Reuven Amitai / Stephan Conermann (eds.)

The Mamluk Sultanate from the Perspective of Regional and World History

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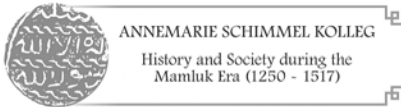

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Mamluk Studies

Volume 17

Edited by Stephan Conermann and Bethany J. Walker

ANNEMARIE SCHIMMEL KOLLEG

History and Society during the
Mamluk Era (1250 - 1517)

Reuven Amitai / Stephan Conermann (eds.)

The Mamluk Sultanate from the Perspective of Regional and World History

Economic, Social and Cultural Development in an Era of Increasing International Interaction and Competition

With 14 figures

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Cover image: Daniel Hopfer (ca 1470–1536), Etching, Three Mamelukes with lances on horseback.
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Preface

By its very being, Mamluk studies should have an international orientation. The Mamluks themselves were brought from far-away, usually from the steppes north of the Black Sea or the Caucasus. Over the many decades of its existence, the Mamluks dealt with a series of external challenges: Ilkhanid Mongols, Franks, Cilician Armenia, Turkmans, Timurids, Ottomans, Safavids and more. At the same time, the Sultanate maintained relations, often warm, with various powers far away from its borders: the Mongol Golden Horde, Venice, Genoa, the Byzantine Empire, the Hohenstaufens in Sicily (and conversely, the Capetian Angevin empire), west African Muslim kingdoms, Ceylon, etc. Its commercial connections stretched across the Mediterranean, to the south of the Sahara, to the Crimea, to India and elsewhere.

The Mamluk sultans, formally governing in the name of the ʿAbbasid caliphs (and referred to as "Partner of the Commander of the Faithful"), claimed rule over all Muslims wherever they might be. Mamluk-controlled Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem were the focus of pilgrimage from all the Muslim world; the last named was also a center of Jewish and Christian religious tourism. The major cities of the Sultanate: Cairo and Alexandria in Egypt, and Damascus and Aleppo in Syria, were the foci of international traders, Muslim scholars and mystics, refugees, immigrants and other sundry visitors from afar. And it was the scholars and mystics who left these cities to head elsewhere or were in contact with other religious figures throughout the Muslim oecumene.

The wider geographic, political, economic and cultural context of the Sultanate found expression in the works of several of the earlier luminaries of Mamluk Studies. David Ayalon, the founder of the systematic study of the Mamluk state and its military-political elite, wrote about the larger Eurasian context of the phenomenon of military slavery, as well as the relations with the Mongols. His fellow Jerusalemite, Eliyahu Ashtor, certainly had a Mediterranean perspective (and beyond) when examining the economic life of the Sultanate. Another important historian of their generation was Peter M. Holt, remembered for his studies of Mamluk-Frankish relations. Perhaps the most prominent repre-

sentative of the next generation of Mamlukists was Ulrich Haarmann, who with his interest in the Eurasian and Turkish background of Mamluk society, as well as European sources for the history of the Sultanate, clearly had wide perspectives.

Yet, in spite of these efforts and others, one might say that most of the work on the Mamluks in the post-WWII era was somewhat inwardly looking: the editing and translation of Arabic texts; the analysis of Mamluk politics and the culture (mostly of the elites), art history and archeology; intellectual and social history, again mainly of the elites; urban studies, etc. With the almost endless sources, and the far-flung Sultanate with its multi-varied population, there was certainly lots to do examining its internal history. In the last decade or two, however, this seems to have begun to change, and more emphasis is now placed on the myriad connections between the Mamluk Sultanate on its various levels, and the surrounding world: Muslim, Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, Eurasian, and more. This may be partially due to a growing interest in global and comparative history, but also to the increasing awareness that indeed, the Sultanate was a focus of different ongoing and changing regional and international links. Finally, perhaps Mamlukists are ever more aware that a dichotomy between internal and external relations never really holds, and in order to understand developments within the Sultanate, one needs constantly to look at the larger picture, and vice versa: the study of foreign connections facilitates a comprehension of interior aspects.

Many of these aspects of the relations of the Sultanate and its elites (and to a lesser extent, its overall population) with the wider regional and global arena find expression in this present volume. The majority of the papers had their origins at a conference held on 18–20 December 2015 by the Annemarie Schimmel-Kolleg for Mamluk Studies at the University of Bonn on the "The Mamluk Sultanate and its Neighbors: Economic, Social and Cultural Entanglements," co-convened by the two editors of this volume. Several other papers (by N. Luz, B. Walker and K. Yosef) were originally presented at a Minerva Gentner Symposium, held in Jerusalem in June 2014, also convened by the co-editors, who are grateful to the Minerva Foundation of Germany for its support. Finally, two papers (by R. Irwin and one of two by A. Fuess) were first delivered at a conference organized by Amalia Levanoni and R. Amitai in 2006 in Jerusalem and Haifa. That conference did not spawn a collective work as originally thought, and the editors were happy to invite these two authors to join the present volume with their pertinent papers.

The editors are grateful to the team at the Annemarie Schimmel-Kolleg for its assistance at various stages, and also to Mr. Or Amir of the Hebrew University for his assistance with the 2014 symposium in Jerusalem. We are appreciative of the support and advice of our colleague Prof. Amalia Levanoni. Finally, we wish to

express our thanks to the authors of the papers for their cooperation and patience.

Reuven Amitai   Stephan Conermann
Jerusalem   Bonn

August 2018

A Note on Citations, Transliteration and Dates

This volume is a collection of papers from different specializations and disciplines, based on various scholarly approaches and methodologies. It was thus decided to give the authors a certain amount of leeway regarding both their citations methods and transliteration systems from non-Latin alphabets, as a reflection of their individual scholarly background. Overall, we have eschewed abbreviations for journals, encyclopedias and standard reference works, in the interest of clarity for a (hopefully) wide readership; not everyone is familiar with the abbreviations of all the journals in a neighboring discipline or in all the cited languages. Overall Common Era dates are used, but when Hijrī dates are also employed, the latter generally comes first; in any case, the distinction should be clear from the context.

I. General Considerations on the International Context of the Mamluk Sultanate

Stephan Conermann (University of Bonn)

The Mamluk Empire. Some Introductory Remarks on a Perspective of Mediterranean History[1]

From a classical, phenomenological point of view, space is envisaged as the (terrestrial) ground of human actions.[2] In the last two decades, however, it has become an established viewpoint in the systematic disciplines like sociology, anthropology and geography to think of space as a constructed reference value – and thus no longer a mere physical-material category. The *spatial turn* therefore stresses a more rational understanding of space: the processual spatial references of social interaction, so to speak.[3] Following the tradition of classical social theory (especially Georg Simmel),[4] action-theoretical approaches in the social sciences became more and more important, compared to a territorial, physical spatial determinism. Culture is accordingly no longer conceived of as a territorial fixed habitat, as implicitly propagated by the *area studies*, but rather as a process of exchange and acquisition.[5] The pre-modern Mediterranean is understood and studied in this context as a space of interaction.

In what follows, I present approaches to a global history, before turning to other theoretical considerations on how to analyze interactions between individuals, groups, and political organizations. Recent studies on the Mediterranean region eventually lead us to highlight four research works on the relations of the Mamluk Empire with associates in the North; they give a very incisive overview of contemporary studies and research questions in this field. As it turns out, we are just commencing on an interdisciplinary, theoretically profound and methodically precise research of the Mediterranean.

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1 This is a shortened version of Conermann 2013. I thank the Stämpfli Verlag for giving me the permission to publish the modified text in this volume of collected articles.
2 Cf. Günzel 2006.
3 Cf. Simmel 1903. For Simmel's theoretical approach, see Glauser 2006.
4 For the *spatial turn*, see Bachmann-Medick 2009 and Döring and Thielmann 2008.
5 See on this Ferguson and Gupta 1997.

Global History

Today, upholding the supremacy and dominance of national history has become just as untenable as considering only the history of single cultures. Global history lies less at the center of the clash of civilizations than it does at the intersection of the interactions; or – if you like – of the conflict between global, long-range developments and local and regional reactions.[6] Of course, there are typical spaces of interaction – the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Baltic Sea. Global history focuses on the apprehension and description of the dialectic between spacious, external relations and spatial processes of integration (which inevitably lead to the drawing of boundaries and fragmentation) as well as between densification and differentiation. It is no longer a matter of tracing the Europeanization of the world but of understanding the interaction among different parts of the world in a process of constructing the present age. Just as a look at non-European history is presumed to widen the analytical circumscribed nature of national histories, global history is presumed to put the universalism of European history into perspective. Looking at the *longue durée* of processes of global history inevitably shakes up the well-established epochal structuring and the underlying parameters of modernization deduced from European development. The time is ripe to allot non-European parts of the world their very own historical existence and to stop locating them within the historiographical periphery of the European or national center.

Our special interest in the countless discussions on global history and phenomena of global history lies in the global dimensions before 1492, the so-called "early modern capitalistic world system."[7] "Global" here does not refer to any notion of "worldwide" in a physical sense, but rather to the interconnectedness and interlacing of Eurasian-African spaces. Some might want to generalize this to be the "Old World," but in fact it refers to the *human web* of the Old World[8] in times of an "archaic globalization"[9] or to an *Eurasian connectedness*[10] in the 13th and 14th centuries. To be more specific, it is concerned with the idea (developed especially by Janet Abu Lughod) of a *Pax Mongolica*, evoked, on the one hand, by the Mongols along the Silk Road, and of a space of communication established by Islamic traders and networks across the Indian Ocean, on the other hand.[11]

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6 For global history, the following introductions are helpful: Kossock 1992; Mazlish 1993; Mazlish 2002; Osterhammel 2005; Grandner, Rothermund and Schwentker 2005; Hausberger 2007 and Osterhammel 2008.
7 Wallerstein 1986 which is based on Braudel 1986. For Wallerstein, see Nolte 2005.
8 McNeill and McNeill 2003.
9 Bayly 2007.
10 Darwin 2007.
11 Abu Lughod 1989; Abu Lughod 1993; Abu Lughod 1994.

The world of Islam, which once covered vast areas of Africa and Asia, was precisely not just a religious entity, but rather also conducive to a commercial and cultural cohesion of the space from Seville to Samarkand. This is the beginning of a "process of densification"[12] that is connected to keywords like nationalization, population growth, world-spanning navigation, a permanently interconnected world economy, the intensification of agriculture, and the global diffusion of culture, religion, and technology.

It has to be stated that a sweeping shift occurred between the 13th and the 15th centuries which led to the integration of the Mediterranean region into the global system of transportation and communication as well as the trans-regional processes of exchange.[13] Even though the Crusaders had once and for all been expelled from the Levant at the end of the 13th century, Europe had by no means been excluded from the Eastern Mediterranean. On the contrary, seen from the perspective of the Mamluk Empire, which from that time on held a pivotal function in global activities, Genoa, Venice, and Barcelona were fully integrated into the trade network.[14] Major disturbances of this pre-modern global exchange system were precipitated by the disastrous plague epidemic in mid-14th century[15] and the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453)[16] raging in Europe. Not until the "long" 16th century, which stretched from 1420 to 1620,[17] was this crisis in the North overcome. But from a global perspective, what followed in the 17th century was a period of massive changes with far-reaching impacts: In France, India, China, and England, processes of political and social reform started which, over the course of time, were to permanently change the face of the Earth.[18] Large amounts of capital were being released through the emerging European trade companies that increasingly exerted local power.[19] Furthermore, migration movements were taking place on a huge scale between Africa, America, and parts of Asia.[20] A main feature of the era lay in the remarkable exchange processes evolving on many levels – even though Europe as well as the Islamic realm were still politically largely fragmented (e.g., Mamluks, Ilkhanate, Golden Horde, Timurids, Hafsids, Merinids), a circumstance John Bayly calls a "Warrior Globalization."[21] These were, first and foremost, economic relations. Mamluk Syria and Egypt became the hub between East and West as well as between North and South. An in-

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12 Ertl and Limberger 2009.
13 Cf. Jaspert 2009.
14 An overview gives North 2007.
15 An excellent account is Bergdolt 2011.
16 Cf. Curry 2012.
17 Braudel 1974.
18 Cf. Parker 2008.
19 Cf. Chaudhuri 1985; Tracy 1990; Nagel 2007 and Ertl 2008.
20 Cf. Lucassen and Lucassen 1997 and the relevant parts of Oltmer and Schuber.
21 Cf. Bayly 2007.

creasingly circular exchange of commodities, foodstuff, spices, and craft products arose on the Eurasian continent under the influence of various sub-cycles – and Africa was included in these activities:[22] (1) the European trade area covering the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean sea; (2) the Middle East, which was connected to Central Asia and Africa via land bridges and was able to make use of sea connections to Europe and India; and, (3) the East Asian trade area extending from China via South Asia all the way to India. The corner marks were China and Western Europe, with the Arabic-Persian region at its core. The main transport routes consisted of the caravan routes through Central Asia and the shipping routes via the Indian Ocean;[23] Europe became a factor in those transcontinental linkages via the Mediterranean. Around 1300, a certain peak of this first world system may be registered. Besides trade goods, religious ideas also came to be circulated; shamanistic and animistic religions blended, were overlaid, and syncretized with Arabic and Turkish-Persian Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity, which had a strong influence on the North and East through the idea of the Crusades.[24] The idea of *travelling concepts*, that is, not only the transfer of culture and technology,[25] but also intellectual interlacing, played a significant role that has to date been studied only insufficiently.[26] *Knowledge flows* occurred not only in fields like astronomy, mathematics, and medicine, but also concerning business practices (commercial and financial techniques), military strategies and nautical knowledge. According to John Darwin, this Eurasian *connectedness* lasted until 1750. Only after that year did the global-imperial world of European hegemony came into being on winding paths. Jürgen Osterhammel very aptly calls this process, which arose against great resistance and much contingency, the "transformation of the world" ("Verwandlung der Welt").[27]

Theoretical and Methodological Approaches to the Study of Spaces of Interaction

The identification of the Mediterranean as a space of interaction leads us to questions on the categories we must apply to capture processes of exchange and interlacing, and on which method we should use to work with our material in order to get answers about the *connectedness* of the space and the different

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22 Cf. Abu Lughod 1989.
23 Cf. Conermann 1998 and Conermann 2001.
24 Cf. Riley-Smith 1992.
25 Cf. Agius and Hitchkock 1994.
26 Cf. Neumann and Nünning 2012.
27 Osterhammel 2009.

agents.[28] Let us use a specific example to illustrate the problems encountered here.

For a long time, it was considered ideal to construct a "comparison" to answer historical social-scientific questions.[29] A comparative study in its traditional form compared two or more entities independent from each other, the goal being to determine similarities and differences of certain phenomena, which in turn could help to enlighten them both. So, even though they were related in many ways, they continued to be separate from each other – their existence and identity lay prior to their encounter on a temporal and a systematic level. A comparison was thus only desired – and even possible – when it concerned two communities that were located as far apart as possible from each other on a spatial level.[30]

Methodological problems also should be mentioned: Distinct units of comparison, which in reality do not exist as such, first have to be constructed in order to be compared.[31] Exponents of cultural transfer studies also criticize the fact that any comparison ignores the relations between the units of comparison and could hardly capture developments over time.[32] Against this backdrop the spaces of interaction became the center of attention. Transfer history, dealing predominantly with the movement of goods, people, and ideas in coinciding perspectives of the country of origin and the destination, experienced a revival.[33] Its exponents advocated the argument that societies are not given entities, but that they come into existence through communicative practices and are thus subject to constant change. First and foremost, however, communities should no longer be conceived of as existing prior to the processes of transfer and exchange, in the sense that two communities that were already identifiable and describable contacted each other in a second step. Rather, such a transfer should be understood as *constitutive* because it in fact brought forth the communities. If a definition of differences were the focal point of each comparison, then the term "transfer" (also as opposed to the concept of interlacing) allows the process to be grasped and operationalized more precisely in numerous aspects: First, the reasons for the transfer – specific situations, specific agents, specific motivations – have to be identified; second, the criteria of selection have to be defined, as only certain

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28 The following paragraph is mainly based on Pernau 2011.
29 See Pernau 2011, 30–35 and 153–154. See Kaelble 1999a; Kaelble 1999b; Kaelble 2003; Kaelble 2005; Haupt and Kocka 1996 and Kocka 2003. For transcultural comparisons, see Osterhammel 2003; Höfert 2008a; Höfert 2008b; Drews 2008; Drews 2009; Oesterle 2008 and Oesterle 2009.
30 Cf. Galtung 2000.
31 Cf. Lorenz 1999 and Welskopp 1995.
32 Cf. Borgolte, Schiel; Schneidmüller 2008; Borgolte and Schneidmüller 2010; Borgolte, Dücker, Müllerburg and Schneidmüller 2011.
33 See Pernau 2011, 43–49 and 156–157.

aspects are transferred and never an entire culture; and finally, the results of the transfer have to be discussed.

Exponents and pioneers of a *connected history*[34] followed a similar approach, concentrating on the interconnection between the four world religions in the Early Modern Age. Serge Gruzinski, who emerged from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), especially concerned himself with the cultural processes that evolved in Latin America in the wake of the Spanish conquest.[35]According to his research, cultural hybrids (*métissages*) evolved from an encounter that essentially featured violence (conquest, slave trade with Africa, revolts, natural disasters, and diseases) and was by no means a "happy hybridity."[36] The approach of connected history inevitably fragmented the concept of culture and made it problematic. In his works, Sanjay Subrahmanya mindicates that we should not assume that precolonial societies were static and only developed their dynamic *vis-à-vis* the West.[37] In fact, tight connections and processes of exchange originating from different hubs always existed – in all directions and throughout all time. He argues the case for a fundamental openness of history, which should by no means be interpreted and read from its alleged terminal point: European world domination.

Another standpoint opposite to transfer research is the concept of "histoire croisée," as shaped by Michael Werner and Bénèdicte Zimmerman.[38] They also oppose the method of comparison and call for an elaboration of the theoretical presuppositions of research in order to make them significantly more precise. They are especially concerned with the circulation of ideas, people, institutions, and objects from one social context into another and in different directions, while including the point of view of the researcher. In their view, the scholar cannot immediately interpret the facts, but can only make a second-category interpretation that reflects the preexisting interpretation of the actors themselves. Recently, comparative history and transfer history underwent a rapprochement by changing the objective of the comparison: It is now all about displaying the specific and no longer about showing general causalities and developing historical macro prototypes. Galtung's objection that a proper comparison can be conducted only between entities that have not been related to each other before and that do not have a common origin becomes less important.[39] Transfer history actually *needs* the comparison (as a method). De-

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34 See Pernau 2011, 37–43 and 145–146.
35 Cf. Gruzinski 2004.
36 Ahuja 2006, 112 (quoted after Pernau 2011, 38).
37 Cf. Subrahmanyam 1997; Subrahmanyam 2005a and Subrahmanyam 2005b.
38 Cf. Werner and Zimmermann 2002; Werner and Zimmermann 2004; Werner and Zimmermann 2006. See Pernau 2011, 49–56 and 157–159.
39 Cf. Galtung 2000.

termining differences by contemporary actors is the beginning of each and every process of transformation. Transfer leads to changes, not only in the cultures of origin and reception, but also in the object of transfer itself. These modifications can only be conceived properly by utilizing a temporal and geographical comparison. The presumption that a comparison leads to an essentialization is no longer accurate in any comprehensive way. Multipolar exchange must be managed methodologically and through practical research.

One last approach that intrigues our interest concerning the premodern Mediterranean is represented by the idea of "translocality," as developed by Ulrike Freitag, Achim von Oppen, and Nora Lafi from the Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) in Berlin.[40] In the course of the *cultural turn,* history and the social sciences abandoned structural history and the quantifying methods, looking at "culture" in a more general sense.[41] This includes a preoccupation not only with products of the so-called "high culture," but with all kinds of social interaction to which actors attribute a meaning. Space too became a cultural construct – created through ideas, practices, and symbols. It is a matter of a new segmentation and structuring of space, of regulating the relationship between places. Various fields of action (economic, religious, political, etc.) can lead to different hierarchies between places in this case, though they can also partially overlap. This interaction between the dynamics of trans-local movements and what has been called "establishment," that is, the (not always successful) attempt of the agents to convert this dynamic into stable systems and structures, may be observed.

Mediterranean Studies

The Mediterranean region has long been the subject of countless essays, especially since Fernand Braudel's (1902–1985) publication of his professorial dissertation *La Méditerranée et le monde méditeranéen à l'epoque de Philippe II* in 1949.[42] There, Braudel creates a universal history of the *Méditerranée* at the time of Philip II of Spain (lived 1527–1598).[43] The work has three parts: He starts with an elaboration on the history of humans and their relationship to a geographical milieu and then deals with structures like states, societies, and cultures. The focus of the third part lies on political and military events. This outline corresponds to Braudel's general notion of history, which always moves in three different tempi: *longue durée* (geography, climate), *conjuncture* (economy, social

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40 Cf. Freitag and von Oppen 2005; Freitag and von Oppen 2010. See Pernau 2011, 67–75 and 162–164.
41 Pernau 2011, 67. Fort the *cultural turn*, see Bachmann-Medick 2016.
42 Braudel 1949. For the reception of his theses, see Marino 2004; Molho 2001.
43 Helpful introductions are Horden and Purcell 2005; Balard 2006; Abulafia 2011.

cycles), *événements* (events). Eventually, Braudel's research directs itself against the thesis put forth by Henri Pirenne (1862–1935), arguing that the unity of the Mediterranean created through the Roman Empire as apolitical union was destroyed by the Arabs in the 7th century.[44] Braudel, on the other hand, assumes that not until the 16th century did fundamental global changes occur. Even though Braudel's approach has had great impact to this day, some have remarked that his research fails to sufficiently take the historical agents into account, and that he conceived of and described the three civilizations of the Mediterranean (Roman Christianity, Orthodox Christianity, Islam) in a way that was too essentialist.[45]

This is not the place to present an extensive research report on the history of the Mediterranean.[46] Nevertheless, two studies should be mentioned here which arose in the context of the 8-volume global history "Die Welt 1000–2000" (The World 1000–2000), edited by the historians Peter Feldbauer, Bernd Hausberger, and Jean-Paul Lehners. In his essay "Austausch-, Transfer- und Abgrenzungsraum. Das Mittelmeer"[47] (Space of Exchange, Transfer, and Demarcation. The Mediterranean), Nikolas Jaspert points to the ambiguity of Mediterranean Studies: "An unreflecting approach that misjudges the peculiarities of individual areas and the small-scale division of the Mediterranean risks evening out singularities and making the case for 'Mediterraneanism.'"[48] The small-scale division of the Mediterranean area with its multifaceted internal segmentation led to the fact that "communication and exchange in the Mediterranean area […] – whether on an economic, cultural, or political level – were essentially shaped regionally."[49]

Besides the spatial, there was also religious segmentation, especially in Christianity: Besides the Roman and the Greek-Orthodox Church, the Armenians, Nestorians, Syrians, and Copts were home to bigger enclaves, and indeed in many regions, multi-religiosity was the norm. Also, there was strong political fragmentation around the Mediterranean. This includes for the Islamic realm the Ottoman Empire in Anatolia, the Mamluk Empire in Egypt and Syria as well as the authoritative unions of the Hafsids, Abdalwadids, Merinids, and Nasrids in the Maghreb and Spain. The North was even more heterogeneous: Apart from the kingdoms of Castile, Aragon, France, Sicily, and Hungary, the Byzantine Empire and the Papal States, city-states like Pisa, Genoa, Venice, and Ragusa struggled for power.

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44 Pirenne 1937. See for the reception of his thesis, Kölzer 1998.
45 See Pernau 2011, 98–101.
46 Cf. Oesterle 2012.
47 Jaspert 2009.
48 Jaspert 2009, 139–140.
49 Jaspert 2009, 143.

On the other hand, scholars have started to understand and research the Mediterranean Sea as a space of communication and therefore to focus on the trans-Mediterranean and transcontinental connections. It is increasingly being interpreted as a social space once characterized by various forms of mobility (migration, traveling, emigration, forced displacement). Furthermore, we find an unmistakable series of technical and cultural interlacing as well as economic interactions. There is some discordance concerning the classification of the era. In his article, Gottfried Liedl argues the case for the above-mentioned global history to be a "formative period of European Modernity" from 1348 to 1648.[50] He thinks many critical changes were characteristic of that time, especially the shift of external "occidental" aggression (think: Crusades) to an internal event that was a "veritable revolution in the way of thinking" in combination with the phenomena "Renaissance" and "Humanism" as well as a rapid development in military technology and seafaring. It should be added that this seems to be a very Eurocentric interpretation of the development because the date 1348, which roughly coincides with the catastrophe of the plague, cannot be interpreted only as a new beginning, but also as a depression in a process of development that was very dynamic and began in the 13th century.

The Mamluk Empire as a Node for Global Interaction

According to Birgit Schäbler, a main feature of a global history lies in conceptualizing interpretations polycentrically, including regional differences or asynchrony, and focusing on them.[51] Existing spatial interconnections and interactions were not subject to continual historical development, but rather evolved in waves of intensity including regressive phases. One such era of accelerated densification was, as already stated, the age of the Mongols. In the 13th and 14th century, global transportation and communication emerged, putting into motion far reaching processes that included political and military reactions as well as commercial changes, cultural and technological transfer. Only at the end of the late Middle Ages was Europe finally connected with this trans-regional network. By establishing useful bilateral relations with Genoa and Venice (and to a lesser degree also with Barcelona), the Mamluks had a great influence along the Eastern Mediterranean areas, as well as in the Black Sea. A decisive event of global dimension occurred in mid-14th century, when the plague spread from Central Asia via the above-mentioned seas to Europe and eventually claimed the lives of

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50 Liedl 2008.
51 Cf. Schäbler 2007.

25 million people.[52] The end of the Mongol Empire complicated European access to the markets of East Asia and even of Persia and Turkestan.[53] The quest for other access possibilities to the treasures of the East led to the discovery of the sea routes around Africa and America.[54] The retreat of the Chinese from maritime trade facilitated the establishment of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean.[55] Throughout the course of the entire era, the Mamluk Empire served as an interface between Eurasia, North Africa, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

That the Mamluk Empire had a pivotal function in a global trade network stems from the results of two studies presented by Peter Feldbauer and Gottfried Liedl.[56] In the first study, Feldbauer succeeded in writing a standard reference of the economic and social history of the Islamic world up to the 13th century. He adapted the research literature in an exemplary manner and was able to show the continuity of social productivity and economic performance of Muslim societies far beyond the 10th century. This contradicts the opinion still prevalent among many Orientalists today, namely, that the alleged golden age of the Islamic culture merely lasted up to the year 1000. The 11th century (but at latest the 13th century) are then thought of as consisting of a very long-lasting social, political, and economic crisis– as the beginning of a century-long decline. This incident is said to have been of such a fundamental nature that the development could not even have been stopped by consolidation through the establishment of great empires by the Ottomans, Safavids, and the Moguls. This phase model persists today, even though the Islamic Studies scholar Aziz al-Azmeh has long since very feasibly proven that the multifaceted stereotypes of decadence and decline used to describe the history of economy, society, and culture in the Islamic realm were exceedingly constructed as an antithesis to the civil-capitalist order that increasingly came to be seen as natural in modern era Europe.[57] However, as al-Azmeh states, a Eurocentric perspective on European development, eventually leading to national states, civic societies, the rise of capitalism, and the establishment of a world economy and international division of labor, results in a completely inappropriate search for factors that could obstruct capitalism with respect to non-European societies. With good reason, Feldbauer and Liedl point out that the intentionally naive question put forth by Michael Cook as to why the Islamic world should actually have been anticipating the capitalist development of Western Europe,[58] highlights the Eurocentric perspective of many of these

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52 For the Muslim world, see Dols 1977.
53 Cf. Kauz 2009.
54 Cf. Hausberger 2008.
55 Cf. Dahm, Feldbauer and Rothermund 2008.
56 Feldbauer 1995; Feldbauer and Liedl 2008. The paragraph follows Conermann 2009.
57 Cf. Al-Azmeh 1996.
58 Cf. Cook 1993.

problematic comparisons. The (anti-)thesis of an (on average) rather favorable economic, sociopolitical, and cultural development extending beyond the time of the Crusades is – unfortunately – advocated only by a minority of modern Islamic historians. In this context, Maxime Rodinson, Michael Cook, Subhi Labib, Marshall G. S. Hodgson, and – to a lesser extent – also Gudrun Krämer and Reinhard Schulze should be mentioned.[59] It is very remarkable that the Islamic world comes off much better in the concepts of "regular" historians, such as Ferdinand Braudel, who assumes an economic, political, and cultural strength and creativity of the Islamic societies in the East and South of the Mediterranean lasting at least until the 16th century.[60] Feldbauer and Liedl correctly point out that especially exponents of the World Systems Theory, like Samir Amin, Christopher Chase-Dunn, Andre Gunder Frank, Barry K. Gills, Thomas D. Halland and Stephen K. Sanderson, who started to modify the concepts of Wallerstein's World Systems Theory in the 1970s, consider the position of the Islamic world at least until the 14th century as essentially positive and dominant.[61] In her study *Before European Hegemony. The World System A.D. 1250–1350*, Janet Abu Lughod in particular argued convincingly that it was basically the complementary phenomena of crisis during the second quarter of the 14th century (the plague and the aggressive trade policy of Venice and Genoa) along with severe changes in East Asia, India and Western Europe which changed the structures of the pre-modern world system, leading to crucial shifts in the global distribution of power.[62] Feldbauer and Liedl emphasize that "it was just in this period of time that an interesting congruence can be observed in the developments of – on the one hand – the 'European' cultural and economic area in the narrow sense of the word, and the wider unity called 'Euro-Méditerrannée,' on the other hand. To us, this means not only the aspiring and history-charged regions of the northern coasts of the Mediterranean, but at the same time – and we could not insist on this more – the so-called South and East which are closely entangled with their Northern, respectively Western 'counterparts,' the 'Levant' and the 'Orient': It is the area which has been called the European counter-coast or its Mediterranean 'façade.'"[63] Thus, the global dominion of the cultural sphere shaped by Islam is prolonged even up to the 16th century: "Combining the long-term tendency of the development of agriculture, industry and trade with the estimate of the Mediterranean expansion of the Crusaders and the Italian merchants, the boom years

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59 See Labib 1965; Rodinson 1971, Cook 1993, Hodgson 1974; Hodgson 1993; Krämer 2005; Schulze 2008.
60 Cf. Braudel 1986.
61 Cf. Amin 1991; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1991; Chase-Dunn and Hall 1997; Frank and Gills 1993; Sanderson and Frank 1998.
62 Cf. Abu-Lughod 1989.
63 Feldbauer and Liedl 2008, 9–10.

of trade under the banner of the *Pax Mongolica* and the subsequent crisis of the 14th century, the beginning offensive of Iberian colonialism in the Maghreb as well as the Portuguese circumnavigation of the Cape and their venture into the Indian Ocean, it all results in the notion of productive, adaptive and innovative economies in the states and societies of the overall Arabic-Iranian region from the 11th up to the early 16th century."[64] There were certainly various crises in the Islamic world as well, but they were always compensated for and averted by equally influential phases of prosperity. The so-called "European wonder" remained in its early stages until the 17th century. Concerning economic development, the formerly popular model of stagnation is nowadays rejected to have extended far beyond the 16th century. In general, agriculture, trade, industry, and the financial system experienced a positive development, at least until the crisis occurred in the early 17th century. The Mamluk period therefore has to be reassessed against this backdrop and integrated into the overall economic context. Because we are still at the beginning of developing an interdisciplinary, premodern global history in which the Mediterranean constitutes one of the central spaces of interaction, no synthesis can be offered here. Instead, we present four path breaking studies shall be presented that discuss different facets of the interrelations.

Study 1: "Quelle etait la nature du pouvoir qui gouverna le Moyen Orient depuis la fin du XIVe siècle jusqu'aux debuts de l'âge moderne? Est-il justifié d'y voir des traits origineaux? Sur quels genres d'acteurs peut-on deconstruire le deuxieme Etat mamlouk?" These are the questions asked by Francisco Javier Appelániz Ruiz de Galarretain his study *Pouvoir et finance en Méditerranée prémoderne. Le deuxième etat mamlouk et le commerce de épices (1382–1517)*, submitted in 2009.[65] The book focuses on the spice trade and the fiscal and economic measures the sultans took in this respect. The author questions conventional wisdom according to which the Islamic rulers deeply damaged free trade and the indigenous groups of merchants by establishing a state monopoly and by forcefully integrating the merchants into the apparatus of the state. Appelániz offers a new interpretation of politics and the decline of the Mamluk Empire in the Circassian period (1382–1517), thereby highlighting the financial constraints and shortages caused by the dependence on the profits of the spice trade.

Study 2: The next study was submitted by the French historian Damien Coulon, his doctoral thesis entitled *Barcelone et le grand commerce d'Orient au Moyen*

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64 Feldbauer and Liedl, 2008, 167.
65 Appelániz 2009.

Âge. Un siècle de relations avec l'Égypte et la Syrie-Palestine (ca. 1330–ca. 1430), published in 2004.[66] Venice and Genoa have long been the main focus of the ever-expanding literature on the Levant trade of the 14th and 15th century. This led to the fact that other important agents, such as the merchants from Barcelona, are basically ignored. With his thesis, Damien Coulon fills this academic void by analyzing a remarkable number of largely unedited documents in order to understand how the subjects of the House of Aragon participated in the trade with the Orient between 1330 and 1430. His main sources are 15 notarial registers from the archives of Barcelona, containing several thousand documents that he closely analyzes. The author certainly understands the limits of such a documentation, which, by itself, could lead to making mistakes in perspective, ignoring the fact that the corpus is tied to a particular period and deducing general statements from it. Yet the author elegantly and easily circumvents these difficulties by also referring to documents found elsewhere: the archives of the Crown of Aragon, the citizenry of Barcelona, and of the church. The dioceses of Barcelona own many very interesting documents, for example, sermons prepared for shipowners who profited from a pontifical license allowing them to carry on free trade in the Levant between 1347 and 1418. The overall corpus offers a very solid base for the interpretation of trading between the Iberian Peninsula and the Levant, using the example of Barcelona. Not only can the quality and quantity of the transported goods be identified, also the growth of investment capital, the geographical and social origin of the investors, and the customers can be reconstructed with astounding precision.

Study 3: Georg Christ, currently working and teaching at the University of Manchester, in his dissertation examines the conflicts between Egypt and the Venetians in Alexandria between 1418 and 1420 against the backdrop of the two "civilizations" involved.[67] Large parts of the legacy of the Venetian merchants, especially that of the consul Biagio Dolfin (ca. 1370–1420), are in the state archives of Venice. They concern a time of crisis: Egypt was suffering from pandemics, swift changes of government, and economic recession, and the intrusion of European products and currencies into the Egyptian economy had created a series of problems. Many Venetian merchants were living in Alexandria, part of society but without thoroughly integrating themselves. Established networks and long-standing connections failed to prevent regular conflicts – also among the Venetians themselves. The various agents tried to stabilize their own interests by establishing far-reaching contacts, above all based on family ties. The consul of Alexandria played a central role in avoiding and solving such conflicts, mediating

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66 Coulon 2004.
67 Christ 2012.

between Venetians, local and foreign merchants, Mamluk officials, and the Venetian administration – and occasionally operating at the verge of different legal systems. He made secret agreements with officials and merchants to prevent conflicts or to end them, of course always keeping his own interests in mind.

Being economic powers, the Mamluks, Genoa, and Venice (and to a lesser extent Barcelona) controlled the area around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. But Egypt and Syria also served as transshipment point for numerous products that found their way to the port cities of the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea via the Indian Ocean, and which from there were transported overland to the Middle East. Furthermore, goods were transported to the Levant via the Silk Road and via the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. Thus, the Mamluk Empire served as a node between Europe, North Africa, Central Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia over the course of the entire era. After 1350, however, it became more complicated to transport goods from East to West and vice versa using the overland routes. Sea voyages via the Indian Ocean, on the other hand, went astonishingly well. Egypt remained important as a country in which transit trade took place, although the Red Sea was slowly becoming the hub of mercantile activities. Mecca and the Sharifs of the Hejaz also participated in the Red Sea trade. The port city of Jidda discharged and taxed most of the cargo from ships coming from the Indian Ocean. From there, the precious goods came to Alexandria and then via the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. From Jidda, ships sailed back to Calicut, carrying large amounts of copper, mercury, verdigris, saffron, rosewater, scarlet cloth, silk, camlet, and taffeta fabrics as well as gold and silver. The extensive and intense maritime traffic in the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea inevitably expanded to include the port cities of Aden, Alexandria, and Damietta. But the two oceans were not the only trade routes of Egypt. The land route from Egypt to Syria and the Middle East in general as well as to North Africa and Bilād al-Takrūr had a major stake in the prosperity of Egyptian trade. Eventually, Mecca also became an important center for trans-regional trade due to the annual pilgrimage.

Study 4: Even though the Mamluk period is fairly well studied, it is remarkable that there are almost no essays on Mecca, the central place of pilgrimage of the Muslims in that era. Only recently did John L. Meloy publish an excellent monograph on this topic, focusing not on locating Mecca as central node in the network of trans-regional pilgrimage activities, but rather emphasizing the political and economic parameters of the ruling Sharifs.[68] This family, who traced their ancestors back to the Prophet himself, had been ruling on a local level since the late 12th century. Its power was based on their control of the main places of

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68 Meloy 2010.

pilgrimage, but also on the strategically favorable position of their sphere of influence – particularly in their port Jidda did trade from the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea meet via the Red Sea. The Red Sea trade continuously increased from the late 14th up to the 16th century, when the Portuguese intervened in the Asian trade and secured the basis of Mecca prosperity. However, the premise for the rule of the Sharifs in the Hejaz had always been their ability to maintain a *modus vivendi* in accordance with the Mamluk sultans in Cairo. In light of the massive crises that occurred during the 15th century, the Mamluk rulers in Cairo made use of their favorable geopolitical position and took control over the import and export of certain profitable goods in the oversea trade. The rulers of Mecca could not escape these attempts at monopolization. John L. Meloy portrays the history of the city amid these conflicting priorities: on the one hand, the prosperity connected to the commodity flows and, on the other hand, the hegemonic claims of the sultans, who always wanted to take their share in the revenues of long-distance trade. The local social-economic conditions were based predominantly on the synergy of the pilgrimage, breeding cattle, patronage, and systems of protection. Politics were very risky for the Sharifs–Mamluk ambitions had to be satisfied, as did various demands of local families, tribal alliances, and local notables. Meloy paraphrases a quotation from C. Snouck Hurgronje in describing the history of Mecca in the 15th century as "the loss of Mecca's isolation within the context of Mediterranean-Indian Ocean trade."

Conclusion

In the academic canon of disciplines that developed in the 19th century, Western universities established an extensive separation of cultures within research: While such universal subjects as history, sociology, and national economy were concerned above all with Western Europe and North America, preoccupation with non-Western cultures was "outsourced" to disciplines such as Islamic Studies, Sinology, Indology, etc. In combination with other factors, this led to the history of Western Europe being perceived and displayed as exemplary – and in many ways exclusive – describing the development toward Western modernity as stretching from Antiquity to Recent History. Accordingly, structures and lines of development of non-European history that did not resemble the analytical categories unilaterally established according to Western European history were only marginally noticed – often being referred to as stagnant and integrated into a story of decline contrasting the European ascent to modernity.[69] Any transcultural comparison thus runs against the presumed dis-

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69 See Bayly 2004.

similarity of cultures;[70] it shifts the parameters by rejecting *a priori* the initial thesis of the exclusiveness of historical phenomena in two cultures and by looking for phenomena and categories that assume fundamental similarities instead. Only then are the differences between case studies determined. This backdrop means the history of the Mediterranean has to be rewritten. Even though many studies on this area of interaction have already been submitted, to date the non-European perspective has rarely, and especially much less equitably, been pursued and integrated into the overall interpretation. This can likely be achieved only through interdisciplinary research.[71] Such disciplinary modules, as shown in the examples of the four studies presented above, already exist.

Demonstrating historical alternatives reveals the diversity of historical development models, which contrasts the diversity of modernity with a diversity of the pre-modern period.[72] Between 1250 and 1500 a certain degree of economic, political, religious, and culturally-technical interlacing processes occurred that included not only the Mediterranean, but also large parts of the Eurasia as well as parts of Africa. The networks resulting from these processes of interlacing were complementary and influenced each other. The impacts of historical events like political power change, the closure of trade roads, the introduction of new technologies, or the outbreak of epidemics were felt via the various systems of interaction and affect remote world religions considerably. That is where we have to locate the Mamluk Empire.

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70 Cf. Drews and Osterle 2008.
71 Cf. Meier 1989.
72 Cf. Eisenstadt 2007.

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The Mamlūk Sultanate and its Neighbours: Economic, Social and Cultural Entanglements[*]

The Mamlūk Sultanate negotiated with distant forces and commercial partners and exchanged dispatches and embassies with competitors and rivals. These research topics attracted historians' attention already during the nineteenth century. Their studies illuminated the visible position of Cairo's Citadel in the world and the diplomatic histories of the 13th–16thcenturies.[1] This article, based on literary evidence, is the first chapter in a research enterprise that deals with the diplomatic communications between the Mamlūk Sultanate and Muslim and non-Muslims governments.[2] A planned second chapter will focus on an investigation of archival materials.[3] How did the Mamlūk elite, both its civilian and military echelons, perceive the world around it? Several directions can be chosen in search for answer(s). The careful scrutiny of diverse literary genres, as well as the investigation of artefacts, certainly is a possible first one.[4] This article is based primarily on the inspection of 15th-century literary sources. It will concentrate primarily on three genres: 1) legal writings; 2) slave trade guides; and 3) geographical texts. These texts cast light on the juridical division employed by the religious establishment, on communications with foreign markets and on the image of these remote lands in the collective imagination of the texts' consumers. Certainly, the three literary genres mentioned above are not the only type of

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1 For earlier works of mine on this topic, see Y. Frenkel, "Animals and Otherness in Mamluk Egypt and Syria," in Francisco de Asís García García, Mónica Ann Walker Vadillo and María Victoria Chico Picazabar (eds.), *Animals and Otherness in the Middle Ages: Perspectives across Disciplines* (Oxford, 2013), 52–55; Y. Frenkel, "Embassies and Ambassadors in Mamluk Cairo," in Frédéric Bauden (convener), *Mamluk Cairo: A Crossroad for Embassies* (Université de Liège, September 2012) (in preparation for publication).

2 The history of the Mamlūks and the Italian merchant republics is excluded.

3 One document was presented in Y. Frenkel, "Mamlūk Embassies and Diplomats in 15th-century Mediterranean – The Mamlūk Sultanate in the Days of Qāʾit-Bāy and the al-Ifranj," a talk at the Second Conference of the School of Mamlūk Studies, Liége, June 2015 (Panel: The Mamlūks and Distant Realms).

4 Doris Behrens-Abouseif, *Practising Diplomacy in the Mamluk Sultanate: Gifts and Material Culture in the Medieval Islamic World* (London, 2014).

sources at our disposal. Chronicles and biographical dictionaries also cast light on the world vision that prevailed among the Mamlūk elite. These sources also narrate Cairo's diplomatic ties with Muslim and non-Muslim powers in the Mediterranean, Africa, Central Asia and in India. In addition, these sources report on military operations against close and remote Muslim and non-Muslim forces. Biographical writings inform us of Muslim travellers, including merchants, who visited lands far from Cairo and Damascus.[5] A case in point is a reference to merchants from Mamlūk Egypt and Syria who called at the port of Hormuz (Jarun/Zarun) in the Persian Gulf.[6] Yet since my main concern is the Mamlūk elite's worldview (*die Weltanschauung*),[7] I will refrain from dwelling upon the history of events or political developments.[8]

Opposing Abodes

First, I will concentrate on selected findings taken from Mamlūk juridical compendia. Although quotations from earlier works are a salient feature of the methodology employed by the compilers of these texts, nevertheless the legal compositions produced by these jurists are not merely a transmission of frozen Abbasid traditions. The savants of the Mamlūk period carefully selected earlier generations' works and updated them to suit the contemporaneous interpretation of power struggles and negotiations. Their bulky production provides rich information on the reception of the past and on the mental vision of both the

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5 On early Mamluk seafaring to Aden and India, see *Nūr al-maʿārif fī nuẓum wa-qawānīn wa-aʿrāf al-Yaman fī al-ʿahd al-Muẓaffarī al-wārif* [Lumière de la connaissance: règles, lois et coutumes du Yémen sous le règne du sultan rasoulide al-Muzaffar (fl. 647–694/1249–1295)], ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥīm Jāzim (Sanaa, 2003–5), 1: 175, 260–262, 265 (the currency of India and the ocean's islands), 492–494 (Kārimī merchants, who sail to Egypt, and slaves); on the contribution of this source to the study of the communication of Yemen with India see Elizabeth Lambourn, "India from Aden: *Khutba* and Muslim Urban Networks in Late Thirteenth-Century India," in Kenneth Hall (ed.), *Secondary Cities and Urban Networking in the Indian Ocean Realm, c. 1400–1800* (Lanham, Md., 2008), 60–63.

6 Kamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Samarqandī, *Maṭāliʿ-i saʿdayn va majmaʿ al-baḥrayn* [Kamaluddin Abdul-Razzaq Samarqandi's Mission to Calicut and Vijayanagara], in W. M. Thackston, (trans.) *A Century of Princes: Sources on Timurid History and Art* (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 300; On Sūq al-Harāmiza in Mamluk Cairo see Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Ibn Iyās al-Ḥanafī (852–930/1448–1524), *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr* [Die Chronik des Ibn Ijas (The Amazing Flowers about the Events of the Times)] ed. M. Mustafa (Wiesbaden: F. Steiner, 1975; reprinted Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1429/2008), 3: 434 (905/1500).

7 To use Kant's terminology. See Karl Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (London, 1952), 33–83 [originally published in 1923].

8 Y. Frenkel, "The Mamluks among the Nations: A Medieval Sultanate in its Global Context," in Stephan Conermann (ed.), *Everything is on the Move: The Mamluk Empire as a Node in (Trans-)Regional Networks* (Bonn, 2014), 61–79.

authors who expounded earlier legal traditions and the consumers of these late Middle Islamic writings. Muslim jurists of the Middle Islamic period divided the planet into two "ideal"[9] abodes: Dār al-Islām versus Dār al-Ḥarb.[10] These two legal tags appear again and again in Mamlūk-period jurists' writings. From their legal compendia, we can safely argue that the immediate consequences of this bipolar world vision were not a declaration of war or military expeditions to subdue the infidels. Considering the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims they did not envision armed conflict as the sole option. Sultans adopted a similar attitude and devoted considerable efforts to negotiating political deals with competitors and even with religious adversaries. Quite often they favoured truces rather than taking to the field. That the Mamlūk military aristocracy demonstrated restraint and caution, preferring diplomacy to combat, we may deduce from various sources. Cairo sent diplomatic missions to Italy,[11] to the Golden Horde, to the Ilkhanid Mongols (e. g., Baybars, in 660–665/1262–1267)[12] and to additional ruling courts.[13] Other historical documents shed light on ceasefire agreements. This policy is reflected clearly in the Mamlūks' treaties with the Latins[14] and with the rulers of the Nile valley (baqṭ).[15] From al-Maqrīzī's account we learn that this early Islamic and Fatimid diplomatic arrangement with Nubia was known in 15th-century Cairo. Several juridical works can be construed as compositions showing that the religious establishment backed these diplomatic measures. Using the tag "the imam" (i. e. the sultan), al-ʿAynī, for example, creates an ideal and timeless picture of Islamic history and law. He states that if an armistice promises financial benefit, the Muslim leader (i. e. the Mamlūk

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9 To use the Weberian terminology.

10 During the Mamluk period additional terms, such as *Dār kufr, Dār imān, balad silm, bilād murakkaba* (*qism thālith*). Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm Ibn Taymiyya al-Ḥaranī (661–728/1263–1328), *Majmūʿ fatāwá* ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. Qāsim al-ʿĀṣimī al-Najdī al-Ḥanbalī (al-Madīna: wizārat al-shuʾūn al-islāmiyya, 1425/2004), 27: 248–49, 28: 240–241. I would like to thank Dr. Ashraf Abū Zarqa for this reference.

11 Konrad Hirschler, "Ibn Wāṣil: An Ayyūbid Perspective on Frankish Lordships and Crusades," in Alex Mallett (ed.), *Medieval Muslim Historians and the Franks in the Levant* (Leiden, 2015), 142; John Wansbrough, "A Mamluk Ambassador to Venice in 913/1507," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 26 (1963): 503–530.

12 Reuven Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Ilkhanid War, 1260–1281* (Cambridge, 1995), 81–84.

13 Mercè Viladrich, "Solving the 'Accursed Riddle' of the Diplomatic Relations between Catalonia and Egypt around 1430," *Al-Masaq* 14/1 (2002): 25–31; Leonard Patrick Harvey, *Muslims in Spain, 1500 to 1614* (Chicago, 2005), 84–85.

14 Peter Malcolm Holt, *Early Mamluk Diplomacy, 1260–1290* (Leiden, 1995).

15 Martin Hinds and H. Sakkout, "A Letter from the Governor of Egypt to the King of Nubia and Muqurra concerning Egyptian-Nubian Relations in 141/758," in W. Al-Qadi (ed.), *Studia Arabica et Islamica. Festschrift for Ihsan Abbas* (Beirut, 1981), 209–229; Jay Spaulding, "Medieval Christian Nubia and the Islamic World: A Reconsideration of the Baqt Treaty," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 28/3 (1995): 577–594.

sultan) is authorized to conclude a ceasefire truce (*muwādaʿah*) with non-Muslim powers (*ahl al-ḥarb*).[16] The Mamlūk jurists' discussion regarding the duty of Muslims to migrate from lands governed by non-Muslims fortifies this conclusion. A prevailing view among them was that Muslims can, in certain circumstances, live in territories governed by Christians and by other non-Muslim rulers.[17]

Another example of the adjustment of earlier legal discourse to new condition in the Near East are the works of Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥujāwī, who wrote during the closing days of the Mamlūk Sultanate and the incorporation of the Arab lands within the Ottomans' domains. Classifying the People of the Book (*ahl al-kitāb*), he brings the Mediterranean Europeans (*al-franj*) under the canopy of the safety pact (*ʿaqd al-dhimmah*).[18] In another case, al-Ḥujāwī classifies the monastic military orders. He maintains that even Franks who are members of the religious orders can continue, as long as they are not soldiers in the ranks of the fighting battalions, but rather depend on trade or make their livelihood by working in farms, to remain dwelling in the Abode of Islam. By paying the poll tax (*jizyah*) they obtain the protection of Islam. Women living in the Frankish castles are, according to his opinion, exempted from paying the *jizyah*. He does not even exclude taxation of illicit food (*ḥaram*) like wine and swine.[19] Moreover, he advises victorious Muslim conquerors to catalogue books seized following successful offensives. Books that contain useful knowledge that can enrich the Muslims might be preserved, according to al-Ḥujāwī, and used as intellectual *spolia*.[20] Al-Ḥujāwī's endeavour to update his legal manual to the new conditions in the Mediterranean and the Arabian Sea is also reflected by his statement that a Muslim who fights as a mariner obtains better merits than his co-religionist who serves as an infantryman.[21]

Based on this documentation and additional evidence, I argue that jurists' writings and ambassadorial accords support the assumption that, in addition to its military dimension, *jihād* served also a diplomatic tool. While jurists com-

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16 Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad al-ʿAynī al-Ḥanafī (762–855/1361–1451), *al-Bināyah fī sharḥ al-hidāyah* (Beirut, 1411/1990), 6: 518 [= Beirut, 1420/2000, 7: 117].

17 Abou El Fadl Khaled. "Islamic Law and Muslim Minorities: The Juristic Discourse on Muslim Minorities," *Islamic Law and Society* 1 (1994): 141–187.

18 Sharaf al-Dīn Abū al-Najā Mūsá b. Aḥmad b. Sālim b. ʿĪsá bn Sālim al-Ḥujāwī al-Maqdisī al-Ḥanbalī (895–968/1490–1560), *al-Iqnāʿ li-ṭālib al-intifāʿ [fī fiqh al-imām al-mubajjal Abī ʿAbd Allāh Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal]*, ed. Turkī (Riyadh, 1419/1999), 2: 127; on the presence of Frankish merchants in Damascus see ʿAlā al-Dīn ʿAlī b. Yūsuf al-Buṣrawī (842–905/1438–1500), *Taʾrīkh al-Buṣrawī*, ed. Ḥasan al-ʿUlabī (Beirut, 1498/1988), 137.

19 Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥujāwī, *al-Iqnāʿ li-ṭālib al-intifāʿ*, 2: 129–130.

20 Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥujāwī, *al-Iqnāʿ li-ṭālib al-intifāʿ*, 2: 91.

21 Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥujāwī, *al-Iqnāʿ li-ṭālib al-intifāʿ*, 2: 66; indeed from *ḥadīth* collections we can deduce that prophetic traditions on the significance of fighting at sea circulated among Muslims in the early Abbasid period.

posed several treatises on the merits of *jihād*, and encouraged Muslims to join the defensive forces that guarded the sultanate's shores,[22] sultans hesitated to lunch naval operations or to send military incursions into enemies' territories.[23] Although the term *jihād* was no stranger to Mamlūk propaganda and the armies of the sultanate penetrated deep into Anatolia and operated in the Sudan, they hardly led a religious war to spread the call of Islam. Naval and military expeditions aimed primarily to achieve strategic goals, to strengthen the Sultanate's positions at its edges or to deter enemies.[24]

The Fabric of Mamlūk Society and Culture

It is well established that Mamlūk society was multi-lingual and multi-ethnic.[25] Biographies of Sufis and religious scholars clearly reflect this social reality. Many among them were known by a *nisbah* that indicated Turkish or Persian origin. Furthermore, the very use of the term *mamlūk* signifies that soldiers and emirs were, ideally, outsiders in the Abode of Islam. They were supposed to be infidels recruited in the Abode of War.[26] Administrative titles and accounts of the sultans' court in the Citadel of Cairo support this characterization of the sultanate. Many of the terms used there originated from the Saljuq courts in Iran and attested to an earlier Persian background. The history of the communications among Muslim scholars is vast one, and promises new evidence to support a holistic picture of the Islamicate regions (to use Marshal Hodgson's terminology). The sources reveal that jurists and savants established contacts with colleagues and students who lived in regions outside the Mamlūk realm, in addition to their communications with those who dwelled within the boundaries of the sultanate. There is plenty of evidence to support the historical paradigm that depicts Cairo

22 Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. ʿAlī Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī al-Shāfiʿī (773–852/1372–1449), *[Risālah fī] al-Khiṣāl al-mukaffira lil-dhunūb al-mutaqaddimah wal-mutaʾakhirah* [The Good Qualities that Help Achieving God's Forgiveness], ed. A. A. Salīm (Jeddah, 1422/2001), 64 (citing al-Rabaʿī).

23 Y. Frenkel, "Al-Biqāʿī's Naval War-Report," in Stephan Conermann (ed.), *History and Society during the Mamlūk Period (1250–1517)* (Bonn, 2014), 9–20.

24 Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Sakhāwī (831–902/1424–1497), *al-Dhayl al-tāmm ʿalá duwal al-islām lil-dhahabī*, ed. Ḥasan Ismāʿīl Marwah and Maḥmūd al-Arnāʾūṭ (Beirut, 1992–1998), 2: 141 (on the capture by Mamluk forces of a Genoese consul in the Aegean in 864/October 1459).

25 Zayn al-Dīn Abū Ḥafs ʿUmar b. al-Muẓaffar Ibn al-Wardī al-Maʿarrī (691–749/1292–1349), *Tatimmat al-mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-bashar [taʾrīkh Ibn al-Wardī]* (Cairo, 1285/1868), 2: 269 (720/); al-Buṣrawī, *Taʾrīkh*, 60 (878/1474, tawajjaha al-bāsh yashbak).

26 On this, see the recent study by Amir Mazor, *The Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment: The Mansuriyya in the First Mamluk Sultanates 678/1279–741/1341* (Bonn, 2015), esp. appendixes 1 and 5.

of the Late Middle Islamic Period as the centre of Islamic learning. The capital of the Mamlūk sultanate, and to a lesser extent also Damascus, attracted students of Islamic sciences and Sufis from remote lands.[27]

A legal compendium composed by the famous Badr al-Dīn al-ʿAynī, who originated from the ethnically diverse region of southwest Anatolia, sheds light on this reality. The work is entitled *Masāʾil al-Badrīyyah al-muntakhabah min al-fatāwá al-ẓahīrīyah*.[28] This title transmits two details: 1) that it is a choice of legal responsa selected from an earlier work; and 2) that the author of this earlier work was a *muḥtasib* from Bukhara named Ẓahīr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad (d. 619/1222). I assume that al-ʿAynī transmitted the information presented below because his audience in Cairo were familiar with the Persian language and that they received willingly data from the "East," with which the great savant provided them.[29] This deduction is supported by a later work. The Shafiʿite jurist Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī, whose works reflect the state of production of Islamic scholarship in the post-Mamlūk era, brings in his responsa a question from a convert in Malabar (southern India) who reports his fear of followers of his former religion who, he claims, are brutally threatening him.[30] Al-ʿAynī's synopsis of the legal response from Bukhara contains relics of Persian. In the *Kitāb al-jihād* chapter he provides a list of "words that project infidelity (*alfāẓ al-kufr*)." He opens this list with the sentence: "It is a serious sin to say to someone: 'a bad judgment was given (*qaḍāʾ-ī bad rasīd*)'." The saying "the hand of God is long (*dast-i khudā dirāz-ast*)" is, according to al-ʿAynī, an additional case of wrong saying. The great majority of Muslim scholars consider this expression blasphemy.[31] A third example of a prevalent Persian saying is: "There is God but there is nothing good (*khudā bāshad va-hīch khayr nabāshad*)."[32] Because the person who says these words plays down, according to al-ʿAynī, the very real

27 Yet questions regarding how the *Fatāwá al-Ẓahīrīyah* reached Cairo from Central Asia are beyond the limits of present study.

28 Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd Ibn Aḥmad al-ʿAynī al-ʿAyntabī al-Qāhirī al-Ḥanafī (762–855/1361–1451), *Masāʾil al-Badrīyyah al-muntakhabah min al-fatāwá al-ẓahīrīyah* ed. Aḥmad al-Ghāmidī (Mecca, 1423/2012) [= al-Riyāḍ, 2014; 2 vol.].

29 On al-Taftazānī see Walī al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn al-Mālikī (732–808/1332–1406), *al-Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 3: 117; Earl Edgar Elder (trans.), *Commentary on the Creed of Islam: Saʿd al-Din al-Taftazani on the Creed of Najm al-Din al-Nasafi* (New York, 1950), introduction, xxi.

30 Abū al-ʿAbbās Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥamd b. Muḥammad Ibn Ḥajar al-Haytamī (909–973/1503–66), *al-Fatāwá al-kubrá al-fiqahiyyah* ed. ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd Aḥmad Ḥanafī (Cairo, 1357/1938), 4: 249.

31 Al-ʿAynī, *Masāʾil al-Badrīyyah al-muntakhabah min al-fatāwá al-ẓahīrīyah*, 427.

32 The difference between *hast/nīst* is discussed in the Ḥurūfiyya's writings. Their ideas spread in the Mamlūk Sultanate in al-ʿAynī's day. Shahzad Bashir, *Fazlallah Astarabadi and the Hurufis* (Oxford, 2005), 73, 100–101.

existence of Heaven, Hell and their inhabitants, he judges him an infidel.[33] The saying: "do not be afraid of God (*az khudā namītarsī*)" contains double meanings, al-ʿAynī argues: "If it was said in a state of oppression than it is unfaithfulness, yet if the speaker believes that his partner is a truthful person than theswords should not be considered blasphemy."[34] The last example is of a father who says to his son: "O you, an infidel son (*ya kāfir bachcha*)." According to al-ʿAynī's verdict this father "should not be regarded as a heretic."[35] In his work, al-ʿAynī mentions Abū al-Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (282–333/893–944). This reference to the theologian seems to be a rhetorical device used by an author whose agenda included calling for the reform of some practices common in the Mamlūk court in Cairo during the second half of the 15th century. Bowing to the sultan, al-ʿAynī maintains, should not be tagged as faithlessness. This, he says, is a common practice of his days and should not be interpreted as praying to the royal person. Rather, the wrongdoer is the person who claims that the current ruler is a righteous sultan, this is a wrong assumption since we, al-ʿAynī continues, "certainly know that he is a tyrant," adding that the ruler who substitutes justice with oppression is an unbeliever.[36]

Ethnicity

The major source of slaves who served the households and the armies of the Mamlūk Sultanate were lands in Dār al-Ḥarb. From these regions, girls and boys were recruited and transferred to the slave markets of Egypt and Syria. Textual sources reflect the rich ethnic variety that inhabited the mansions of affluent civilians and the military aristocracy. A point in case is the biography of Ibn Mibrad. In his writings this prolific Damascene writer sheds light on the social reality of his day. In his *samāʿāt,* he names Armenian and Turkish slave girls. He is particularly proud of his *umm-walad* Bulbul bint ʿAbd Allāh.[37] Slave-dealers and buyers could consult shoppers' manuals. Prominent among the authors of these shopping manuals were surgeons, a fact that Helmut Ritter mentioned already a hundred years ago.[38] Self-advice texts are another genre that illuminates the

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33 Al-ʿAynī, *Masāʾil al-Badrīyyah al-muntakhabah min al-fatāwá al-ẓahīrīyah*, 429.

34 Al-ʿAynī, *Masāʾil al-Badrīyyah al-muntakhabah min al-fatāwá al-ẓahīrīyah*, 429.

35 al-ʿAynī, *Masāʾil al-Badrīyyah al-muntakhabah min al-fatāwá al-ẓahīrīyah*, 439.

36 al-ʿAynī, *Masāʾil al-Badrīyyah al-muntakhabah min al-fatāwá al-ẓahīrīyah*, 434.

37 Abū Yaʿlá Muḥammad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Farrāʾ al-Ḥanbalī (380–458/990–1066), *Kitāb al-Iʿtiqād* (Riyadh, 1423/2002), 20 (*samāʿāt*); cf. Ṣāliḥ Ibn Muḥammad Ibn ʿAbd al-Khāliq al-Azharī, *al-Fihris al-waṣfī lil-nusakh al-khaṭṭiyyah li–muʾalifāt Yūsuf b. ʿAbd al-Hādī Ibn al-Mibrad* (Kuwait, 1433/2012), 17, 24, 27, 30, 39, 42, 46.

38 Hellmut Ritter, "Ein arabisches Handbuch der Handelswissenschaft," *Der Islam* 7 (1916): 24 (Ibn al-Akfānī).

sultanate's slave markets. They were written for audiences who did not turn a blind eye to the advice of physiognomy manuals and who agreed with the "scientific" suggestion that the inspection of physical symptoms, such as colour, are a valuable tool. We can learn from various sources about the reception of this theory. We learn from Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ṣūfī al-Dimashqī, known by the nick name Shaykh al-Rabwah, that the categorization of mankind suggested by the authors of these guidebooks was well received in Mamlūk Damascus. One of his works is *al-Maʿāqid al-jammah min al-kiyāsah fī ʿilm al-firāsah wa-ḥasan al-siyāsah* ("The numerous divans of cleverness: about the sciences of physiognomy and the accurate control").[39]

Indeed, Shaykh al-Rabwah's originality is limited. His work is a compilation of materials available in earlier writings.[40] Like other Mamlūk authors, he also depends heavily on Abbasid-period sources.[41] This fact clearly illuminates the practices of the Mamlūk reading public, its reception of past works and the popularity of these past achievements. No doubt, this is a point of interest for students of Arabic literature. But assuming that Shaykh al-Rabwah's aim was not to demonstrate his academic achievements or to express nostalgia for a glorious and remote past, and that he was primarily interested in the reception of his work by his contemporaries, as well as with amusing them, we can safely assume that this audience's response shaped his literary production. He made accessible to them highly esteemed traditional accepted writings. In his chapters on the characters and qualities of human groups he makes wide use of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī as a source.[42] Yet his composition is not without value.[43] It reflects the prevailing images of the Other among his audience, images that as we well know are slow to change or disappear. His geography book is another source that reflects this world view. In it he informs his readers of the lands of origins of the

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39 Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. Abī Ṭalib al-Sūfī al-Dimashqī al-Anṣārī (654–737/1256–1327), *al-Siyāsah fī ʿilm al-firāsah* (Beirut, 1426/2005).

40 Cf. the note on al-Ibshīhī by Ulrich Marzolph, "Medieval Knowledge in Modern Reading: A Fifteenth-Century Arabic Encyclopaedia of *Omnire Scibili*," in Peter Binkley (ed.), *Pre-Modern Encyclopaedic Texts. Proceedings of the Second COMERS Congress* (Groningen, 1–4 July 1996) (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

41 Abū al-Fatḥ Shihāb al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Ibshīhī (790–850/1388–1466), *al-Mustaṭraf fī kulli fanni mustaẓraf*, ed. Ibrāhīm Ṣāliḥ (Beirut: Dar Ṣādir, 1419/1999), 2: 531 (*dhakara* al-Masʿūdī), 532 (al-Gharnāṭī, *Tuḥfat al-albāb*), 536 (al-Qazwīnī), 537 (Ibn Zūlāq), 549–553.

42 This might be an explanation why we do not have at our disposal a scientific edition of this work. I used the manuscripts from UCLA and Mecca, beside the volume printed by ʿAbd al-Amīr Muhannā, who based his publication on a single privately-owned manuscript.

43 On this, see Antonella Ghersetti, "The Semiotic Paradigm: Physiognomy and Medicine in Islamic Culture," in Simon Swain (ed.), *Seeing the Face, Seeing the Soul: Polemon's Physiognomy from Classical Antiquity to Medieval Islam* (Oxford, 2007), 301 (she used a Bursa MS.).

ethnic groups that he mentioned in his book on the *firāsah*. I will returnto Shaykh al-Rabwah's work below.

Another writer on *firāsah* is Ibn al-Akfānī (d. 749/1348). The values of these earlier works on physiognomy are high, he says. The data in them illuminates the circumstances of those people who mingle with friends, slaves and women to be married. Physiognomy is, according to him, a legal and accepted Muslim discipline. And, as man is a political creature (*al-insān madanī bil-tabʿ*), he will benefit from the enunciation of ethnic qualities and the characterization of different people.[44] This, Ibn al-Akfānī claims, led him to compose a short tractate on the art of facial assessment.[45]

The Mamlūk Egyptian author al-Amshāṭī is another contributor to the genre that occupies us here.[46] This author produced, among other works, a guidebook entitled *al-Qawl al-sadīd* ("The Correct account of choosing slaves").[47] His point of departure is Ibn al-Akfānī's work on the characterization of slaves. "It is a good work," al-Amshāṭī notes," but lacking in contents and does not provide enough information. My aim is to append it with useful data."[48] In chapter one of this treatise, he provides a register of the ethnic groups that populate the world (*fī dhikr ajnās al-ʿālam*). Following it he provides an anachronistic catalogue of races: Turks, Circassians, Franks, Indians, Berbers, and Blacks.[49] Like other composers of treatises on issues such as race, colour and human geography, al-Amshāṭī does not go beyond the literary limits of the genre. An example of his fictional conservatism is his use of a maximum that Aristotle is supposed to have said to Alexander: "use the Armenians as slaves, employ the Greeks and seal with the Arabs."[50] The prevalence of these deeply entrenched representations of human races in the Mamlūk world vision, which combined ethnic images with ideas on the effects of world geography and climate, is seen by the popularity of Galen's theory. A case in point is al-Amshāṭī's negative picture of the Africans. He

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44 Muḥammad b. Ibrāhīm Ibn al-Akfānī (ca. 1286–749/1348), *Kitāb Irshād al-qāṣid ilá asná al-maqāṣid,* ed. ʿAbd al-Munʿim Muḥammad ʿUmar (Cairo, 1990), 176.

45 Yet the manuscript that reached us is a damaged unicum, copied in the 15th century and preserved in Paris, and hence is of little value. William McGuckin de Slane, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes* (Paris, Bibliothèque nationale – Département des manuscrits Arabes, 1883–1895), 392 no. 2234/3 (fol. 148–151); it was translated by Hans Müller, *Die Kunst des Sklavenkaufs* (Freiburg, 1980).

46 Cf. Ghersetti, "The Semiotic Paradigm" 295.

47 Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad al-ʿAyntābī al-Amshāṭī (812–903/1409–1496), *al-Qawl al-sadīd fī ikhtiyār al-imāʾ wal-ʿabīd:* [*risālah nādirah fī shará wa-taqlīb al-ʿabīd*], ed. Muḥammad ʿĪsá Ṣāliḥīyah (Beirut, 1996).

48 Al-Amshāṭī, *al-Qawl al-sadīd*, 31–32.

49 Al-Amshāṭī, *al-Qawl al-sadīd*, 41–42.

50 Al-Amshāṭī, *al-Qawl al-sadīd*, 43.

argued, as did Ibn Khaldūn[51] and Ibn al-Nafīs,[52] that the distance from the sun affects people's qualities.

Mamlūk Imaginative World Geography

The previous sections presented a condensed account of the Mamlūk Sultanate's intensive contacts with Dār al-Ḥarb and Cairo's communications with neighbouring and remote lands as well as the political geography that Muslim jurists of the time espoused. The sultans established direct communication with the Mediterranean and the Black Sea as well as with the Horn of Africa and Ethiopia. This explains the Bahri-period (648–784/1250–1382) sources' description of territories and forces that were beyond the Mamlūks' boundaries. The colossal encyclopaedia of Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī (700–750/1301–1349) serves as an example of the achievements of these sources.[53] In it he transmits valuable reports on foreign lands, from Anatolia to India.[54] He describes methods of government, languages of political legitimacy, coinages in use, agricultural systems and Islamic institutions of learning. In line with the Islamic mirror of princes genre, al-ʿUmarī also compares the court etiquette of a Muslim sultan with the ideal court of Alexander the Great. Using this narrative strategy helps him to introduce Islamic India to world history and particularly into the orbit of civilized nations.[55]

Yet, if al-ʿUmarī's writing provided knowledge that sultans in Cairo of his day could use to obtain data that supported their efforts to comprehend the world around them, the literary production from the Circassian regime (784–922/1382–1517) reveals a different picture.[56] I assume that this reflects the fact that in the second half of the 15th century, only a handful of embassies from Islamic India,[57]

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51 El-Bushra El-Sayed, "Perspectives on the Contribution of Arabs and Muslims to Geography," *Geo Journal* 26/2 (1992): 161.

52 Max Meyerhof and J. Schacht (eds. and trans.), *The Theologus Autodidactus (Al-Risala al-Kamila) of Ibn Nafis* (Oxford, 1968), 71–74.

53 I would like to thank Professor Michal Biran for her remarks.

54 Ibn Faḍl Allāh Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Yaḥyá al-ʿUmarī (700–750/1301–1349), *Masālik al-abṣār fī mamālik al-amṣār*, ed. K. Jabūrī (Beirut, 2010), 3: 35–87 (quoting Indian and Arab informants); Lambourn, "India from Aden," 56.

55 Aziz Al-Azmeh, "Barbarians in Arab Eyes," *Past & Present* 134 (1992): 7–8; Joan-Pau Rubiés, *Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance. South India through European Eyes, 1250–1625* (Cambridge, 2000), 23–34, 147–149.

56 Moreover, I do not recall any Circassian Mamlūk emissary similar to the embassy of Kamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Razzāq who was sent by the Timurids to India (845/1442).

57 Presumably Arabic and Persian were the languages of communication. But see the verses by Amīr Khusraw (1253–1325) "l have no Egyptian sugar with which to talk to an Arab, I am an

or from the islands of the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, arrived in Cairo,[58] although these regions, which are already mentioned in Abbasid travel literature, served as important trade partners of the sultanate.[59] This is in sharp contrast to the accounts of Ethiopian and Mediterranean embassies that ascended to the Citadel or called at Damascus,[60] let alone other Muslim governments in the Mediterranean basin and Central Asia.[61] The maritime routes even gained even more importance in the years that experienced the decline of land traffic from Central Asia to the Near East. During the second half of the 15th century the Red Sea became more closely tied to the economy of the sultanate and the political scene in Cairo.[62] Contacts between the sultan's agents and a Chinese fleet, which sailed from India to the Red Sea, illuminates this new reality. Despite this, it seems that the first official delegation that Cairo dispatched to regions beyond the Hijaz was recorded only during the last decades of the 15th century. This was in response to reports that reached Cairo and informed the local governing elite that Portuguese flotillas were challenging the old naval order in the Indian Ocean. In response to this defiance of Islam's maritime superiority in that corner of the world, the sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī sent a fleet commanded by the governor of Jeddah to protect the shores of the Indian Ocean. In the face of

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Indian Turk, I respond in Hindi." Muzaffar Alam, *The Language of Political Islam in India c. 1200–1800* (New Delhi, 2010), 148.

58 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr*, 3: 65 (876/1471), 212 (889/1484), 215 (890/1455, an ambassador from India to the Ottomans); al-Sakhāwī, *al-Dhayl al-tāmm*, 3: 46 (898/1493, on the arrival to Jeddah of three ships, that originated from Diu and Kanbāyah in India), 83 (reports reached Egypt on fighting among Muslims in India), 109, 153, 197.

59 On India as a remote heaven for Mamlūk refugees see al-Sakhāwī, *al-Dhayl al-tāmm*, 2: 55–56 (854/1450).

60 Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr*, 3: 145 (883/1478 on a naval mission to Anatolia and Cyprus), 150 (883/1479 the dispatch of an ambassador to Catalonia), 179–180 (886/1481 Ethiopia), 183, 185, 192 (886–7/1481–2 Ottomans), 206, 215 (890/1485); Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥimṣī (841–934/1458–1528), *Ḥawādith al-zamān wa-wafiyyāt al-shuyūkh wal-aqrān*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Ḥarfush (Beirut, 1421/2000), 235 (897/1492); Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Ibn Ṭūlūn al-Ṣāliḥī (1473–1546/880–953), *Mufākahat al-khullān fī ḥawādith al-zamān* [The Joyful Stories of Close Friends Concerning Recent Events], ed. Kh. al-Mansur (Beirut, 1998), 10.

61 A case in point is the report of the plea that reached Cairo from al-Andalus. In response, the sultan instructed that the monks of the Holy Sepulchre be presented with an ultimatum. They should send an envoy to the king of Naples who should write to the king of Castile. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr fī waqāʾiʿ al-duhūr,* 3: 244–45 (892/1487), 316 (901/1495). Another account that illuminates the flow of information from Western Europe to the lands of the sultanate are the account of the Ottoman prince Cem. Al-Sakhāwī, *al-Dhayl al-tāmm*, 3: 223–224 (900/1494).

62 Patrick Wing, "Indian Ocean Trade and Sultanic Authority: The nāẓir of Jeddah and the Mamluk Political Economy," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 57 (2014): 56–62.

the intruders, another expedition was sent to Kamrān Island in the Red Sea, off the coast of Yemen.[63]

Geographical data from the last century of the Mamlūks' rule elucidate an incursion of imaginative elements into what should be a practical geographical discourse. The data do not represent the topography of Muslim settlements, but rather provide a map of locations populated by fabulous beast, mysterious and hybrid creatures and sites visited by mythological figures. These imaginary locations served to define the norms of Islamic world. The lack of direct communication between the sultans of Cairo and south-east Asia explains the quality of the Arabic accounts of these parts of the world. In the mind of the Mamlūk elite and in their *mappa mundi*, the Indian Ocean was depicted as a zone of exotic *mirabilia* (ʿajāʾib, accounts of the fantastic). It was an invented imaginary archipelago. This was in sharp contrast to reports on the "civilized" districts of Earth, namely regions that were governed by familiar systems of administration or by established religions.[64] Without considering these components our picture of the Mamlūk *Weltanschauung* will be a partial one. Following earlier Persian and Arab writers, Ibn al-Wardī's and Shaykh al-Rabwah's accounts contain a mix of "real facts" and "imaginary world."[65] The salient presentation of naked men and women in their accounts of the Indian Ocean support this deduction. Reports of people with faces resembling trees or beasts are illuminating examples of the legendary components that make up a considerable part of their narratives.[66] A case in point is the "account" of the Wāq-Wāq Island:

> On this island are trees that bear as fruit women: shapely, with bodies,eyes, hands, feet, hair, breasts, and vulvas like the vulvas of women.Their faces are exceptionally beautiful and they hang by their hair. They come out of cases like big swords, and when they feel the wind and sun, they shout Wāq Wāq until their hair tears.[67]

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63 Aḥmad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn al-Mallá al-Ḥaṣkafī al-Ḥalabī al-Shāfiʿī (937–1003/1530–1595), *Mutʿat al-adhhān min al-tamattuʿ bil-iqrān bayna tarājim al-shuyūkh wal-aqrān* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1999), 1: 322, 323 (918/1512). On the India trade in these years see Francisco Apellániz, "News on the Bulaq: a Mamluk-Venetian Memorandum on Asian Trade, AD 1503," European University Institute Department of History and Civilization. *EUI Working Paper HEC* 2016/ 01.

64 Mark J. P. Wolf (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Imaginary Worlds* (New York, 2018).

65 Sarāj al-Dīn Ibn al-Wardī al-Shāfiʿī (861/1457), *Kharīdat al-ʿajāʾib wa-farīḍat al-gharāʾib* [The Pearl of Wonders and the Uniqueness of Strange Things], ed. M. Fākhūrī (Beirut, 1411/ 1991). This pseudo-geographical and cosmographical summery of early sources is merely a plagiarism of the *Jāmiʿ al-funūn wa-salwat al-maḥzūn* of Naḍjm al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Ḥamdān b. Shabīb al-Ḥarrānī al-Ḥanbalī, who lived in Egypt *circa* 732/1332.

66 Ibn al-Wardī, *Kharīdat al-ʿajāʾib*, 73, 74, 78, 84, 85, 88, 94.

67 Shawkat M. Toorawa, "Waqwaq: Fabulous, Fabular, Indian Ocean (?) Island(s)," *Emergences* 10/2 (2000): 393.

Neither author limits his accounts to names of locations, religions or people, but rather both seek to place them on the borders of a geographical and historical picture, in an imaginative world map with which their audiences were familiar. References to Biblical fables, names of legendary patriarchs, stories taken from the Qurʾān and Persian legends are employed by both in an effort to elucidate prevailing images of "others" and of remote countries and to establish the ties of these people and lands with Islamic history. After all, goods from those mysterious destinations turned up in the markets of the Sultanate. Several examples sustain this interpretation. At the southern end of the Indian Ocean, in the island of Sarandīb, is said to be the mountain of al-Rāhūn. There the armchair geographer identifies the site where Adam fell, after his expulsion from the Garden.[68] His footprint is visible also in the island of Beljera/Balqaram [Rhinoceros].[69] A comparable function can be identified in the legend of the prophet al-Khiḍr.[70] Al-Manūfī provides additional data that supports this interpretation. His history of the equatorial Nile is entangled with biblical legends.[71]

Alexander the Great is prominent among the celebrated figures that played a role in combining past and present, local and general.[72] During the Middle Islamic Period the legend of "The One with Two Horns" (*Dhū al-Qarnayn*) spread far beyond the Arab-Islamic world.[73] It was well received in India and beyond. Arab authors located him in isolated islands and in remote lands. These were mysterious places that seized the imagination of Mamlūk audiences.[74] The story of Alexander's adventures has several functions.[75] One of them was to bridge the

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68 Shams al-Dīn Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Abī Ṭālib al-Ṣūfī Shaykh al-Rabwah al-Dimashqī al-Anṣārī (654–737/1256–1327), *Nukhbat al-dahr fī ajāʾib al-barr wal-baḥar* (Choice of the Time of Wonders of Land and Sea), ed. A. F. M. von Mehern (St. Petersburg, 1865), 152, 160 [= Shems ed-Din Abou Abdallah Mohammed de Damas, *Manuel de la Cosmographie du Moyen age*, trad. M.A.F. Mehren (Saint-Peʹtersbourg, 1874), 204].

69 Shaykh al-Rabwah, *Nukhbat al-dahr*, 157 [= Fr., 210]; Ibn al-Wardī, *Kharīdat al-ʿajāʾib*, 86–88.

70 In some exegeses of Qurʾān 18:60 the junction of the two seas is located at the edges of the Persian Gulf. I. Friedlaender, *Die Chadhirlegende und der Alexanderroman: Eine sagengeschichtliche und literarhistorische Untersuchung* (Leipzig, 1913), 303–304.

71 Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Manūfī (1443–1521), "Les sources du Nil: Extrait d'un manuscrit arabe intitulé Kitāb al-Fayḍ al-Madīd fī Akhbār al-Nīl al-Saʿīd [Bargès (ed. et trans.), le Livre du courant étendu, traitant de tout ce qui a rapport à l'heureux Nil," *Journal Asiatique* (3rd ser.) 3, (1837): 145–165.

72 Shaykh al-Rabwah, *Nukhbat al-dahr*, 159–160 [= Fr., 214–215].

73 Cf. the report on the Mamlūk army commanders' headgear and the popular verses that were chanted in Cairo. Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿal-zuhūr*, 3: 340 (902/1496); Although it should be added that in some exegeses of Q. 18: 83–101 he is not identified with Alexander, but rather with a South Arabian king. See Brannon M. Wheeler, *Moses in the Qur'an and Islamic Exegesis* (London, 2002), 16.

74 Ibn al-Wardī, *Kharīdat al-ʿajāʾib*, 73, 84.

75 The encounter between this mythological king and the sages of the south is told already in the

gap that separates the perfect days of the past and banal contemporary reality. An additional function was to bind remote territories to the central Islamic lands. The following story sheds light on this literary device. It is narrated that Alexander (Iskandar) had besieged a mountainous region in Tannīn (serpent or monster), an island in the Comoro Islands group.[76] On that island is a city which is also named Tannīn. The local population maintains that Alexander conquered the place and built the city.[77] The reason for his expedition was that in that location lived a huge and malicious monster. Alexander sent hunters who manufactured sacks from goats' hides and filled them with calcium and sulphur. The monster swallowed the bait and died. Following this achievement, Alexander decided to commemorate his success and founded the city.[78] By using the name of a mythologized Hellenic king and his legendary fame, the account served to join the Islands of the Moon (al-qamar) with the history of Mamlūk Egypt and Syria.[79]

Stories about the jinn (jānn) are another visible element in late Mamlūk-period accounts of remote lands.[80] So are stories of the Anti-Christ (al-dajjāl) and the adventures of Tamīm al-Dārī.[81] Mamlūk audiences believed that this companion of the Prophet had visited a remote island, which they located in the ocean that separates their land from India.[82] On its soil they believed Tamīm encountered the she-spy and the dajjāl.[83] These popular fables play a role in bringing together legendary histories and remote people, of connecting the Muslims of the sultanate with isolated and mysterious regions of the world. A common literary device for combining remote lands with the world known to the author's audiences is to populate these lands with people that these imaginative audiences were familiar with. Hence they report on Arabs and Muslims in

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Talmud. On this and on adventures see Aleksandra Klęczar, "The Kingship of Alexander the Great in the Jewish Versions of the Alexander Narrative," in Richard Stoneman, Kyle Erickson and Ian Netton (eds.), *The Alexander Romance in Persia and the East* (Groningen, 2012), 61–79, and Faustina C.W. Doufikar-Aerts, "King Midas' Ears on Alexander's Head: In Search of the Afro-Asiatic Alexander Cycle," in ibid., 339–334.

76 Shaykh al-Rabwah, *Nukhbat al-dahr*, 148 [*Baleine* (whale) in the French translation, 198 but I assume that the name refers to the Bible, Genesis 1:21, Exodus 7: 9 and other verses.]

77 Read *malakaha*.

78 Ibn al-Wardī, *Kharīdat al-ʿalīda*, 73–74; Shaykh al-Rabwah, *Nukhbat al-dahr*, 159–160 [= Fr., 214–215].

79 On Baybars as "Iskandar al-zamān" see Denise Aigle. "Les inscriptions de Baybars dans le Bilad al-Šam. Une expression de la légitimité du pouvoir," *Studia Islamica* 97 (2003): 73–77.

80 Shaykh al-Rabwah, *Nukhbat al-dahr*, 149, 166; Ibn al-Wardī, *Kharīdat al-ʿajāʾib*, 85, 89. On the belief in these creatures see Ibn al-Mallā al-Ḥaṣkafī, *Mutʿat al-adhhān*, 1: 101–102.

81 Y. Frenkel, "*Volksroman* under the Mamluks: The Case of Tamīm ad-Dārī Popular Sira," in Conermann (ed.), *History and Society during the Mamlūk Period (1250–1517)* (Bonn, 2014), 21–36.

82 Shaykh al-Rabwah, *Nukhbat al-dahr,* 149 [= Fr., 198].

83 Ibn al-Wardī, *Kharīdat al-ʿajāʾib*, 91–92.

country far beyond the boundaries of the Middle East.[84] The population of the largest city of Sarandīb (Ceylon)[85] is depicted as a rich mosaic of religious communities: Muslims, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians and infidels who do not hold with any belief system. Every group has its own governor. They do not offend each other and all of them depend on the Muslim king who leads them.[86] The Barṭāʾīl Island is populated by people resembling the Turks with long hair that looks like horses' tails. From a mountain on that island strange sounds are heard. Some say that this is the voice of the anti-Christ, other claim that it is the devil's voice.[87] A similar vision of ethnic and geographical images can also be identified in an account of the sources of the Nile. It tells that the Muslims of the Sudan are civilized and urbanized while the polytheists are said to be barbarians.[88] The people far remote from Islam's frontiers are not counted as belonging to the civilized world. Wild black people are equated to animals (mutawaḥḥishūn)[89] who eat what other people hand them, while the Nubians, who are Christians, are part of the civilized world (al-ʿāmira bil-mudun wa-qurá):[90]

> They are Christians and follow the law (do not sleep with their wife during the days of menstruation). The polytheistic Africans have no religion and no culture. They walk around naked. They are the offspring of Ham whom his father Noah cursed.[91] Some among these people are said to be cannibals.[92] They are lawless, and no prophet was born among them.[93]

The criteria explained above were also used to categorize other people, including the inhabitants of Central Asia and the remote northern corners of that continent. Shaykh al-Rabwah's description of Eurasia is based mainly on earlier sources.[94] Narrating in line with the genre's literary codes, he transmits the tradition that Gog and Magog are Turkish people. He is also familiar with the story of the Mamlūks' origin (wa-aqam alān min hādhī al-ṭāʾifa bi-miṣr wal-

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84 Shaykh al-Rabwah, *Nukhbat al-dahr,*160 (Arabs populate the island of al-Diba) [= Fr., 215: les Laquedives et les Maledives]; Joseph Toussaint Reinaud, *Relation des voyages faits par les Arabes et les Persans dans l'Inde et à la Chine dans le IXe siècle de l'ére chrétienne* (Paris, 1845), 55 (Arabs populate the island of al-Diba).
85 Shaykh al-Rabwah, *Nukhbat al-dahr*, 158,160 (on giraffes in Serendib/Sarandīb?!), [= Fr., 9 n. 3, 212, 215,].
86 Shaykh al-Rabwah, *Nukhbat al-dahr*, 160 [= Fr., 215].
87 Shaykh al-Rabwah, *Nukhbat al-dahr*, 158 [= Fr., 213].
88 Shaykh al-Rabwah, *Nukhbat al-dahr*, 268 [= Fr., 388].
89 Al-Manūfī, "Les sources du Nil," 148.
90 Al-Manūfī, "Les sources du Nil," 157.
91 Al-Manūfī, "Les sources du Nil," 266, 269.
92 Al-Manūfī, "Les sources du Nil," 269.
93 Al-Manūfī, "Les sources du Nil," 273.
94 Shaykh al-Rabwah, *Nukhbat al-dahr,* 261 (quoting al-Masʿūdī and al-Idrīsī), 261, 262, 263 (quoting Ibn al-Athīr), 265 (quoting Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr, *Ansāb al-umam*), 275.