you [*dakhala 'alayka al-dākhil*], for there is not a single mamluk who is not waiting for a moment's inattention on your part [*yataraqqabu ghaflah minka*]."⁵¹ Because al-Nāṣir greatly trusted Yalbughā, he bowed to the amirs, and had al-Nashw imprisoned. But imprisonment was not enough to placate the amirs; they wanted his execution, for they feared that as long as he was still alive, the sultan would continue to avail himself of his advice. When the sultan refused to give in, the amirs began to alienate themselves from him and he from them.⁵² The amirs organized the closure of the markets in Cairo and Fuṣṭāṭ, and demonstrations of the masses at the foot of the Citadel, carrying candles and Qurans and rejoicing at the imprisonment of al-Nashw and his relatives.⁵³ The turmoil surrounding al-Nashw was further kindled by an anonymous letter found in the sultan's bed accusing Bashtāk and Aqbughā 'Abd al-Wāḥid of wanting to murder him. When the person who had actually written the letter was found, one Ibn al-Azraq, he admitted that the accusation was a fabrication. That he was released unpunished indicates that he was sent by the amirs to unsettle the sultan. The pressure reached a point where "the sultan's fears increased and he became so agitated that he could not remain seated in one place."⁵⁴ In his extreme wariness of the amirs, al-Nāṣir ordered the closure of the professional archery equipment shops and had their target ranges dismantled. He forbade the amirs and their mamluks to carry weapons.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ Al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh*, 60; Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, "Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab," Leiden University Library Ms. Or. 19B, fol. 8a.

⁵⁰ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:475–76, 479, 480; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 9:134, 135.

⁵¹ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:477; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 9:133; al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh*, 60.

⁵² Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:483; al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir*, 353; al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh*, 62.

⁵³ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:479.

⁵⁴ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:484–85.

⁵⁵ Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 9:140–41; al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh*, 62.



Matters came to a head on 24 Rabī' I/19 September when at the council of the sultan and the amirs, *al-mashūrah*, al-Nāṣir accused the amirs of ingratitude towards him: "O amirs! These are my mamluks whom I have nurtured and upon whom I have bestowed great gifts [*al-'atā' al-jazīl*], and yet I hear improper things about them."⁵⁶ It is worthy of mention that al-Nāṣir's reproach to his prominent amirs on this tense occasion reveals the model he perceived as the proper one for the relationship between a sultan and his amirs. Indeed, throughout his rule, he was generous with gifts as a means to gain support. The amirs could not build their status on such an unequally-balanced relationship. It is hardly surprising that they were not impressed by his reproach, and in a polite but nevertheless threatening way, the amirs expressed their unequivocal demand that al-Nashw be executed, even if it meant that the sultan would lose his throne: "But our master the sultan knows that the caliphate was brought down by bureaucrats and that most of the sultans met their deaths because of the viziers" (*wa-ghalib al-salāṭīn mā dakhala 'alayhim al-dākhil illā min jihat al-wuzarā'*).⁵⁷ Here the amirs invoked the Mamluk tradition since its inception during Abbasid rule as a moral basis for their demands from the sultan.

Al-Nashw's brother killed himself the same night while in detention and his mother died shortly afterwards under torture. That al-Nāṣir Muḥammad acted under pressure from the amirs is clear from the way Barsbughā, who was in charge of administering the torture, ensured that despite being tortured al-Nashw stayed alive. Al-Nāṣir secretly ordered Barsbughā to show al-Nashw mercy, "for this situation was not of the sultan's making but rather his desire to appease his mamluk amirs" (*li-ajl khawāṭir mamālīkihi al-umarā'*).⁵⁸ When this came to light, the amirs "were agitated [*tashawwasha khawāṭiruhum*] and their relations with the sultan became greatly unsettled [*khabṭ kathīr*] because al-Nashw was kept alive." Only on 2 Rabī' II/27 September, when Bashtāk threatened Barsbughā and demanded that he change his methods, were al-Nashw and his relatives allowed to die. During al-Nashw's interrogation and after his death, the amirs outdid themselves to show al-Nāṣir the vast property confiscated from al-Nashw and his relatives, in proof of their contention that he had been embezzling a fortune from the sultan's treasury. Proving their point was a sort of a triumph over the sultan, implying that informal relationships and resources were part and parcel of the state sociopolitical structure.

The al-Nashw episode clearly illustrates what was previously known to us on the role of non-formal patronage relationships in organizing sociopolitical activities

⁵⁶ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:485; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 9:141.

⁵⁷ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:485; Ibn Taghrībirdī, *Nujūm*, 9:141–42; al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh*, 61.

⁵⁸ Al-Maqrīzī, *Sulūk*, 2:485–86; al-Shujā'ī, *Tārīkh*, 62–63.



in the urban community in the medieval Middle East. However, despite its failure, al-Nāṣir's ambitious attempt to employ the authority of formal institutions as a primary means for universally organizing sociopolitical relations clearly brings into relief the formal institutions of the Mamluk state, with the non-formal structures that existed within them and motivated their activities in practice. The scope of the reforms that al-Nāṣir Muḥammad intended to enforce in the state's economy raised to the surface details about all sectors of society and the mechanisms of interaction between them. We learn from these details that the non-formal patronage relationships that functioned under the auspices of formal institutions existed on a broad state-wide scale and not only in the urban centers of the Mamluk state, linking cities and villages into one sociopolitical system. This non-formal relationship crossed borders between sectors horizontally and vertically—between the ulama and the amirs and their subordinates—and created a covert cooperation to obtain state resources far beyond those allocated to them in the formal state distribution of resources.⁵⁹ Al-Nāṣir's plan of administrating his state "by the book" signified his wish to create a real and unlimited authority for the sultan and a monopoly over the sources of power in the state. Such a change in the macrostructure of the state could not have been inaugurated without an overt conflict with the functional groups in Egyptian society. However, the conflict surrounding al-Nashw, albeit critical, shows that all parties used mediation tactics,⁶⁰ such as personal intimidation and public protests, and avoided the use of violent force. Despite his large number of rank-and-file mamluks, al-Nāṣir did not mobilize his army, nor did he punish any of his prominent amirs for their embezzlements. The voice of the ulama was heard only indirectly through public prayers and celebration. The amirs were the most active in the mediation process; actually they were the coordinators of the event and when they used violence (against al-Nashw), it was not directed at changing the ruler but rather to resume the old order. The non-violent solution of such a large-scale crisis proves that in the Mamluk polity there were codes of crisis-management and a macrostructure of moral economy (based on both formal and informal principles) that guaranteed the state's survival against changes generated by social and political actions.

⁵⁹For this issue see Carl F. Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamluk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power* (New York, 1994), 131–89; Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1984), 130–42.

⁶⁰F. G. Baily, "Parapolitical Systems," in *Local Level Politics*, 281–94; Clifford, "State Formation," 33–35.



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The Politics of the Mamluk Sultanate: A Review Essay

In the simplest terms, politics is the struggle for power, and in that sense the Mamluk Sultanate was a truly Hobbesian world, in which the price of defeat was a loss not merely of status, influence, and wealth, but very often of life itself. However, we can think of politics more broadly, as the competition for resources (symbolic as well as material) within a society. On the most general level, politics may be defined as the whole body of practices and institutions (whether these are formally constituted or merely implicit and unspoken) through which a society distributes costs and benefits among its members. From that perspective Mamluk politics may seem altogether more rational and serious if hardly less bloody-minded. It is still a matter of power, but power exercised for a purpose. All this is a distinctly old-school way of defining politics, one grounded in the grand theory and model-building which characterized the social sciences in the 1960s and 1970s. Even so, there is ample room here for more current ways of thinking about the problem: symbolic action, cultural representation, the encoding of ideology in myth and ritual, linguistic analysis, not to mention post-colonialist self-reflexivity. We need only remember that symbols, myths, and rituals are not autonomous entities operating inside some separate universe; they reflect or embody real acts which have grave material consequences for real people.

Both in Western and Islamic literary traditions, politics forms the oldest and most highly developed subject of the historian's craft. Moreover, the resources available to us for the study of Mamluk political history are unmatched for any other period of Islamic history down to the heyday of the Ottoman Empire. It is thus frustrating to have to admit that our knowledge of this field is at best a patchwork. We possess several outstanding works of scholarship, to be sure, and the massive bibliography on Mamluk studies produced by the University of Chicago's Middle East Documentation Center continues to grow faster than anyone can read it. But what we do *not* have is even more striking.

First of all, there is no modern full-length account in a Western language of the whole Mamluk period, which I would argue stretches from 1238 (the death of the Ayyubid sultan al-Kāmil Muḥammad) down to 1524 (the definitive consolidation of Ottoman rule in Syria and Egypt). The nineteenth-century syntheses of Gustav Weil and (on a distinctly lesser and more derivative level) William Muir hardly rival the achievements of Mommsen, Ranke, Macauley, or Bury, which, however



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antiquated, still have much to teach us.¹ In Arabic, there are of course a number of general histories, pitched at various levels of readership. Almost all of these have been produced by Egyptian scholars, and consequently have a very Egyptian (one might say Cairo-centric) view of things.²

In general, the large volume of Egyptian scholarship on the Mamluks suggests that this period constitutes a persistent and fundamental problem for Egyptian thinkers. Are the Mamluks an integral part of Egypt's historical identity and sense of nationhood, or are they rather (to borrow a phrase from H. A. R. Gibb) a "kernel of derangement"? The Mamluks were foreigners in language and geographical origin, but also the last great independent regime in Egypt before the nineteenth century. They defended Egypt from foreign threats, but they were tyrannical rulers. They were lavish patrons of religion, literature, architecture, and the fine arts, but they were themselves often semi-literate barbarians. Moreover, it is a much-debated question whether all this activity represents cultural efflorescence or stagnation. In modern Egyptian thought, in short, the Mamluks symbolize both power and decline. In view of this profound ambivalence, I would argue that twentieth-century Egyptian historiography on the Mamluk Sultanate merits a study in its own right, in the manner of Werner Ende's *Arabische Nation und islamische Geschichte*.³

Hardly less grave than the lack of a general synthesis is a shortage of monographs on the reigns of individual sultans—the kinds of political biographies that are still produced in droves, even in our post-modernist age, for every European monarch and U.S. president. There are in fact some very good studies in this category, but they cover only a few sultans—seven out of the sixty-one men (and one woman) who held that office. Not all of these people were on the throne long enough to merit a separate study, to be sure, but the disparity in numbers is nonetheless remarkable. The first four decades of Mamluk domination have in fact been studied fairly well, at least by the feeble standards of Islamic historical studies,

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¹There are of course several solid and up-to-date chapters by various authors in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 1, *Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, ed. Carl Petry (Cambridge, 1998). We also have a good concise history of the first Mamluk century by Robert Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: the Early Mamluk Sultanate, 1250–1382* (London, 1986). But the gap remains even so.

²Among many authors, the oeuvre of Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāḥ 'Āshūr might be the best place to start, both because of his own training under some of the best Egyptian scholars of the 1930s (e.g., Muṣṭafá Ziyādah and Aḥmad Amīn), and because he himself had many students at the University of Cairo who went on to become leading historians in their own right.

³Werner Ende, *Arabische Nation und islamische Geschichte: Die Umayyaden im Urteil arabischer Autoren des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Beirut and Wiesbaden, 1979).



with solid monographs on Shajar al-Durr, al-Zāhir Baybars, and al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn.⁴ On the other hand, it is hard to explain to colleagues in other fields that we have only one political biography for a figure so formidable as Baybars. For the fourteenth century, Amalia Levanoni has given us an extended interpretive essay on al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.⁵ Finally, three key figures of the Circassian period have drawn serious attention: Barsbāy, Qāyṭbāy, and Qanṣūh al-Ghūrī.⁶ Everyone would have a favorite candidate for the next such study; mine would be two periods of intense crisis. First, the virtual interregnum—or more precisely, the puppet sultanate—from the death of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (1341) to the seizure of power by Barqūq (1382), an era which comprises both a breakdown of the established political system and the onset of the Black Death. Second, the disastrous reign of al-Nāṣir Faraj (1399–1412), marked by pestilence, currency collapse, constant internecine conflict, and the invasion of Syria by Timur, calls out for sustained attention. Taken together, these two periods represent the hollowing out of the Mamluk monarchy under the later Qalāwūnids and then a bitter struggle (finally successful under al-Muʾayyad Shaykh) to re-establish royal autocracy. Edward Gibbon famously remarked that history is largely a record of the crimes and follies of mankind; between 1341 and 1412 there is a lot of history.

A research agenda of this sort raises an important general question: does the reign of an individual sultan constitute a meaningful and useful unit of political analysis? Undoubtedly it is a decidedly old-fashioned way of approaching the subject, but that fact does not invalidate political biography. First, the Mamluk Sultanate was in principle, and often in fact, an autocracy; the whole political system was focused on the person of the sultan. If he was as often the captive of his amirs and mamluks as their master, so it is with all autocrats. The way in which a sultan could manipulate, or was manipulated by, the other players in the game tells us a great deal about the internal workings of the Mamluk political system. Second, every sultan had to struggle to secure his throne, whether or not he had a hereditary claim to it. For this reason, a sultan's reign does not represent

⁴Götz Schregle, *Die Sultanin von Ägypten: Šağarat al-Durr in der arabischen Geschichtsschreibung und Literatur* (Wiesbaden, 1961). Peter Thorau, *Sultan Baibars I. Von Ägypten: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Vorderen Orients im 13. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden, 1987); trans. P. M. Holt, *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century* (London and New York, 1987). Linda Northrup, *From Slave to Sultan: The Career of al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamluk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678–689 A.H./1279–1290 A.D.)* (Stuttgart, 1998).

⁵Amalia Levanoni, *A Turning-Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn, 1310–1341* (Leiden, 1995).

⁶Ahmad Darrag, *L'Égypte sous le règne de Barsbay, 825–841/1422–1438* (Damascus, 1961). Carl F. Petry, *Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of the Mamluk Sultans al-Ashraf Qāyṭbāy and Qanṣūh al-Ghūrī in Egypt* (Seattle, 1993).



an arbitrary chunk of time cut out of a continuum of stable successions to the throne. On the contrary, a reign embodies a real political moment, in that it faithfully mirrors the stress lines and balance of forces at that moment. The exception might be a period already mentioned: the Qalāwūnids after al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, 1341–82, where only two sultans, al-Nāṣir Ḥasan (1347–51, 1354–61) and al-Ashraf Sha‘bān (1363–77), clung to the throne for any length of time, and neither was able to assert control over the political system.

After a dreary account of opportunities missed and obvious subjects ignored, it is a relief to turn to the formal institutions which provided the enduring framework of Mamluk rule—the army, the *iqṭā’*, the civil bureaucracy, and the religious establishment, along with the fiscal and charitable (*waqf*) resources which made the whole thing possible. In this arena we have a great deal. Here I need not refer to work published before 1990, some of it of genuinely classic stature, since I have reviewed it in *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*.⁷ But even with all that has been done there are major gaps, along with a curious lack of integration. We are pretty well off if we want to know the names of specific taxes, how they were assessed and allocated, the distribution of *iqṭā’*s in fourteenth-century Egypt, the general organization of the royal mamluk corps in the army, who the bureaucrats were in fifteenth-century Egypt and how they were recruited.⁸ It is true that of the administrative structures and personnel of Syria we know far less, indeed almost nothing. (This will be an oft-repeated *Leitmotif* in this article.) In spite of this generally positive assessment, if we want to pick up a single book that will tell us how the Mamluk state worked and how it imposed its will on its subjects, then we will have a hard time of it. Even on the core institution of the regime, there is no single study entitled “The Mamluk Army” that brings together the whole thing—the several mamluk corps, the *ḥalqah*, auxiliary forces, the command structure, etc.—or tells how this complex military system changed over the 267 years of Mamluk history.⁹

Apart from a lack of integrated syntheses on the state, the army, and the fiscal

⁷R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry*, rev. ed. (Princeton, 1991), Ch. 7, “The Fiscal Administration of the Mamluk Empire.”

⁸To the studies reviewed in *Islamic History*, Ch. 7, at least two major titles should be added: Sato Tsugitaka, *State and Rural Society in Medieval Islam: Sultans, Muqṭa’s and Fallāḥūn* (Leiden, 1997); and Bernadette Martel-Thoumian, *Les civils et l’administration dans l’état militaire mamluk (IXe/XVe siècle)* (Damascus, 1991).

⁹The great student of the Mamluk army was of course the late David Ayalon, whose voluminous writings continue to demand close study. On the other hand, Ayalon was such a dominating figure that few other scholars ventured into this critically important field. For the current state of the field during the last decades of Mamluk rule, see Carl F. Petry, “The Military Institution and Innovation in the Late Mamluk Period,” in *Cambridge History of Egypt*, 1:462–89.



administration, there are vast gaps in the literature. Most critically, far more has been written about Egypt than about Syria, even though Syria was an integral and very distinctive part of the empire, and even though Mamluk Syria is exceptionally well documented by the standards of medieval Islamic history. (We will return to this point further on.) A second gap is, to put it baldly, the fourteenth century. The fifteenth century has received far more lavish attention, even though we might suppose that this latter period would make little sense without a real understanding of the earlier one. For Mamluk institutions, in short, we have a vast jigsaw puzzle, where a few scattered sections have been assembled and thousands of pieces (though many are missing) are strewn on the worktable. The sort of work needed to put all this together is far from what the current *Zeitgeist* regards as cutting-edge, but until it is done any effort to pursue more innovative ways of decoding the Mamluk state will only be word games with (at most) a certain heuristic value.

If the study of political actors and administrative institutions reflects a nineteenth-century frame of mind, then social history as now practiced has its roots in the social sciences of the 1950s to 1970s. Certainly that is true for the field of Mamluk studies, where Ira Lapidus' *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* still provides the dominant paradigm.¹⁰ By now Lapidus' work has been subjected to a fair amount of criticism—not least of all by Lapidus himself—for its overly rigid adherence to the functionalist sociology of Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils. It must be said, however, that his work was an astonishingly effective synthesis for its time, and it continues to provide a useful point of departure for analyzing the interactions between local and imperial power.

Garcin's great study of Qūṣ might point us in a different direction—viz., a narrowly focused study of a single locality that takes our eyes off Cairo, and allows us to ask just what made this place different from that one.¹¹ It perhaps reflects the realities of our field that Garcin's *magnum opus* is now almost thirty years old and has had only one real successor, Anne-Marie Eddé, *La principauté ayyoubide d'Alep*.¹² The chronological scopes of the two works are very different, of course, since Garcin covers the whole medieval period down to the end of Mamluk rule, while Eddé's equally monumental tome deals only with eight decades. Moreover, Eddé exploits a far richer fund of resources (including the city of Aleppo itself) than Garcin had at his disposal for the remote reaches of Upper Egypt. Finally, they reflect quite distinct concepts of historical method and presentation, with Garcin generating broad conceptual structures in order to make sense of his sparse materials, and Eddé sticking close to her carefully sifted and

¹⁰Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1967; reprinted without notes, Cambridge and New York, 1984).

¹¹Jean-Claude Garcin, *Un centre musulman de la Haute-Égypte médiévale: Qūṣ* (Cairo, 1976).

¹²Anne-Marie Eddé, *La principauté ayyoubide d'Alep (579/1183–658/1260)* (Stuttgart, 1999).



meticulously presented evidence. Still, both suggest how much can be learned from a detailed regional study, where the grid is sufficiently fine to allow us to capture the detail and specificity of local realities. Obviously other places demand attention of this kind: certainly Damascus and the other major towns in the interior of Syria, but also Egypt's Mediterranean ports, Damietta and Alexandria, and perhaps, if the sources permit, Asyūt or Minya in Middle Egypt.

Certainly the most traditional area of historical study, yet even now one of the most revealing, is that of the relations between the Mamluk Sultanate and the outside world. The Mamluk Sultanate sought out and found many allies—the Golden Horde, the Kingdom of Aragon, even Byzantium; even so, it regarded itself—quite correctly—as perpetually threatened by the enemies that surrounded it. The Mamluks, with their powerful albeit unruly army, their famously durable and stable borders, and their self-consciously conservative ideology, became the very model of a fortress state.¹³ As such they were also the antithesis of their expansion-minded Mongol and post-Mongol neighbors to the east and (after the consolidation of Ottoman power under Mehmet II) north.

Research on this subject area has benefited from the survival of a good deal of direct documentary evidence, for the most part in European archives (Barcelona, Florence, Venice, and even the Vatican), in Arabic as well as in European languages. Though there is a vast amount still to do, this material has attracted the attention of estimable scholars since the nineteenth century. Among recent publications, those of Peter M. Holt on Mamluk-Crusader relations stand out.¹⁴ As things now stand, we have a number of solid studies on the late thirteenth century, as well as for the last decades of Mamluk rule—both periods of sustained conflict and crisis for the Mamluk regime.¹⁵ Even for these two periods, of course, no one could say that all the key issues have been settled. But for the intervening two centuries the

¹³These points are more fully explored in my "Ayyubids, Mamluks, and the Latin East in the Thirteenth Century," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 2 (1998): 1–17.

¹⁴E.g., Peter M. Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy (1260–1290): Treaties of Baybars and Qalawun with Christian Rulers* (Leiden, 1995).

¹⁵It is impossible to review the enormous literature on the late thirteenth-century Crusades here. On the struggle against the Mongols down to 1281, see Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260–1281* (Cambridge, 1995), and of course Thorau, *Lion of Egypt*. (The three decades down to the last Mongol incursion in 1309 still await detailed study.) On the late fifteenth century—a period in which three very different threats (Shah Ismā‘īl and the Safavids, the Ottomans, and the Portuguese in the Red Sea) suddenly burst onto the scene—see Carl F. Petry, *Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamluk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power* (Albany, NY, 1994). The later chapters of John E. Woods, *The Aqqyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (first ed., Minneapolis, 1976; revised ed., Salt Lake City, 1999) are highly important for this subject. On the first Ottoman-Mamluk confrontation, see Shai Har-El, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East: The Ottoman-Mamluk War, 1485–1491* (Leiden, 1995).



publications are extremely spotty and tend to be oriented toward particular crises (e.g., the sacking of Alexandria in 1365, the Cyprus expeditions of al-Ashraf Barsbāy, and the invasion of Timur), with little effort to place these crises within a framework of long-term problems and policies. Perhaps Setton's astonishingly old-fashioned and yet deeply impressive *Papacy and the Levant* gives us the nearest thing we have to a general interpretation—though of course Setton knew no Arabic and made no serious effort to include Mamluk views and understandings.¹⁶

With this brief review of existing categories of research on the Mamluk Empire, I would like to turn to some possible new directions. Here I have four particularly in mind.

First, I mention yet again an old enthusiasm of my own, Mamluk Syria. For this period, Syria is typically treated either as *une Égypte manquée* or as merely a turbulent frontier zone, important chiefly for the battles against invaders or revolts against the sultans which occurred there. But it is clear enough that Syria has its own social traditions and structures (a point made quite clearly by Lapidus in *Muslim Cities in Later Middle Ages*, where he posits Damascus and Aleppo as the normative cases of urban society, while Cairo is described as socially amorphous due to domination by the palace and military elite). It is likewise apparent, though no one has ever tried to explore the issue systematically, that the Mamluk armies in Syria were not mirror images of the Egyptian army. On the contrary, apart from a few royal Mamluk contingents sent out from Cairo for garrison duty in the major towns, Syrian forces seem to exhibit distinctive recruitment patterns and systems of pay, as well as an officer corps whose origins and career paths were not at all like those of their Egyptian counterparts. The Syrian fiscal system was unquestionably a world of its own—a point which should be intuitively obvious given the stark absence of the Nile. Finally, we can witness a continuing vitality of religious and intellectual life in Damascus down to the late fourteenth century. Though many Syrian scholars, as Carl Petry has demonstrated,¹⁷ moved to Cairo to make their careers there, names like Ibn Taymīyah, al-Jazarī, al-Dhahabī, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīyah, al-Ṣafadī, and Ibn Kathīr are enough to demonstrate the international stature that Damascus retained throughout the first century of Mamluk rule.

As a second priority, I would argue that we need to develop studies that focus on specific and carefully delimited groups, locales, etc., rather than broad and often quite general categories. For example, everyone talks about the crucial role of the Mamluk household. True enough, but who has tried to reconstruct such a household? (Actually, Jane Hathaway has done precisely this for the Qazdaghlī

¹⁶Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant*, 5 vols. (Philadelphia, 1976–84). (Only vols. 1–2 are directly relevant to this article.)

¹⁷Carl F. Petry, *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton, 1981).



faction in eighteenth-century Egypt. For the "classic" Mamluk period, however, there is nothing of the kind.)¹⁸ For a few amirs, at least, we should be able to extract enough material from the biographical compilations of al-Şafadī, Ibn Taghrībirdī, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, al-Sakhāwī, and many others to develop at least a detailed sketch of the households and factions that they recruited and maintained. For the Mamluk period above all others, we should expect prosopography to be one of our most widely utilized approaches. It is not merely a matter of lending individuality and nuance to dry abstractions; well-designed microstudies of this sort commonly lead to new understandings even of broad social and political processes in very fundamental ways.

A third area of emphasis would aim at identifying the structures and long-term continuities that underlie the ebb and flow of events. In particular, far more needs to be done on what we might call the Mamluk-Ottoman continuum. The bulk of scholarship on the transition from Mamluk to Ottoman rule has tended to focus on the changes brought about by the Ottoman conquest. This frame of mind is nicely captured in Peter M. Holt's pioneering synthesis on Ottoman rule in Arab lands, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, 1516–1922*, and it continues in more narrowly focused monographs like Doris Behrens-Abouseif's *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule*.¹⁹ It is undeniable that the violent shock of 1516–17 and the years immediately following brought massive and abrupt changes in many sectors of Egyptian and (so we suppose) Syrian life, and Egypt's abrupt fall from imperial metropolis to subject province had a profound impact on that country on many levels. Even so, much could be gained by a simple exercise in reperiodization: instead of working within the traditional Cairo-centered parameters of 1382–1516, 1517–1700, and 1700–98, we might try defining two broader periods, the first beginning around 1450 and going down to roughly 1600, the second bracketing the two centuries from 1600 to 1800. At first glance, this revised periodization seems to privilege the Ottoman Empire, since it marks the "classical" era from the ascension of Mehmet II to the political and fiscal crisis after the death of Kanuni Suleyman,

¹⁸Jane Hathaway, *The Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdaghlis* (Cambridge, 1996).

¹⁹P. M. Holt, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent, 1516–1922: A Political History* (Ithaca, NY, 1967). In Arabic, see Abdul Karim Rafeq, *Bilād al-Shām wa-Miṣr min al-Fatḥ al-ʿUthmānī ilā Ḥamlat Nābuliyyūn Būnabart*, 2nd ed. (Damascus, 1968). Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Egypt's Adjustment to Ottoman Rule: Institutions, Waqf, and Architecture in Cairo, 16th and 17th Centuries* (Leiden, 1994). There is not a great deal on early Ottoman Egypt or Syria; the eighteenth century has attracted far more attention. For Syria, see Muhammad Adnan Bakhit, *The Ottoman Province of Damascus in the Sixteenth Century* (Beirut, 1982); and (very tightly focused) Amnon Cohen and Bernard Lewis, *Population and Revenue in the Towns of Palestine in the Sixteenth Century* (Princeton, 1978), and A. Cohen, *Economic Life in Ottoman Jerusalem* (Cambridge, 1989).



and then the era of “decline” down to the deposition of Selim III in 1807. But in fact it represents a far more inclusive and comparative approach. The first segment (1450–1600) covers several broad trends within the political order of the Mediterranean Basin and the Middle East: (1) the expansion and consolidation of the Ottoman state; (2) the last efflorescence and rapid dissolution both of the Mamluk Sultanate and of a post-Mongol political order in Iran and Mesopotamia that reached back to the mid-fourteenth century; (3) the transformation of the Safavids from a chiliastic movement based on the Turkoman tribes of eastern Anatolia and Azerbaijan to a relatively centralized Iranian empire; (4) in a remarkable synchrony with the Ottomans, the rise of a worldwide Spanish (one might better say Castilian) empire. This redefining of the historical process within which the later Mamluk Sultanate endured and then succumbed should encourage scholars to trace as precisely as possible the continuities and changes in every aspect of life in Egypt and Syria—military and administrative institutions, the recruitment of elites, the character and role of local leadership, agriculture and pastoralism, commerce and manufacturing, etc. The point, in a nutshell, is that Ottomanists must become Mamlukists. Any scholar who wants to take the sixteenth century seriously must also take the fifteenth century seriously. The earthquake of 1516–17 did not leave a *tabula rasa* for the new masters of the old Mamluk realm.

The second segment (1600–1800) takes us beyond the chronological limits of this paper. However, we ought to note that it too is a highly useful way of grouping together long-term trends across a broad area: (1) the “restructuring” (to choose a neutral term) of the Spanish and Ottoman Empires; (2) the apogee of Safavid power in Iran (down to 1666) and then that country’s descent into a time of troubles; (3) the emergence of the Dutch, French, and English as the major European actors in the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean. For Mamluk specialists, of course, these two centuries have a particular interest because they witnessed the emergence, and ultimately the political domination, of a neo-Mamluk order in Egypt. The neo-Mamluk system of Ottoman Egypt is certainly not a simple revival of the classical (though ever-changing) Mamluk order of 1250–1517, but it is quite unintelligible without it.

This leads us to the fourth area in which I hope to encourage research: the place of the Mamluk Sultanate within the whole *dār al-islām*: Africa, the western Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean basin, Iraq-Iran and the Turco-Mongol world generally (which in this period of course includes much of North India). As much as the Mamluk elite itself might have wished it, their empire was not walled off from the outside world, and indeed every aspect of Mamluk life and politics was inextricably tied to that world. At first glance, at least, the lack of studies aimed at situating the Mamluks within their broader environment is not only regrettable but rather puzzling. That is all the more so because we now have many of the elements



of a general framework for such comparative and trans-regional research. The Mediterranean world has of course been very widely studied for more than a century by a cohort of outstanding scholars, and though the Mamluks are ordinarily marginalized in this work (usually being portrayed merely as the conduit for the spices of Asia), we nevertheless know a great deal about their interactions with that region. There is also a good deal of work on the Indian Ocean, though most of this refers to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, a richly documented and remarkably detailed general synthesis is now available in the three volumes of André Wink, *Al-Hind: the Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, which take us to the end of the fifteenth century. (Two further volumes are projected, which will reach the mid-eighteenth century.)²⁰ It is true that the Mamluks never attempted to project power beyond the Red Sea, but of course their international commerce, which was a critical part of their revenues, was generated from within this world, and Mamluk merchants were an integral part of it.

When we turn to Africa, we find markedly less to work with. Even North Africa is mostly neglected by Mamluk specialists, in spite of the important commercial and religious connections stretching from al-Andalus to Cairo and beyond, and in spite of the considerable number of North African expatriates (Ibn Khaldūn was not alone) who took up residence in Egypt. Of Saharan and Sub-Saharan Africa—an important zone of Islamic commercial, religious, and cultural expansion—we know far less than we should; there has been good work on Nubia and the western Sahel, but apart from the exceptional case of Musa Mansa there has been little effort to connect it with Egypt. On the east, we still find a sort of Chinese wall between the Mamluk and Turco-Iranian worlds, running southward from the middle Euphrates through the Syrian Desert. The failure of Mamluk specialists to include Iraq and Iran within their purview is partly a matter of language, since that requires a thorough command not only of Mamluk Arabic with all its oddities, but also of the formidable rhetoric of Timurid Persian, and various sorts of Turkish. For the most part, however, it is a matter of *taqlīd*, of just sticking to the topics and approaches laid down by our academic ancestors.

I would be the first to admit that the areas I have suggested for research do not include some important current approaches to historical analysis—e.g., those that focus on issues like gender, discourse analysis, or the construction of communal identity. I certainly do not decry the value of such work or doubt the possibilities of doing it successfully. Women, to give an obvious example, are far more visible in Mamluk-period sources than in those from earlier periods, and gender historians should therefore find much with which to work. But lacking as we do a well-

²⁰André Wink, *Al-Hind: The Making of the Indo-Islamic World*, 3 vols. (in progress) (Leiden, 1991–2004).



developed scholarly literature in so many traditional core subjects—those that constitute the who, what, where, when, and how of Mamluk history—the discussion of these innovative topics and approaches will inevitably rest on frail foundations. In any case, I hope that theory-driven investigation will add to our perspectives on Mamluk history, and not displace the sort of work-still-undone that I have discussed above. I say this knowing that historians are anarchists at heart and prefer not to work according to the agendas and dictates that anyone else may lay down.

I have so far spoken as if scholarship on the Mamluk Sultanate were a world unto itself, as if we could pursue it without reference to the larger structures of contemporary academic life within which we must work. But of course that is the opposite of reality. Like our colleagues in every other field of historical research, we face very serious constraints on our capacity to conduct research, and far more importantly, on our capacity to publish it in appropriate and accessible forms. In the United States, at least, the day of the specialist-audience research monograph is rapidly coming to an end. University presses have lost their subsidies, and university libraries, also facing sharply reduced acquisitions budgets and escalating prices, can no longer afford to purchase the books that the presses publish. No acquisitions editor can contemplate (if she means to keep her job) the prospects of a monograph, however brilliant, that will sell only 500 copies. Given the size of the Mamluk studies field (and even of Islamic history more generally), 500 copies might well seem quite an ambitious target.

Especially for our more intricate scholarly projects, therefore, we need to explore actively the possibilities presented by emerging technologies such as on-line publication. Technically this is perfectly possible, as it offers many advantages for revision and updating, and on-line materials can easily be converted into CD-ROMs or (my preference) the more stable and flexible printed volume. The real issues are the same as those that bedevil the presses: gatekeeping and quality control, editorial oversight, copyright, and distribution. Whatever research we conduct, however probing our analyses, it will all come to nothing until we have decided how to share what we have learned.



Book Reviews

TAQĪ AL-DĪN AL-MAQRĪZĪ, *Rasā'il al-Maqrīzī*, edited by Ramaḍān al-Badrī and Aḥmad Muṣṭafā Qāsim (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1998). Pp. 365.

REVIEWED BY LI GUO, University of Notre Dame

This collection contains eleven of al-Maqrīzī's treatises that cover a wide range of subjects, reflecting the author's encyclopedic scope. The texts can be roughly categorized as follows:

1. History: Two famous polemical treatises, one on the Umayyads, the Hashimites, and the early Islamic caliphate ("Al-Tanāzu' wa-al-Takhāṣum fīmā bayna Banī Umayyah wa-Banī Hāshim"), and another on the legitimacy of the Fatimids ("Ma'rifat Mā Yajib li-Āl al-Bayt al-Nabawī min al-Ḥaqq 'alā Man 'Adāhum");
2. Theology: Several treatises on the principle of the unity of God ("Tajrīd al-Tawḥīd al-Mufīd"), the *dhikr* ("Ḥirṣ al-Nufūs al-Fāḍilah 'alā Baqā' al-Dhikr"), and the *tafsīr* of the Quranic phrase *tawaffanī musliman* ("Ḥuṣūl al-In'ām wa-al-Mayr fī Su'āl Khātimat al-Khayr");
3. Numismatics: One treatise ("Al-Nuqūd al-Qadīmah al-Islāmīyah");
4. Geography and ethnography: Two treatises, on the bedouin tribes in Egypt ("Al-Bayān wa-al-I'rāb 'an Man fī Arḍ Miṣr min Qabā'il al-A'rāb"), and the Muslim dynasties in Abyssinia ("Al-Ilmām bi-Akḥbār Man bi-Arḍ al-Ḥabashah min Mulūk al-Islām");
- (5) Mineralogy: One treatise ("Al-Maqāṣid al-Sanīyah fī Ma'rifat al-Ajsām al-Ma'dinīyah");
- (6) Miscellanies: These include a short treatise on the metaphorical use of references to water ("Al-Ishārah wa-al-Īmā' ilā Ḥall Lughz al-Mā"), and a lengthy encyclopedic piece on the merits of bees from lexicographical, historical, and cultural perspectives ("Naḥl 'Ibar al-Naḥl").

The edition is based on a microfilm reproduction of the Paris manuscript, Bibliothèque Nationale, arabe 4657. In the introduction, the editors provide a short sketch of al-Maqrīzī's life and work and a brief description of the manuscript as well as the contents of the eleven treatises edited here. Indexes include the Quranic verses, hadith, personal and tribal names, place names, weights and measures, and names of coins.

For the reader of this journal, particularly interesting might be the introduction,



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where one finds a confused, and confusing, assessment of al-Maqrīzī's work by the editors. Factual errors aside (the collection, the editors claim, contains fourteen treatises, while eleven is the correct number), one is baffled by the apparent discrepancy in that al-Maqrīzī is criticized in one place, but receives raves in another. Al-Maqrīzī, according to the information given on page 5, "knew very little" (*qalīl al-ma'rifah*) about pre-Islamic history, and was equally "incompetent" (*ghayr māhir fī*) in dealing with the early Islamic era. He might know a thing or two (*la-hu ma'rifah qalīlah*) about jurisprudence (*al-fiqh*), hadith, and grammar, but nothing truly outstanding. Far worse, his handling of sources suffered from serious flaws ranging from "distortion" (*al-tahrīf*) to "deliberate omission" (*al-saqt*). Even with all the good qualities al-Maqrīzī might have as a person, such as being "virtuous" (*ḥasan al-khulq*), "ambitious" (*ālī al-himmah*), and, most importantly, "fond of history" (*mūla' bi-al-tārīkh*), this lukewarm praise, coming from the editors, is still quite curious since the editors are the ones who carry the burden of justifying the effort put into editing these works. If al-Maqrīzī was indeed so bad, why bother? As if having sensed this line of questioning, a 180-degree turn occurs on page 7, where al-Maqrīzī is spoken of in glowing terms: the lousy, amateurish "history buff" turns, at the end of the day, to be nothing less than a "great scholar" (*ālim jalīl*), a "fine historian," and so forth. Now one is confused. Which image should one trust? The problem here, to be honest, is not whether al-Maqrīzī should be scrutinized critically (he should, just like anyone else), but rather whether this discourse should be taken seriously. The apparent illogical and odd dichotomy discussed above causes one to suspect that the editors may have simply quoted verbatim, on page 5, from one medieval author, who happened to be al-Maqrīzī's rival (perhaps al-'Aynī or Ibn Taghrībirdī?), and, on page 7, from another, who was perhaps an admirer. Not a good way to go.

ISMĀ'ĪL MUḤAMMAD HUSĀM AL-DĪN, *Al-Uṣūl al-Mamlūkīyah li-'Amā'ir al-'Uthmānīyah* (Alexandria: Dār al-Wafā' li-Dunyā al-Ṭibā'ah wa-al-Nashr, [2002]). Pp. 238.

REVIEWED BY HOWAYDA AL-HARITHY, American University of Beirut

This book is a collection of essays that have been published in different venues between 1987 and 1999. The author organized the eight articles in the following manner: "Some Remarks on the Relationship between the Processions and the Location of Monumental Buildings on the Streets of Cairo," "The Naming of Places during the Mamluk Period," "The Administration of the *Awqāf* during the



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Mamluk Period," "The Ottoman Use of Residential and Commercial Mamluk Buildings based on the *Waqf* Documents," "Four Mamluk Houses from Ottoman Documents," "The *Wakālah* of al-Sulṭān al-Mu'ayyad Known as the *Wakālah* of 'Awdah Pāshā," "The Buildings of Sulṭān Qāyṭbāy in Sūq al-Ghanam based on Ottoman Documents," and "The *Sabīl* of 'Abd al-Raḥmān Katkhūdā in the Nahhāsīn: A New Study Based on Some Mamluk Documents." The author states that the articles address two issues: the distribution of important edifices in the city of Cairo, and the origins of some Ottoman buildings traced through Mamluk documents.

While there is no single thread that runs through the articles presented, they share a methodological link. The link that ties the whole work together is the use of *waqf* documents, cross-referencing these with historical accounts, such as those of al-Maqrīzī, and illustrating urban transformation in the Fatimid city during the Mamluk and Ottoman periods. Accordingly, the articles can be divided into two groups. The first four articles address urban issues by extracting evidence from the *waqf* documents available from the Mamluk period. The second group of four articles publishes extracts from the *waqf* documents that pertain to a single building or a group of buildings.

The focus of the first group of four articles is as follows: the first article discusses the different processions that took place in the city of Cairo, identifies their routes, and concludes by demonstrating the close relationship between the processions and the location of major edifices along the processional routes during the Mamluk era.

The second article looks into the names assigned to various places in Cairo. It addresses first the terminology used by Mamluk historians, primarily al-Maqrīzī, and in the *waqf* documents, and makes the distinction between terms such as *khatt*, *ḥārah*, *ʿaṭfah*, and *zuqāq*. The author then identifies and traces the names of eight *khatts* in Mamluk Cairo.

The third article addresses two questions: the process of transferring property in Cairo into the hands of the Mamluks for the purposes of rebuilding or endowing, and the management of *waqfs* by Mamluk sultans and amirs. The study focuses its investigation on the area of Khān al-Khalīlī and demonstrates by examples extracted from *waqf* documents how the Mamluks confiscated *waqf* properties on the basis of alleged legal violations, which they then legalized as their own.

The fourth article traces through the *waqf* documents the appropriation of Mamluk buildings and the transformation of their use during the Ottoman period, with special attention to private and commercial residential buildings.

The second group of four articles relies less on analysis and more on quotation of excerpts from the *waqf* documents that pertain to a single building or a group of buildings. The first sheds light on four Mamluk residences in the area of



al-Ḍarb al-Aḥmar through excerpts from Ottoman *waqf* documents. The second focuses on a single building, the *wakālah* of al-Sulṭān al-Mu'ayyad, and traces its development through four Mamluk and Ottoman *waqf* documents. The third relies on one Ottoman *waqf* document to extract information pertaining to a group of buildings of Sultan Qāyṭbāy in the area of Sūq al-Ghanam. The last traces through Mamluk *waqf* documents the history of the *sabīl* of 'Abd al-Raḥmān Katkhūdā to the Qaysariyah of Sultan Qalāwūn from the seventh/thirteenth century, which was rebuilt by Sultan Barsbāy in the ninth/fifteenth century before its rebuilding in the twelfth/eighteenth century by 'Abd al-Raḥman Katkhūdā.

Collectively the articles demonstrate the author's knowledge of the historic city of Cairo, of the primary sources, and of the *waqf* documents, both Mamluk and Ottoman. With such extensive knowledge, he is able to trace buildings' development and transformations through time from Fatimid origins to Mamluk and Ottoman times. There is no doubt that the material provided by the book is a valuable source for further work by researchers in the field.

NU'MĀN MAḤMŪD JUBRĀN AND MUḤAMMAD ḤASAN AL-'IMĀDĪ, *Dirāsāt fī Tārīkh al-Ayyūbiyyīn wa-al-Mamālīk* (Irbid, Jordan: Mu'assasat Ḥamādah lil-Khadamāt wa-al-Dirāsāt al-Jāmi'īyah, 2000). Pp. 399.

REVIEWED BY LI GUO, University of Notre Dame

Despite its rather vague title, *Studies in the History of the Ayyubids and Mamluks*, the book under review weaves its narrative around one focal point: the Muslim holy war against the Crusades and the Mongols under the leadership of the Ayyubid and early Mamluk sultanates and its political, historical, and social impact on the Islamic Near East, especially Bilād al-Shām and Egypt, in the eleventh–thirteenth centuries. The authors' thesis is a simple and elegant one: it is true that the "foreign aggressions" against the Islamic realm were motivated by religious, political, military, ideological, and economic factors, but they were also aggravated by internal conflicts within the Muslim front, as a result of the decay of the weakened and decentralized Abbasid caliphate and endless civil wars among various domestic factors. Still worse is what the authors call "the dissolution of the Muslim front" (*al-tashattut al-islāmī*) (p. 7), in that some of the Muslim rulers would, for their own gain, make peace, or even forge alliances, with the "infidel" enemies at the cost of Muslim lands and lives. The unity of the Muslim world (*al-waḥdah al-islāmīyah*), or the lack thereof, thus constitutes a pivotal test in passing historical



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judgment on the political leaders of the Muslim communities at the time. The book thus sets out to explore the way in which some of these leaders succeeded in their efforts to mobilize the Muslim forces and unify the Muslim front through shrewd political strategizing and military maneuvering, while others, and there were many, failed. The result is a chronicle of the political and military events of the era, with special focus on the careers and reigns of three heroic figures, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (Saladin), Sultan al-Zāhir Baybars, and Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn.

The core of the book consists of four chapters that follow a straightforward chronological order: Chapter One, "The Ayyubid State until the Death of Saladin" (pp. 39–129); Chapter Two, "The Ayyubid State after Saladin: 589–648 A.H./1193–1250 A.D." (pp. 131–245); Chapter Three, "The Mamluk State until the End of the Reign of Sultan Baybars" (pp. 247–306); and Chapter Four, "The Reign of the Qalāwūn Family and the End of the Early Mamluk Period" (pp. 307–63).

Overall, the book is neatly organized and adequately written. The major theme, of the success of the united Muslim front in fighting off the "foreign aggressions," as well as the lessons learned from the Muslim defeats, runs recurrently throughout. The authors are perhaps reasonable in focusing on political and military events, while leaving economic, social, and intellectual aspects largely untouched, for the book's focus is on the major heroic figures and their searching for, and achieving, Muslim unity. A noticeable feature of the book that distinguishes it from other studies on the same subject is perhaps its unmistakably political undertone. Its goal in dealing with issues of modern relevance from a historical perspective is clearly seen in a narrative that not only makes frequent references, and analogies, to modern events (e.g., on the changing status of Jerusalem from Saladin's time up to this day, pp. 194–95), but also is studded with contemporary vocabulary such as the awareness, or lack thereof, of the "unified Islamic front" (*tawḥīd al-jabhah al-islāmīyah*), in fighting "foreign occupation" (*al-iḥtilāl al-ajnabī*), "liberating" (*al-taḥrīr*) the occupied territories, and so forth. But in due course, the authors manage to walk a fine line between the *sīrah*-like panegyric (of which Baybars was a legend in popular culture) and modern historical-political inquiry. In this regard, despite the authors' polemical position in defending the "heroes" in question, especially Saladin and Baybars, it is evident (e.g., pp. 106–7, 138–39, 154–55, responding to modern historians' criticism of Saladin's perceived "failures"; pp. 278 ff., on Baybars' controversial legacy), that they, for the most part, allow the sources, including some documents, to take over and let the historical events speak for themselves. In this connection, one of the book's strengths is, in my opinion, the authors' control of the Arabic primary sources, published and unpublished, which are consulted with judiciousness and cited generously in the



narrative. Unfortunately, the same may not be said about the use of the Western sources, especially in dealing with the Crusades. Curiously lacking, too, are modern studies in non-Arabic languages. (This comes as a surprise since one of the coauthors, Dr. Nu'mān Jubrān, who wrote his Freiburg dissertation on the chronicle of al-Jazarī under the late Professor Ulrich Haarmann, is surely not unfamiliar with Western scholarship.)

The reader of this journal might also be disappointed by the fact that this book is long on the Ayyubids (nearly two-thirds of the book is devoted to Saladin, which, given the overall goal of the book, is understandable), and short on the Mamluks. And with regard to its coverage of the Mamluks, if one has read Peter Thorau's *Baybars*,¹ Linda Northrup's *Qalāwūn*,² Amalia Levanoni's *al-Nāṣir*,³ and Reuven Amitai's *Mongols*⁴ (none of which are mentioned in the book), then nothing new can be learned here. The book, nevertheless, does manage to present well-researched accounts, in a relatively balanced manner, of an important historic era of the Islamic Near East, and offers some fresh insights, from the authors' viewpoint, into the events it covers. It might therefore be used as a textbook for Arab high schools. Speaking of textbooks, the book in its current form could have benefited from more careful editing: typos aside, it contains some minor grammatical errors. The overall production of the book is otherwise quite serviceable.

Money, Land and Trade: An Economic History of the Muslim Mediterranean.

Edited by Nelly Hanna. The Islamic Mediterranean Series (London: I. B. Taurus, 2002). Pp. 295.

REVIEWED BY WARREN C. SCHULTZ, DePaul University

This volume contains several informative and useful contributions concerned with different aspects of the economic history of the Islamic lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea. All were originally delivered in seminars at the American

¹*Sultan Baibars I. von Ägypten* (Wiesbaden, 1987); English translation, *The Lion of Egypt: Sultan Baybars I and the Near East in the Thirteenth Century*, by P. M. Holt (London, 1992).

²*From Slave to Sultan: The Career of al-Mansūr Qalāwūn and the Consolidation of Mamluk Rule in Egypt and Syria (678–689 A.H./1279–1290 A.D.)* (Stuttgart, 1998).

³*A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The Third Reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad Ibn Qalāwūn (1310–1341)* (Leiden, 1995).

⁴*Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhānid War, 1260–1281* (Cambridge, 1995).



University of Cairo over the course of 1997–98. Unfortunately, this collected studies volume is mistitled. It falls far short of delivering what one would expect from a work with the sweeping subtitle “An Economic History of the Muslim Mediterranean,” as the following list of contents reveals.

After a brief introduction by Nelly Hanna, the book is divided into three sections: “Land” (contributions 1–5); “Crafts and Trades” (6–9); and “Money” (10–13). The contributions are: 1. “The Individual and the Collectivity in the Agricultural Economy of Pre-Colonial Morocco” by Nicolas Michel; 2. “Why Study Ownership? An Approach to the Study of the Social History of Egypt” by Ra’uf ‘Abbas Hamid; 3. “A Multiplicity of Rights: Rural-Urban Contradictions in Early Nineteenth-century Egyptian Land Ownership” by Muhammad Hakim; 4. “The Worst of Times: Crisis Management and *Al-Shidda Al-‘Uzma*” by Amina Elbendary; 5. “‘Passive Revolution’ as a Possible Model for Nineteenth-century Egyptian History” by Peter Gran; 6. “Making a Living or Making a Fortune in Ottoman Syria” by Abdul-Karim Rafeq; 7. “Manufacturing Myths: Al-Khurunfish, A Case Study” by Pascale Ghazaleh; 8. “The Private Papers of an Armenian Merchant Family in the Ottoman Empire, 1912–1914” by Armin Kredian; 9. “The *Rasa’il Ikhwan al-Safa’* and the Controversy about the Origin of Craft Guilds in Early Medieval Islam” by Abbas Hamdani; 10. “Interaction Between the Monetary Regimes of Istanbul, Cairo, and Tunis, 1799–1875” by Şevket Pamuk; 11. “Monetary Causes of the Financial Crisis and Bankruptcy of Egypt, 1875–8” by Ghislaine Alleaume; 12. “The Financial Resources of Coptic Priests in Nineteenth-century Egypt” by Magdi Girgis; and 13. “Perceptions of the Greek Money-lender in Egyptian Collective Memory at the Turn of the Twentieth Century” by Sayyid ‘Ashmawi.

In terms of geographical location, then, the reader is presented with eight studies concentrated exclusively on Egypt (2–5, 7, 11–13), with one about Morocco (1), one for Syria (6), one on Anatolia (8), and one without geographic focus (9). Only the study by Pamuk (10) addresses more than one location in the Mediterranean basin. In terms of chronology, eight contributions are focused on the nineteenth and/or early twentieth century (1, 3, 5, 7–8, 11–13), with one on the ninth–tenth centuries (9), one on the eleventh century (4), one that addresses the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries (6), another concerned with the seventeenth–nineteenth centuries (10), and one general theoretical survey (2) with no specific chronological focus. Given these contents, a more accurate subtitle would be “Collected Studies Concerned with the Economic History of Primarily Egypt and Its Neighbors in the Eastern Mediterranean, and for the Most Part Addressing the Nineteenth Century with Scattered Coverage of Earlier Periods.” This subtitle, however, would clash with the claim found on the dust jacket that



the book is "the first major study of the economic history of the Islamic Mediterranean."

QĀSIM 'ABDUH QĀSIM, *Fī Tārīkh al-Ayyūbiyīn wa-al-Mamālīk* (Al-Haram [Giza]: 'Ayn lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Buḥūth al-Insāniyah wa-al-Ijtimā'iyah, 2001). Pp. 296.

REVIEWED BY KONRAD HIRSCHLER, School of Oriental and African Studies (London)

Qāsim 'Abduh Qāsim, professor of medieval history at Zaqaziq University (Egypt), has published widely in his fields of specialization, namely the Crusades, the Ayyubids, and the Mamluks. Works of his have previously been reviewed in this journal (*'Aṣr Salāṭīn al-Mamālīk* by Thomas Herzog and *Al-Sulṭān al-Muẓaffar Sayf al-Dīn Qutuz* by Amalia Levanoni, both in volume 6). The monograph reviewed here focuses primarily on the role of the Crusades, despite the title's wider implications. The ten chapters narrate in chronological order the grand political and military events in the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, starting with the rise of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn and ending with the Ottoman conquest of the Arab lands. However, due to the author's focus on the Crusades, most of the Mamluk dynasty is dealt with rather briefly: a mere 32 of the total 282 pages cover the more than two centuries after the fall of the last considerable Crusader town in the Middle East (Acre) in 690/1291.

Qāsim's main thesis is that the Ayyubids and Mamluks were both "military dynasties headed by a warring ruler" who responded to the external threats to which the Islamic world was exposed, mainly the Crusades (for example, pp. 77–79). It was these dynasties' "historical role . . . to realize the grand Islamic project, i.e., to expel the Crusaders from the lands of the Muslims" (p. 222). For Qāsim, the rise of the Ayyubids constituted a crucial change, as the "military dynasties" started to replace the more shari'ah-based Abbasid and Fatimid Caliphates who had failed to confront the newly-arisen dangers. The disappearance of these external threats after the conquest of Acre "took away the basic historical function of the Mamluk sultans" (p. 259), which was one of the crucial factors leading to the subsequent decline of this military dynasty. Consequently, the Mamluks handed over their "historical role" some two centuries later to the Ottoman Empire, the new military dynasty, which "protected the Arab lands against Western colonialism for a long period stretching until the late nineteenth century" (p. 282).

In keeping with modern-day perceptions of the Crusades in the Middle East, Qāsim bases his narrative on two assumptions. First, the Crusades are represented



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as the most important factor, dominating the course of Middle Eastern history during the sixth/twelfth and the seventh/thirteenth centuries. Even "the Mongol threat to the Islamic world did not equal the scale of the Crusader threat to it" (p. 193) since the latter was still in the mid-seventh/thirteenth century the "greatest danger for the Arabic Islamic world" (p. 228). In this vein the Crusades were also responsible for the long-term decline of the Arab lands as the available resources were drained during the fight against them (p. 6).

This importance attributed to the Crusades is crucial for the text's second main assumption. The period of the Crusades is continuously represented as a confrontation of two monolithic blocks, where the "Islamic front" or the "Islamic-Arab front" was juxtaposed to the "European West." The Crusades appear here as a conflict between "the Arab Islamic civilization—owner of the soil and the truth—and the Catholic European civilization" (193). This image evidently sidelines the scholarship of the last decades, in which it has been shown that cooperation and coexistence were as much a characteristic of the Crusader period as conflict.¹

However, a serious consideration of secondary literature is not an issue at stake in the reviewed book. The confrontational image and the importance ascribed to the Crusades aims not at scholarly discourse, but at a wider audience. The subtext underlying the book is the argument that the Crusades were a precursor of the current situation in the Middle East. This perception is already expressed by the book's cover: the modern-day statue of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in Damascus is placed in front of al-Aqsa Mosque with the Dome of the Rock—currently one of the most potent symbols in the Middle East—looming from behind. In combination with the book's dedication to the martyrs of the al-Aqsa intifada the framework for the following narrative is clearly set. Here, the Crusades appear as an "expansionist settler project," which set the precedence for "European colonialism" and "imperialist Zionism" (p. 5). While such explicit comments are rare, the subtext emerges repeatedly, for instance in the continuous use of the term *istīṭān* when referring to the Crusading movement or the exceptional stress on the term "Palestine" in contrast to the more contemporary *Bilād al-Shām*. Such an ahistorical tendency towards the sources is also visible when the medieval authors' disinterest in the Muslim reconquest of Jerusalem in 637/1240 is encountered with incomprehension (p. 126). Qāsim does not try to understand their different perspectives on this event, but prefers his own image of the Crusades as an early expression of a millennial conflict between two blocs.

In the course of this general picture, the text also restates on a smaller scale arguments which would have merited a more subtle analysis. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's career

¹See for example Michael Köhler, *Allianzen und Verträge zwischen fränkischen und islamischen Herrschern im Vorderen Orient* (Berlin/New York, 1991).



is seen as a teleological development, where every step led to the inevitable battle at Hattin (pp. 33–34, 60); the Mamluks remained throughout their rule foreigners to Egyptian society (p. 267); and—as referred to above—their dynasty declined over a period of some two hundred years. At the same time, central rule is generally seen as the positive norm, implying stability and strength, while regionalized rule is equated with chaos and failure. Consequently, the author criticizes the Ayyubid successors of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn who did not stand united and, due to this neglect of their “historic role,” had to step back for the benefit of the Mamluks (pp. 137–38).

The sources employed in the course of the text are somewhat problematic. The main medieval author referred to throughout the text is, similar to the source-basis in Qāsim’s earlier works, al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), who is described as a “contemporary historian” (e.g., p. 150). Authors who were closer to the respective events described, such as Ibn Shaddād (d. 632/1234) and Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1232) for the early Ayyubid period, are used only as additional material. The issue of primary sources is further complicated by the difficulty in pursuing the author’s references. Often it is not clear which edition has been used. Some notes are incomplete and the bibliography omits the work in question altogether.² For other works different editions are given in the bibliography and in a footnote, so that it remains unclear for the following passages which edition is referred to.³

Secondary literature is merely discussed in order to disprove the arguments of “historians of the West” who have either tried to belittle the military genius of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (p. 58) or have delighted in speculations concerning possible courses of mutual Mongol-Christian affections (p. 192–93). The secondary literature referred to, both Arabic and English, is largely limited to monographs to the exclusion of journal articles. The English literature stops in the early 1970s, the Arabic literature, with the exception of the author’s own works, was largely published in the 1980s and earlier.

In sum, it is regrettable that this work by one of the specialists in Ayyubid and Mamluk history does not offer a more original outlook on this period’s events. As it stands, it is a rather interesting source for the study of modern-day perceptions of the Crusades.

²For example Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Tārīkh al-Bāhir fī al-Dawlah al-Atābakīyah*, which is mentioned p. 55, n. 36. The note cannot refer to the work’s standard edition by ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad Ṭulaymat (Cairo, 1963).

³For example Ibn Shaddād, *Al-Nawādir al-Sulṭānīyah wa-al-Maḥāsīn al-Yūsufīyah*. The bibliography cites the edition by Jamāl al-Dīn al-Shayyāl (Cairo, 1964), while note 10, page 19 cites an anonymous edition (Cairo, 1317).



SHAMS AL-DĪN MUḤAMMAD IBN AḤMAD AL-DHAHABĪ, *Al-Mu'īn fī Ṭabaqāt al-Muḥaddithīn*. Edited by Muḥammad al-Sa'īd ibn Basyūnī Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, 1998). Pp. 430.

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This volume contains an edition of al-Dhahabī's biographical dictionary of the hadith transmitters, from the early *ṣaḥābah*, or the Prophet's "companions," to those who were active in the twenties of the seventh/fourteenth century. During his extraordinarily prolific career, al-Dhahabī wrote, besides his major works such as *Tārīkh al-Islām*, an amazing number of short manuals and pamphlets of the *rijāl/ṭabaqāt* genre, in which he registered the names, and sometimes biographical sketches, of the hadith transmitters and other categories of Muslim learned men. A few of these manuals have recently been made public, and they all read like a check list that contains not much more than mere names. The volume under review is one of these. It contains 2,443 names of hadith transmitters. Each is described in footnotes by the editor with some bibliographical references as well as a short indication the person's "degree" of qualification regarding his/her authenticity, or reliability, or perhaps liability, in the hadith material transmitted on his/her authority or through him/her. The various "degrees" range from *thiqah* (trustworthy), *ṣadūq* (reliable), *lā ba's bihi* (so-so), to *ḍa'īf* (weak). And each of these is further classified with more degrees of quality. The later the person's date, the more details are given.

The editor's labor is mainly seen in the extensive indexes (pp. 233–427). The reader can, for example, search according to proper names, or *kunyah*-nicknames, or *nisbah*-surnames. Women's names are listed in separate indexes. To the disappointment of the readers of this journal, the persons who lived in the Mamluk era, that is, the *ṭabaqahs*, in al-Dhahabī's classification, "from the fifties up to the seventies of six hundred" A.H. and onwards occupy only a slim ten pages (pp. 221–32). It is also disappointing that this is hardly a critical edition by any measure. One knows nothing about the basic information regarding the manuscript(s) and the method of editing. The editor did not even bother to provide a bibliography; so all the cryptic signs and abbreviations one finds in the footnotes are nothing but puzzles and riddles. One cannot help but wonder, besides perhaps some commercial gain, what else there is to explain why the volume should have been put together in the first place. Have we not already seen enough of the scissors-and-paste method of mass producing, or abusing, medieval Arabic texts?



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IBN HAJAR AL-‘ASQALĀNĪ, AḤMAD IBN ‘ALĪ. *Ithāf al-Maharah bi-al-Fawā'id al-Mubtakarah min Aṭrāf al-‘Ashrah*. Edited by Zuhayr ibn Nāṣir al-Nāṣir. Medina: Wizārat al-Shu'ūn al-Islāmīyah wa-al-Awqāf wa-al-Daw‘ah wa-al-Irshād bi-al-Ta‘āwun ma‘a al-Jāmi‘ah al-Islāmīyah, 1994. 16 vols. in 17.

IBN HAJAR AL-‘ASQALĀNĪ, AḤMAD IBN ‘ALĪ. *Vies des cadis de Misr, 237–851, 366–976: Extrait du Raḥ al-isr ‘an qudat Misr d’Ibn Hagar al-Asqalani*. Edited and translated by Mathieu Tillier. Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 2002. Pp. 212.

IBN TAYMĪYAH, AḤMAD IBN ‘ABD AL-ḤALĪM. *Jawāb Ahl al-‘Ilm wa-al-Īmān; bi-Taḥqīq Mā Akhbāra bi-hi Rasūl al-Raḥmān min anna (Qul huwa Allāhu Aḥad) Ta‘dīl Thulth al-Qur’ān*. Edited by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz ibn Fathī ibn al-Sayyid Nadā. Riyadh: Dār al-Qāsim lil-Nashr, 1421. Pp. 256.

IBN TAYMĪYAH, AḤMAD IBN ‘ABD AL-ḤALĪM. *Mustadrak ‘alā Majmū‘ Fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad Ibn Taymīyah*. Edited by Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāsim. Riyadh: Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāsim, 1997. 5 vols.

‘ISHQĪ, ANWAR MĀJID. *Khilāfat Abī Bakr al-Ṣiddīq fī Fikr Ibn Taymīyah al-Siyāsī: Dirāsah Taḥlīlīyah*. Riyadh: Maktabat al-Tawbah, 1998. Pp. 262.

MAQRĪZĪ, AḤMAD IBN ‘ALĪ. *Durar al-‘Uqūd al-Farīdah fī Tarājim al-A’yān al-Muḥīdah*. Edited by Maḥmūd al-Jalīlī. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 2002. 4 vols.

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SUYŪṬĪ, JALĀL AL-DĪN. *Al-‘Arf al-Wardī fī Akhbār al-Imām al-Mahdī*. Edited by Muṣṭafā Ṣubḥī al-Khiḍr. Damascus: Dār al-Kawthar, 2001. Pp. 135.

SUYŪṬĪ, JALĀL AL-DĪN. *Al-Ashbāh wa-al-Nazā’ir fī al-Naḥw*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmīyah, [1991?]. 4 vols. in 2.

SUYŪṬĪ, JALĀL AL-DĪN. *‘Ilm al-Munāsabāt fī al-Suwar wa-al-Āyāt, wa-Yalīhi Marāṣid al-Maṭāli‘ fī Tanāsub al-Maqāṭi‘ wa-al-Maṭāli‘*. Edited by Muḥammad ibn ‘Umar ibn Sālim Bāzmūl. Mecca: Al-Maktabah al-Makkīyah, 2002. Pp. 208.

Arabic Transliteration System

Romanized Arabic in *Mamlūk Studies Review* follows the Library of Congress conventions, briefly outlined below. A more thorough discussion may be found in *American Library Association-Library of Congress Romanization Tables* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1991).

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|----|-----|---------------------|-----|----|-----|------------------------|---|---|
| ء | ' | خ | kh | ش | sh | غ | gh | م | m |
| ب | b | د | d | ص | ṣ | ف | f | ن | n |
| ت | t | ذ | dh | ض | ḍ | ق | q | ه | h |
| ث | th | ر | r | ط | ṭ | ك | k | و | w |
| ج | j | ز | z | ظ | ẓ | ل | l | ي | y |
| ح | ḥ | س | s | ع | ‘ | | | | |
| | | ة | h, t (in construct) | | | ال | al- | | |
| | | ـَ | a | ـُ | u | ـِ | i | | |
| | | ـَـ | an | ـُـ | un | ـِـ | in | | |
| | | آ | ā | وُ | ū | يِ | ī | | |
| | | اَ | ā | وُـ | ūw | يِـ | īy (medial), ī (final) | | |
| | | ى | á | وِ | aw | يِـ | ay | | |
| | | | | | | يِـ | ayy | | |

Capitalization in romanized Arabic follows the conventions of American English; the definite article is always lower case, except when it is the first word in an English sentence. The *hamzah* is not represented when beginning a word, following a prefixed preposition or conjunction, or following the definite article. Assimilation of the *lām* of the definite article before “sun” letters is disregarded. Final inflections of verbs are retained, except in pausal form; final inflections of nouns and adjectives are not represented, except preceding suffixes and except when verse is romanized. Vocalic endings of pronouns, demonstratives, prepositions, and conjunctions are represented. The hyphen is used with the definite article, conjunctions, inseparable prepositions, and other prefixes. Note the exceptional treatment of the preposition *li-* followed by the article, as in *li-l-sultān*. Note also the following exceptional spellings: Allāh, billāh, lillāh, bismillāh, mi’ah, ibn (for both initial and medial forms). Words not requiring diacritical marks, though following the conventions outlined above, include all Islamic dynasties, as well as the following terms: Quran, sultan, amir, imam, shaykh, Sunni, Shi’i, Sufi. Common place-names should take the common spelling in American English. Names of archaeological sites should follow the convention of the excavator.