

# A Window to the Past?

Tracing Ibn Iyās's Narrative Ways of Worldmaking

Bonn University Press



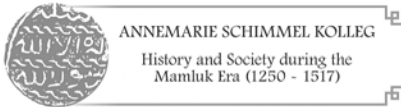


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Anna Kollatz

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With one figure

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Cover image: © Florian Saalfeld. View into Ibn Ṭulūn mosque, Cairo.

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Manifestum est enim quod omne  
quod recipitur in aliquo,  
recipitur in eo  
per modum recipientis  
*Thomas Aquinus, Summa Theologica*

“Of course it is happening inside your head,  
Harry, but why on earth should that mean  
that it is not real?”  
*Albus Dumbledore, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*



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## Notes on Transliteration and Dates

The present work uses the transliteration standards of IJMES journal for Arabic terms and names. Turkish terms and names are transliterated in accordance with the Modern Turkish standard script. Commonly known names of cities, places or other terms that have been introduced to English standard vocabulary, including the term ‘Mamluk’ as to designating the Mamluk realm, ruling system and culture as a whole and as the denomination of the social status of the Mamluks themselves, are not transliterated unless appearing e.g. in translated quotations from source material.

Dates are given in both the Islamic and Common Era, unless they are used to designate rough timespans in the analysis; in these cases, I have decided to leave the Islamic era out for better legibility.



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# I Introduction

This study is dedicated to the oeuvre of an author who, measured against the number of citations to be found in recent and not-so-recent literature on Mamluk times, and especially the transition to Ottoman rule over Egypt, has often been rated as the most eminent source, at least for his own lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Ironically, Ibn Iyās al-Ḥanafī (852–ca. 930/1448–ca. 1524) seems to have been of way less interest to his contemporaries than to modern researchers,<sup>2</sup> given that not a single author of the numerous bibliographical dictionaries from his time bothered writing an entry about him. Interest in his person and his writings from the part of the intellectual community of his time<sup>3</sup> seems to be rather limited as well, as no contemporary author of historiographical narrations did refer to or

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1 To date, no contemporary description of his life other than his own are known, although his *Badā'ī al-zuhūr fī waqā'ī al-duhūr* (forthwith cited as *Badā'ī al-zuhūr*) has widely been used as a source for Mamluk history and numerous studies have delivered reviews on the biographical information available on him. Cf. Kahle, Paul (1931): "Einleitung." In Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Ibn Iyās: *Die Chronik des Ibn Ijās*, vol. IV. Edited by Paul Kahle, Muḥammad Muṣṭafā and Moritz Sobernheim. Istanbul, Leipzig: Brockhaus (Bibliotheca Islamica), vol. IV, 1–29. Kahle refers to Ibn Iyās's singular position as an eyewitness chronicler of the Ottoman conquest and to his comprehensive reports on the social, economic, architectural and political contexts of Mamluk rule (ibid., 1). See also Hartmann, Richard (1926): *Das Tübinger Fragment der Chronik des Ibn Ṭūlūn*. Berlin: Dt. Verl.-Ges. für Politik und Geschichte (Schriften der Königsberger Gelehrten Gesellschaft, Geisteswissenschaftliche Klasse, 3. Jahr, H. 2).

2 There are numerous articles discussing Ibn Iyās's life, all of which draw on the information given by himself in the *Badā'ī al-zuhūr*. For a state-of-the-art overview, see Brinner, W. M.: "Ibn Iyās". In: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Leiden: Brill, online 2012; other more concise approaches are Winter, Michael (2007): "Ibn Iyās." In: *Historians of the Ottoman Empire*; and Massoud, Sami G. (2007): *The Chronicles and Annalistic Sources of the Early Mamluk Circassian period*. Leiden, Boston: Brill (Islamic History and Civilization, 67), 69–70. Even the recent monograph study by Al Amer cannot add information, cf. Al Amer, Ahmad (2016): *Matériaux, Mentalités et Usage des Sources chez Ibn Iyās. Mise au Point du Discours historique dans les Badā'ī al-zuhūr fī waqā'ī al-duhūr*. Saarbrücken: Éditions Universitaires Européennes.

3 Cf. Massoud (2007), 69–70 and note 226.



cite his works as far as we know.<sup>4</sup> The *emic*<sup>5</sup> knowledge on Ibn Iyās is therefore basically limited to the information he conveyed on himself. This is why, in my view, Ibn Iyās is the ideal figure for discussing some of the most crucial boundaries that cut through—and thereby strongly influence—research on (Mamluk) history. To date, to whom Ibn Iyās wrote and who was interested in his texts has not been thoroughly discussed.

Due to his writing concept, and especially his tendency to use vernacular Arabic, his work has been associated with the rise of so-called ‘bourgeois’ recipients of knowledge in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.<sup>6</sup> The popular topics covered in

4 The German language has a distinction between contemporary historians and authors whose source texts usually do not correspond to the genre formats and ‘demands’ of modern historical scholarship: the former are referred to as *Historiker*, the latter as *Geschichtsschreiber* or *Historiographen*. Though such a distinction seems not to exist in English, the inclined reader is asked to keep this differentiation in mind: certainly, Mamluk historians of different times did take into account different principles of writing and making sense of history, than we modern historians and historiographers interested in the art of Mamluk history writing do. Their principles and narrative strategies deserve attention and appreciation, as they may be different, but not *a priori* worse than those of other epochs. I will refer to the corresponding source texts as ‘histories’ or ‘historiographical narrations’ (as derived from *historiography* as an established term for this type of texts). However, this is not in any way to emphasize the lesser value they are often assumed to have. Rather, I am interested in emphasizing the act of the historiographical narration, which deeply shapes our sources. The historians of the Mamluk period were able to use narrative strategies, form and structure consciously in order to convey a certain image of history. A clear distinction should therefore be made between ‘history’ in the sense of ‘events that happened in the past’ and ‘historiographical narration’ in the sense of ‘narration about these events presented in an emplotted context’. On the definition of the term ‘historiographical narration’ and relevant theoretical approaches, see Fulda, Daniel (2014): “Historiographic Narration.” In: the living handbook of narratology, online 2014. For a discussion of narrativity in historiographical discourses, see also Jaeger, Stephan (2009): “Erzählen im historiographischen Diskurs.” In Christian Klein and Matias Martínez (eds): *Wirklichkeitserzählungen. Felder, Formen und Funktionen nicht-literarischen Erzählens*. Stuttgart, Weimar: Verlag J.B. Metzler, 110–135.

5 For a critical evaluation and definition of the *emic-etic* distinction and its value in the context of history, see Harris, Marvin (1976): “History and Significance of the Emic/Etic Distinction.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 5 (1), 329–350, esp. 334 (definition).

6 Amina Elbendary has recently published a study on the growing influence of lower social strata on Mamluk society, cf. Elbendary, Amina (2015): *Crowds and Sultans. Urban Protest in late Medieval Egypt and Syria*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press. Elbendary characterizes the fifteenth century as a time of dynamic, asymmetrical change, which included social flux and opened up spaces for power negotiations between non-elite urban populations and the ruling classes (*ibid.*, 1–2). See also ead., (2012): *Between Riots and Negotiations. Urban Protest in late Medieval Egypt and Syria*. Berlin: EBV (Ulrich Haarmann Memorial Lecture, 3). The rise and spaces of influence of non-military social groups have been studied by Martel-Thoumian, Bernadette (1991): *Les Civils et l’administration dans l’état militaire Mamlūk: (IXe/XVe siècle)*. Damas: Institut français de Damas, and Petry, Carl F. (2014): *The Civilian Elite of Cairo in the Later Middle Ages*. Princeton: Princeton University Press (Princeton Legacy Library). He has also published on liminal societal spaces, as e.g. id. (2012): *The Criminal Underworld in a Medieval Islamic Society. Narratives from Cairo and Damascus under the*

his *Badā'i al-zuhūr*, together with the vernacular style he used to spin his yarns, have led Ulrich Haarmann to name him, together with Ibn al-Dawādārī, as a prime example of the “literarizing” historians<sup>7</sup> of the Mamluk period and thus an instance of the ‘popularization’ of historiography by and for the rising urban classes.<sup>8</sup> By addressing the definition of ‘popular culture’, Konrad Hirschler has discussed a critical dichotomy in Mamluk studies.<sup>9</sup> Defining a ‘popular culture’ or addressing a ‘popularization’ during the long fifteenth century implicitly establishes a clear distinction between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ or ‘low’ culture, and furthermore assumes that texts in both fields were received and produced by two distinct social groups. To avoid this dilemma, which could blur our sense of the fluidity and interactive nature of Mamluk society, he proposes identifying “communities that shared a similar relationship to the written word”,<sup>10</sup> studying “mechanisms of differentiation that indicate variations in cultural practices” and defining ‘popular reading practices’ along “the intersection of specific texts, spatial settings and social contexts.”<sup>11</sup> Taking into account these three criteria allows us to separate the term ‘popularization’ from dichotomic and thereby static conceptions of society. Drawing on Hirschler’s example, the term ‘popularization’ in this study will be understood as the

increasing participation of individuals [...] who had hitherto been excluded [from the reception and production of histories and other intellectual works, AK]. These individuals belonged to different social layers, but they all participated in the spread of the written word beyond the confines of the narrow scholarly, political and cultural elites.<sup>12</sup>

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*Mamluks*. Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center (Chicago Studies on the Middle East, 9). For a short introduction on the development of *sabīl-makṭabs*, their role in schooling children from the lower strata of society and continuity into Ottoman times, see Behrens-Abouseif, Doris (2018): *The Book in Mamluk Egypt and Syria (1250–1517). Scribes, Libraries and Market*. Leiden, Boston: Brill (Islamic History and Civilization, 162), 108–113. For the popularization of written culture, see also Leder, Stefan (2003): “Post-klassisch und prämodern. Beobachtungen zum Kulturwandel in der Mamlukenzeit.” In Stephan Conermann and Anja Pistor-Hatam (eds): *Die Mamlūken. Studien zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur; zum Gedenken an Ulrich Haarmann (1942–1999)*. Schenefeld: EBV (Asien und Afrika, 7), 289–312.

7 Cf. Haarmann, Ulrich (1971): “Auflösung und Bewahrung der klassischen Formen arabischer Geschichtsschreibung in der Zeit der Mamluken.” *ZDMG* 121, 46–60, esp. 55.

8 Ibid., 59; see also his remarks concerning the rise of the ‘literary popular chronicle’ (“literarisierende Volkschronik”) in id., (1970): *Quellenstudien zur frühen Mamlukenzeit*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Freiburg i. Br.: Schwarz (Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, 1), e. g. 10.

9 On different conceptualizations and the critique raised against the term ‘popular culture’, see also Berkey, Jonathan P. (2005): “Popular Culture under the Mamluks. A Historiographical Survey.” *Mamluk Studies Review* 9 (2), 133–146, esp. 135–137.

10 Hirschler, Konrad (2013): *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands. A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices*. Paperback ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 24.

11 Hirschler (2013), 24.

12 Hirschler (2013), 25, thereby owing much to Berkey’s call to come to a balanced position that stands back from dichotomic concepts but also accepts the existence of cultural phenomena

Ibn Iyās's literary reaction to the needs and expectations of these emerging readerships, together with his use and re-use of compiled source material, has earned him criticism for having produced poorly organized historiographical accounts "inaccurate as to chronology".<sup>13</sup> This critique has seeped into more recent literature and seems to be closely related to the persistent aim of perceiving and using the respective sources as conveyors of trustworthy facts. However, this claim does not do justice to the texts in their individuality. It can lead to the devaluation of the historiographical narratives' original characteristics as 'inventions', for example when specific narrative strategies like fictionally retold dialogues between historical persons are misunderstood as 'fake news'.<sup>14</sup> Somewhat inconsistently, *Badā'ī al-zuhūr*, Ibn Iyās's most 'literarizing' chronicle, is, as stated above, of crucial importance as a contemporary source.<sup>15</sup> For his own lifetime, Ibn Iyās has been acknowledged widely as a trustworthy eyewitness and has been received without hesitation by modern researchers as an author of texts that directly mediate reality.<sup>16</sup> In any case, both appreciation and

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that can rightly be called 'popular', cf. Berkey (2005), 137. See also Shoshan, Boaz (1993): "On Popular Literature in Medieval Cairo." *Poetics Today* 14 (2), 349–365, esp. 359, and Herzog, Thomas (2014): "Mamluk (Popular) Culture." In Stephan Conermann (ed.): *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus? Mamluk Studies—State of the Art*. Göttingen: V&R Unipress (Mamluk Studies, 3), 131–158, esp. 132 for the origin of the concept, and 136f., where he opposes the dichotomic picture by pointing to social mobility in Mamluk society.

- 13 Little, Donald P. (1970): *An Introduction to Mamlūk Historiography. An Analysis of Arabic annalistic and biographical Sources for the Reign of al-Malik an-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalā'ūn*. Wiesbaden: Steiner (Freiburger Islamstudien, 2), 94. Little also criticizes the *Badā'ī al-zuhūr* for presenting information not presented elsewhere, which leads him to question the reliability of the text (ibid.).
- 14 See e.g. Irwin, Robert (2006): "Mamluk History and Historians." In Roger Allen and D. S. Richards (eds): *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature), 159–170, esp. 164. Irwin gives Ibn Iyās only superficial attention elsewhere, as in his overview of Mamluk literature. Cf. Irwin, Robert (2003a): "Mamluk Literature." *Mamluk Studies Review* 7 (1), 1–29, 18–27.
- 15 Thus e.g. Winter, Michael (2006): "Historiography in Arabic during the Ottoman Period." In Roger Allen and Donald S. Richards (eds): *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature), 171–188, 172; similarly Massoud (2007), 70, who brings scholarly attention to Ibn Iyās's *Badā'ī al-zuhūr*, stating that "...Ibn Iyās is considered to be the historian of the Mamluk *fin de regime*...".
- 16 This type of source use becomes particularly clear where certain sources are denied benefits for research, as shown by Little (1970), 97. In particular, research dedicated to the contemporary history of Ibn Iyās use his information without hesitation. Even recent studies that acknowledge the narrative character of the sources still use Ibn Iyās as a mediator of 'reality'. For example, Axel Havemann has used Ibn Iyās's *Badā'ī al-zuhūr* as a source for Mamluk history from below, cf. Havemann, Axel (2010): "The Chronicle of Ibn Iyās as a Source for Social and Cultural History from Below." In Heinemann, Arnim; Meloy, John L.; Haddad, Mahmoud and Su'ād Abū'r-Rūs Salim (eds) (2010): *Towards a Cultural History of the Mamluk Era*. Würzburg: Ergon (Beiruter Texte und Studien, 118), 87–98. See also more

critique do not apply to his entire *oeuvre*: in no way have *all* his texts been explored by historians of the Mamluk-Ottoman transition period and others so far. Rather, only *one* of his texts has been used, namely his last work, the *Badāʾiʾ al-zuhūr*, which has been the recipient of overwhelming long-term interest and trust.

Thus, Ibn Iyās is not only a striking example of the differing appreciation and reception of authors by emic and etic recipients, but also a remarkable instance of the establishment of a master narrative founded on selective reading. Today's etic image and reception of Ibn Iyās and his work are deeply influenced by the decisions of scholars in Oriental studies, who since the nineteenth century have perused Arabic historiography for 'trustworthy' authors, eyewitnesses who convey 'historical reality', on the basis of a general assumption that accounts that use fictional or semi-fictional narrative strategies must be unreliable. They share this attitude with both contemporary and later critiques, as "learned scholars in Arab-Islamic culture vigorously denounced the imaginary world of story-telling, especially when it touched on the field of history".<sup>17</sup> Even some of the fathers of (German) Mamluk studies joined the call for the text-critical study of Mamluk historiographies in order to determine a source's "grade of originality" and "value"<sup>18</sup> and establish a hierarchy of reliable sources rather than to understand the respective source materials in terms of their emic concepts and with regard to their narrativity.<sup>19</sup> However, Ulrich Haarmann must be appreciated as one of the first voices to call for "additional" fields of research on the materials, such as the emic genre conceptions.<sup>20</sup> Since then, historiography not only in the field of Mamluk studies has changed direction thoroughly. Writing another statement advocating for the acknowledgment of the literary, narrative character of his-

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recently Mauder, Christian (2021): *In the Sultan's Salon. Learning, Religion and Rulership at the Mamluk Court of Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī (r. 1501–1516)*. 2 vols. Leiden, Boston: Brill (Islamic History and Civilization, 169), 1:73–102, 2:1013–4, who acknowledges Ibn Iyās's biased and partial view on al-Ghawrī and the "the problem of an often one-sided and uncritical reliance on Ibn Iyās's chronicle", but still uses him as "the standard narrative on this period". On this assessment, see also Petry, Carl F. (1994): *Protectors or Praetorians? The last Mamlūk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power*. Albany: State University of New York Press (SUNY Series in Medieval Middle East History), 7.

17 Cf. Herzog, Thomas (2012): "What they Saw with their Own Eyes... Fictionalization and 'Narrativization' of History in Arab Popular Epics and Learned Historiography." In Sabine Dorpmüller (ed.): *Fictionalizing the Past. Historical Characters in Arabic Popular Epic. Workshop held at the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo, 28th–29th of November 2007 in Honor of Remke Kruk*. Leuven: Peeters (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, 206), 25–44, 25.

18 Cf. Haarmann (1971), 47 (German Original: "Originalitätsgrad" and "Quellenwert").

19 Cf. Conermann, Stephan (2018): "On the Art of Writing History in Mamluk Times." In Stephan Conermann (ed.): *Mamluk Historiography Revisited. Narratological Perspectives*. Göttingen: V&R unipress Bonn University Press (Mamluk Studies, 15), 7–26, esp. 7.

20 Haarmann (1971), 48.

toriographical sources would be like beating a dead horse.<sup>21</sup> After the *linguistic turn*, historiographical scholarship had to acknowledge that the evaluation of 'historical facts' in emic narrative sources had to struggle with a twofold challenge: both emic sources and the historiographical narratives constructed on their basis by modern scholars should be assessed as products of a selective, reconstructive and interpretative process. Their statements were heavily formed by and thus dependent on the "interpreting eye of the narrating historian".<sup>22</sup>

However, we still ignore wide portions of the source material that have been, at certain moments in the history of European or 'Western' Islamic studies, declared as less valuable due to oscillations between claims of factuality and distinct fictional modes of narration.<sup>23</sup> Thus, Li Guo's statement in his 1997 assessment of Mamluk historiography, or the statement by R. Steven Humphreys cited below, are still valid: we need more case studies on authors and their works to build a stronger basis for a thorough understanding of the intellectual contexts of the time, which deeply shaped the authors' output and were in turn shaped by them.<sup>24</sup> As Humphreys has stated, "we ought to have book-length analyses of the interplay between a historian's life and career, the cultural currents in which he was immersed, and the development of his thought and writing."<sup>25</sup> In the case of Ibn Iyās, and the many other Islamicate authors from different times and places

21 For a discussion of Hayden White's theory in relation to Arabic 'medieval' historiography, see Hirschler, Konrad (2006): *Medieval Arabic Historiography. Authors as Actors*. London, New York: Routledge (SOAS / Routledge studies on the Middle East, 5), esp. 4f.; Hirschler further advocated a change in the approach towards Mamluk historiography, e.g. in id., (2014): "Studying Mamluk Historiography. From Source-Criticism to the Cultural Turn." In Stephan Conermann (ed.): *Ubi sumus? Quo vademus? Mamluk Studies—State of the Art*. Göttingen: V&R unipress (Mamluk Studies, 3), 159–186. One of Annemarie Schimmel Kolleg's recent edited volumes has, for the first time, convened a collection of contributions that approach Mamluk historiographic texts from the point of view of narratology. Cf. Conermann, Stephan (ed.) (2018): *Mamluk historiography Revisited. Narratological Perspectives*. Göttingen: V&R unipress Bonn University Press (Mamluk Studies, 15).

22 Herzog (2012), 26.

23 A discussion of the differentiation between fictional and non-fictional narratives can be found in Martínez, Matías and Michael Scheffel (2003): "Narratology and Theory of Fiction. Remarks on a Complex Relationship." In Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller (eds): *What Is Narratology? Questions and Answers Regarding the Status of a Theory*. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter (Narratologia, 1), 221–237.

24 Guo, Li (1997): "Mamluk Historiographic Studies: The State of the Art." *Mamluk Studies Review* 1, 15–43; see also Little, Donald P. (1998): "Historiography of the Ayyubid and Mamluk epochs." In Carl F. Petry (ed.): *The Cambridge History of Egypt, vol. I: Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 412–444, esp. 433, who points to the much more limited research on Circassian historians compared to Qipchak. Hirschler (2014) has reaffirmed his call for more case studies on individual authors and their way of writing history.

25 Humphreys, R. Stephen (1991): *Islamic History. A Framework for Inquiry*. Rev. ed. London: Tauris, 135.

about whom we currently lack personal information, unearthing his personal life and career will be a hard, perhaps irresolvable task. However, it must be possible to explore an author's wider intellectual context—the "cultural currents" as Humphreys put it—and the development of his writing *from the writing itself*. Again, Humphreys can stand as witness: "Questions of concept, method and structure are essential to understanding how a historian has constructed his account of events."<sup>26</sup> In the following lines, Humphreys turns to another aspect of an author's intellectual context. He points to the study of intellectual history, stating that the dissection of the sources of knowledge used by a historical author is as important, if not even more so, to the study of his methods and concepts as a critical reading of his narrative concepts:

Equally important, however, and in a sense logically prior, is the technical matter of determining the provenance of his data. We need not discuss the general problems and procedures of *Quellenkritik* here, since these are dealt with adequately in many places [...]<sup>27</sup>

This study pleads for the importance of a further category of analysis, namely an author's narrative strategies. The narrative construction of a text, naturally, is closely entangled with both the author's choice of sources and the structuring of his account.

Following Ferdinand de Saussure, post-structuralist theories have argued that common discourses, values and convictions determine human perceptions of reality in such way that the ascription of meaning to social life or historical events resemble collective fictionalizing and the construction of master-narratives more than purely objective reconstruction. From this point of view, Hayden White, similar to Paul Ricoeur, has identified historiographical narratives as "most manifestly [...] verbal fictions, the contents of which are as much invented as found and the forms of which have more in common with counterparts in literature than they have with those in science."<sup>28</sup> Since the publication of White's theories, which, although belatedly, also shook the German Oriental studies to its bones, many examinations have acknowledged the narrative character of historiographical (and other) sources. In the context of this movement, new theoretical approaches have been applied to the material.<sup>29</sup> Thus, Konrad Hirschler

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26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 White, Hayden (1978): *Tropics of Discourse. Essays in Cultural Criticism*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 82.

29 In the wake of this movement, the Bonn Centre for Transcultural Narratology (BZTN) has been founded in 2010 and has, since then, developed methods in the transcultural analysis of narrative texts. This collaborative work has influenced my approach to both Persian and Arabic sources since the time of my dissertation thesis. For a recent overview on the Centre's work, see Conermann, Stephan and Anna Kollatz (in press): "An Introduction to the Nar-

centered his study on the *agency* of authors,<sup>30</sup> thereby exploring their room for manoeuvre in terms of text production, the choice of material or narrative strategies and influencing their historical and social context by writing history. The methodology tailored for this goal nevertheless is a rather traditional one in the best sense of the word. Hirschler rightly stated that the study of the “room for manoeuvre” historians had “in composing the works in terms of the social context in which they acted, the learned tradition in which they stood, and the textual environment in which they composed their works” needs to be founded on “a detailed analysis of the authors’ social and intellectual contexts and their narratives”.<sup>31</sup> With this statement, he calls for scrutiny of both text and context, including the author’s wider and narrower historical contexts.

Yet, does this approach necessarily require a certain set of basic (emic) information on the historical author, his individual living situation etc.? If so, the approach would not fit many authors, and especially anonymous texts from the Islamicate tradition. Is it then possible to supplement a deficit of biographical information on historical authors by other ways of researching a certain textual corpus? Such an approach must also include reflection on a text’s context—be it inside a certain author’s *oeuvre* or in the wider arena of contemporary writing traditions and generic allocations and influences.<sup>32</sup> To decode the multiple interrelations of a certain text, the study of its composition and language are of great importance. Arguments and working plans similar to Hirschler’s approach are to be found in methodological discussions in literary studies, for example in the context of the development of narrative studies from a rather structuralist approach into a form of cultural studies,<sup>33</sup> and in studies aiming for the reassessment of historiographical sources from different times and contexts.<sup>34</sup> The

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ratological Approach. The Bonn Centre for Transcultural Narratology.” In Anna Kollatz and Tilmann Kulke (eds): *Through the Travellers’ Eyes. Narrative Strategies on India in Transition*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

30 Hirschler (2014), for his conceptualization and application of *agency*, see *ibid.*, 1, 63–86 and 86–114.

31 Hirschler (2006), 1.

32 Parallel fields of interest are to be found in the study of intellectual networks, which can help to elucidate not only textual agency, but also the interagency between learned people. See e.g. Binbaş, İlker Evrim (2016): *Intellectual Networks in Timurid Iran. Sharaf al-Din ‘Alī Yazdī and the Islamicate Republic of Letters*. New York: Cambridge University Press (Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization).

33 Erll, Astrid and Simone Roggendorf (2002): “Kulturgeschichtliche Narratologie. Die Historisierung und Kontextualisierung kultureller Narrative.” In Ansgar Nünning (ed.): *Neue Ansätze in der Erzähltheorie*. Trier: WVT Wiss. Verl. (WVT-Handbücher zum literaturwissenschaftlichen Studium, 4), 73–114.

34 For the Indo-Persian historiographical context, see Conermann, Stephan (2002): *Historiographie als Sinnstiftung. Indo-persische Geschichtsschreibung während der Mogulzeit (932–1118/1516–1707)*. Wiesbaden: Reichert (Iran–Turan, 5).

basic steps to be made before one can discuss room for manoeuvre, intertextual relations or the interagency of society and writing are, however, still close to long-established methods. While historians tended, and sometimes still tend, to neglect the fictional side of narrative sources, Gérard Genette criticized, in his book *Fiction et Diction* (1991), narratology for its exclusive concentration on fictional texts, calling it pejoratively “*narratologie fictionnelle*”.<sup>35</sup> He also pointed out that fictional narration can by no means be regarded as a prime example of narration *per se*. Rather, the methodology for the analysis of factual narratives, or narratives oscillating between factuality and fictionality, must be adapted to these materials. In addition, the structuralist toolkit, as well as Genette’s methodology, is restricted not only in terms of its focus on a corpus of fictional narratives, but also by the fact that this corpus consists almost exclusively of fictional narratives written in European languages.<sup>36</sup>

Methodological approaches that seek to combine the history of cultural and mental aesthetics with narratology have followed the direction proposed by Genette. Connecting a thorough study of the historical, social and intellectual contexts of a certain text or author with narrative analysis (as proposed by Astrid Erll and Simone Roggendorf and successfully applied by the studies mentioned above and many more) also takes us back to the core of historical-critical analysis. By the term ‘*cultural historical narratology*’ (“*kulturgeschichtliche Narratologie*”), Erll and Roggendorf refer to an inherently heterogeneous new field of research, one located within the framework of an interdisciplinary re-orientation of the formerly structuralist narratology. Common to the approaches and studies that belong to cultural historical narratology is the orientation of narratological theory and practice towards the epistemological interests and theoretical assumptions of the New Cultural History.<sup>37</sup>

The present study draws on the wide toolkit of this new field, combining narratological approaches and a focus on intertextual analysis. Based on this

35 Cf. Genette, Gérard (1991): *Fiction et Diction*. Paris: Éd. du Seuil (Collection Poétique), 66.

36 Even today, the vast majority of narratological research concentrates on European languages. While efforts have been made to widen the focus to factual texts and narratives in everyday situations (*Alltagserzählungen*) and recently has widened to the analysis of narrative strategies in films, cartoons or even music, narratological research on non-European texts is still in its infancy.

37 Cf. Erll and Roggendorf (2002), 74. On the problem of the terms ‘cultural history’ and ‘cultural studies’ see Daniel, Ute (2001): *Kompendium Kulturgeschichte. Theorien, Praxis, Schlüsselwörter*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp (Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft, 1523), 14. For the genesis and discussion of the field, as well as its methods and theory, see Engel, Manfred (2001): “Kulturwissenschaft/en—Literaturwissenschaft als Kulturwissenschaft—kulturgeschichtliche Literaturwissenschaft.” *KulturPoetik* 1 (1), 8–36. The standing and situation of the history of the Islamic world in the context of German cultural studies has been discussed in Conermann, Stephan (ed.) (2012): *Was ist Kulturwissenschaft? Zehn Antworten aus den “Kleinen Fächern”* (Edition Kulturwissenschaft).



methodological inventory, it takes an approach similar to Hirschler's study on 'medieval Arabic historiography', as it is likewise interested in shedding light on the node of interaction between the historical author, his writing processes and the different contexts of which he and his texts form part. However, while Hirschler takes a comparative approach and scrutinizes two authors, this study's focus is much more on the development of a single author, namely Ibn Iyās al-Ḥanafī. In a comprehensive analysis that, for the first time, takes into account all of Ibn Iyās's known historiographical writings, it aims to trace the working process of this single author in the context of the processes' and the author's entanglements with social, historical and intellectual contexts. The reason for proposing yet another study on Ibn Iyās and pre-modern Arabic historiography that advocates for a combined literary and social historical approach to narrative sources is that our discipline still struggles with a lack of biographical information on individuals like Ibn Iyās. How can we approach authors of key sources for today's etic understanding of their times when we have little to no independent information on them? Judging from the master narratives established in basic inventories of our discipline, like the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, one would suspect this problem to be non-existent.<sup>38</sup> We have a sound and logical narrative of Ibn Iyās's life and social context, which, as for so many other pre-modern authors, is founded on the scarce information transmitted by the authors themselves, emplotted and re-emplotted by historians over decades of Orientalist scholarship. Here again, we find traces of the 'Rankeian' heritage of 'looking for historical reality', which lures us into the trap of accepting that 'we cannot find any other trustful sources' and 'we have to work with the information at hands'. This study aims to explore an approach to elusive authors of Ibn Iyās's kin, which more radically than before opts for the informative power of the literary approach. If, as in so many cases, it is impossible to gather 'trustworthy' independent information on certain historical persons who happened to become central sources for our discipline—and if, in turn, we accept relying on the information they themselves transmitted—then why not take advantage of the full range of information they left us?

This study is based on the distinction between the term *author*, meaning a historical person who acted as a real or empirical individual that "can be defined in a narrow sense as the intellectual creator of a text written for communicative purposes. In written texts in particular, the real author is distinguished from the mediating instances internal to the text",<sup>39</sup> and *narrator*, or *narrative voice*, meaning "the inner-textual (textually encoded) highest-level speech position from which the current narrative discourse as a whole originates and from which

38 Cf. Conermann (2018), 7.

39 Schönert, Jörg (2011): "Author." In: the living handbook of narratology, online.

references to the entities, actions and events that this discourse is about are being made”,<sup>40</sup> be it a fictional or factual narrative, a postmodern novel or pre-modern historiography claiming to convey factual knowledge about the past.<sup>41</sup> In the case of the latter, the narrative voice often appears very close to the historical author, if not identical with him. This holds especially true for texts that show the characteristics of ego-documents, like travelogues or historiographical texts in which the narrative voice clearly identifies itself with the author’s person. Although there are many texts in which this connection is much clearer, Ibn Iyās does identify himself as the superordinate narrator in his writings. This offers the possibility to approach the author through the analysis of his narrative voice.

The construction of a narrative is a complex process that requires many decisions to be made by the author. These include the choice of material and topics, form, ordering principles, narrative strategies, intended readership and the degree of presence an author grants to himself in his texts. These decisions, to a certain degree, are influenced by the contexts of which an author and his work form a part. But still, as Hirschler has shown, there is room for manoeuvre, spaces of agency in which authors can take decisions, shape their texts individually and thereby influence their contexts. This means that an author’s narrative voice, his way of shaping his narratives and fitting them into the contexts he and his texts lived in, is an open gate that offers us the opportunity to dig through the words of a text into its worlds. Thus, even highly tendentious historiographical narratives can become a window to the past.

With the comprehensive analysis of the historiographic *oeuvre* of a single author on whom we have little to no contemporary independent information, this study aims to test this approach as a way of getting closer to such elusive authors and their contexts. The endeavor is based on a comparative reading of Ibn Iyās’s different historiographic texts, with a strong focus on dissecting the working process behind them. The basic idea is to transpose what Frédéric Bauden was able to do with al-Maqrīzī’s scratchbooks<sup>42</sup> onto a set of closely

40 Margolin, Uri (2012): “Narrator.” In: the living handbook of narratology, online.

41 For Mamluk historiography, see Stephan Conermann (ed. 2018) and the many different approaches used by the contributors. A transculturally comparative approach to premodern concepts of historiography is Conermann, Stephan (ed.) (2017): *Wozu Geschichte? Historisches Denken in vormodernen historiographischen Texten. Ein transkultureller Vergleich*. Berlin: EBV (Bonner Asienstudien, 18). The volume tests an approach based on analysis criteria dissected by Goetz, Hans-Werner (2009): *Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtsbe-wußtsein im hohen Mittelalter*. 2., ergänzte Auflage. Berlin: Akademie Verlag (Orbis Medi-aevalis, 1).

42 As published in his extensive Maqriziana series, beginning with Bauden, Frédéric (2006): “Maqriziana I: Discovery of an Autograph Manuscript of al-Maqrīzī. Towards a better Understanding of his Working Method, Description: Section 2.” *Mamluk Studies Review* 10 (2), 81–139; on the dissection of the working process based on Maqrīzī’s scratchbook id. (2003):

interrelated and interdependent texts that have equal status as finished narratives by one author. For unlike in the case of the notebooks examined by Bauden, this book is about three historiographical narratives completed for publication.

This side of the study relies on compilation analyses that will help us to trace the author's strategies of intertextual re-use and re-arrangement of text parts, information and narrative strategies. Compilation as a technique of text production has long been underrated for producing mere plagiarism and rather derivative texts, in which "the compiler himself does not speak",<sup>43</sup> an assessment closely related to the narrative of decline fostered by etic attempts to periodize Islamic intellectual history.<sup>44</sup> The narrative of decline is problematic in itself, as it contrasts the late fourteenth to sixteenth centuries with a mostly undefined 'golden age', which was and still is presented as the culmination of Islamic scholarship, art and political significance. This negative assessment, of course, also has its roots in emic historiographical narratives, especially of the later Mamluk period, in which authors tend to glorify the beginnings of Mamluk rule

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"Maqriziana IV. Le Carnet de notes d'al-Maqrīzī. L'apport de la codicologie à une meilleure Compréhension de sa Constitution." *Manuscripta Orientalia* 9 (4), 24–36; further id. (2009): "Vers une Archéologie du Savoir en Islam. La Méthode de Travail d'al-Maqrīzī, Historien du XVe siècle." *Comptes rendus des Séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 153 (1), 97–110; most recently in his Ulrich Haarmann Memorial Lecture (in press 2023): *Trusting the Source as far as it can be trusted. Al-Maqrīzī and the Mongol Book of Laws (Maqriziana VII)*. Berlin: EBV.

43 Utzschneider, Helmut and Stefan Ark Nitsche (2008): *Arbeitsbuch literaturwissenschaftliche Bibelauslegung. Eine Methodenlehre zur Exegese des Alten Testaments*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Gütersloh: Kaiser, 248.

44 Conermann and Şen argue against this narrative of decline, advocating for the revision of historical periodization in favor of a concept-oriented approach towards the *longue durée* perspective: Conermann, Stephan and Gül Şen (eds) (2017): *The Mamluk-Ottoman Transition. Continuity and Change in Egypt and Bilād al-Shām in the Sixteenth Century*. Göttingen: V&R unipress; Bonn University Press (Ottoman Studies, 2), for the discussion of periodization see the introduction by the editors, esp. 13–16. Their argument is based on an environmental approach informed by archaeological studies. Bethany J. Walker has shown for the Mamluk 'frontier' region in today's Jordan that the period in question (before and after the Ottoman conquest) should rather be interpreted as a period of transition during which traditional concepts of order, agriculture, etc. had to cope with environmental and related social and political struggles (and did so successfully). See Walker, Bethany J. (2011): *Jordan in the late Middle Ages. Transformation of the Mamluk frontier*. Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center on behalf of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies The University of Chicago (Chicago studies on the Middle East), for the discussion of 'decline' esp. 6f.. For approaches from perspectives other than archaeological ones, see e.g. Heinemann, Arnim; Meloy, John L.; Haddad, Mahmoud and Su'ād Abū'r-Rūs Salīm (eds) (2010): *Towards a Cultural History of the Mamluk Era*. Würzburg: Ergon (Beiruter Texte und Studien, 118). Recently, Elbendary (2015) has further challenged the decline paradigm from a social-historical perspective. However, already on the first page of his seminal study on the last Mamluk sultans, Carl Petry (1994, 1) argues against alleged "mental fatigue" in the later Mamluk period, acknowledging the hardships people had to cope with, which they did, according to Petry, in a very pragmatic way.

in Egypt against the background of their own times, often associated with economic and political decline.<sup>45</sup> Although scholars like David Ayalon and Donald P. Little have warned against falling into the trap of reading the “nostalgic idealization” present in many historiographical narratives from later times as sincere depictions of reality, this notion has been reproduced to a certain extent by modern research that has described (late) Mamluk rule and society while relying on those very depictions.<sup>46</sup>

Various recent publications argue against this master narrative, constructed by the interplay of a questionable periodization and the reproduction of emic assessments. Using the example of the history of the Islamic natural sciences, Sonja Brentjes has shown the shortcomings of the master narrative on decline in the Islamic middle periods.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, Christoph Herzog has argued this from the point of view of Ottoman history.<sup>48</sup> Thomas Bauer has called for a realignment of the discipline’s internal master narrative, being particularly critical of the common periodization and devaluation of Mamluk literature.<sup>49</sup> Triggered by the findings of Islamic archaeology and a few other voices, the perception has changed to the effect that the fifteenth century, as well as the era during and after the Ottoman conquest, is now increasingly regarded as a transition period.<sup>50</sup> The problem with the decline paradigm is not only that it is based on theories centered on the West, but also that it is determined by linear models of social evolution, which assume the direction of development towards modernity. W. W. Clifford has criticized this in the theories of Bourdieu, Parsons and Elias.<sup>51</sup>

45 Supported by the historiographical narratives from the earlier Qipchak period, which paint, almost without exception, a very positive picture of Mamluk rule—not least because many of the earlier Mamluk historians held positions in the administration and thus were more or less closely connected to the rulers. Cf. Little (1998), 420, and for a discussion of the Qipchak period’s historians, 421–432.

46 Ayalon, David (1993): “Some Remarks on the Economic Decline of the Mamlūk Sultanate.” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 16, 108–124, esp. 110. See also Little (1970), 90–92 and Little (1998), 440.

47 Brentjes, Sonja (2012): “The Prison of Categories. ‘Decline’ and Its Company.” In Felicitas Opwis and David Reisman (eds): *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion. Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gutas. With Assistance of Dimitri Gutas*. Leiden, Boston: Brill (Islamic Philosophy, Theology and Science, 83), 131–156.

48 Herzog, Christoph (1999): “Zum Niedergangsdiskurs im Osmanischen Reich und in der islamischen Welt.” In Stephan Conermann (ed.): *Mythen, Geschichte(n), Identitäten. Der Kampf um die Vergangenheit*. Hamburg: EBV (Asien und Afrika, 2), 69–90.

49 Bauer, Thomas (2007): “In Search of ‘Post-Classical Literature’: A Review Article.” *Mamluk Studies Review* 11 (2), 137–167. Shoshan (1993), 360 refers to Bridget Connelly, who challenged the decline paradigm or “decayed epic theory” earlier. Cf. Connelly, Bridget (1986): *Arab Folk Epic and Identity*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press.

50 Cf. Conermann and Şen (2017); Elbendary (2015 and 2012).

51 Clifford, Winslow W. (1997): “Ubi Sumus? Mamluk History and Social Theory.” *Mamluk Studies Review* 1, 45–62, 58.

However, research following this long overdue re-evaluation has unfortunately not yet been able to fill the gap left by the disregard of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as a time of “mental flaccidity” and merely defective imitation of former cultural achievements, as Brockelmann put it in 1909.<sup>52</sup> Although numerous projects have already turned their attention to this period,<sup>53</sup> the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries remain, especially from the angle of literary studies directed towards factual or semi-factual texts, a largely unwritten page. One symptom of this, for example, is that a disproportionately large number of writings from this period, which were not covered by Brockelmann’s *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* or were considered subordinate in value, still remain only in manuscript form or at best published in uncritical editions. This also applies to a large extent to historiography, with the exception of the use of historiographical sources from the late Mamluk and early Ottoman periods in Egypt as the basis for historical studies dedicated to the reconstruction of ‘historical reality’. As Hirschler has pointed out, the perspective “on authors of medieval Arabic narratives is closely connected to the ‘Rise/Golden Age/Decline paradigm.’”<sup>54</sup> Even Hodgeson’s otherwise highly welcome proposals for the periodization of Islamic history based on emic criteria are not free of the idea that a cultural decline occurred by the fifteenth-sixteenth century at the latest, which was thought to be characterized by a lack of originality on the part of thinkers and authors of the time.<sup>55</sup> These interpretations of literary production, deeply engraved in reference works, can ultimately be traced back to a Western concept of the author, which has its origin in the romantic idea of the creative author as a genius. Ripping this idea out of its context of origin and applying it to a completely different environment has had problematic effects similar to the

52 Brockelmann, Carl (1909): *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur (GAL)*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Leiden: Brill, 217, German original “*geistige Schlaffheit*”.

53 Again, the volume by Conermann and Şen (2017), of which a second will follow shortly, is the first effort to bring together specialists from Ottoman and Mamluk studies to discuss the period in question and to reassess master narratives in a common effort. See also Wollina, Torsten (2014a): *Zwanzig Jahre Alltag. Lebens-, Welt und Selbstbild im Journal des Ahmad Ibn Tawq*. Göttingen: V&R unipress (Mamluk Studies, 8), 115–139.

54 Hirschler (2006), 2. This also holds true for the perception of Persianate and Ottoman authors and covers genres apart from historiography. This can be seen in many EI articles on emic genres: see the article on geographic treatises, Ahmad, S. Maqbul and F. Taeschner: “*Djuḡhrāfiyā*.” In: *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Second Edition. Leiden: Brill, online 2012.

55 On Hodgeson’s impact and the recent discussion of his periodization, see Conermann and Şen (2017), Introduction, 14–15. Their thoughtful considerations on dating include social, cultural, literary, archaeological and environmental perspectives.

application of the concept of the Middle Ages to Islamic societies, recently criticized by Thomas Bauer.<sup>56</sup>

The present study, however, recognizes compilation as a process deeply and actively shaped by the compiler's (henceforth the author's) individual aims and decisions. As Kurt Franz has shown in his study on compiled narratives on the Zanj rebellion,<sup>57</sup> it must be recognized as a complex, multi-step writing technique that makes use of information and narrative techniques already present in the intellectual archive of an author's cultural and social environment. The compilation process involves the choice of material according to the author's aims and intended agenda, the conscious arrangement of the chosen material and thus the creation of a new, individually shaped narrative. Thus, the benefits compilation analysis can contribute to the understanding of the working process of Arabic historians lie in the 'gaps' between the bits and pieces of information an author re-uses. Here, the process of conscious (re-)emplotment of knowledge by an individual author, in relation and interaction with his social and intellectual contexts, become even more observable than in a purely 'original' text.<sup>58</sup> Hayden White's theory provides the basis for considerations on the narrativity of historiographical sources in this study.<sup>59</sup> However, the process of emplotment should not be interpreted in a formalistic-structuralist way, especially since White's rather rigid classification of texts and the distinction between 'facts' and 'events' has been rightly criticized.<sup>60</sup> Rather, I would like to emphasize the processual, and thus elastic, character of emplotment. Here I see parallels with Norbert Elias's theory, who uses the term *figurations*.<sup>61</sup> In reference to his con-

56 Cf. Bauer, Thomas (2018): *Warum es kein islamisches Mittelalter gab. Das Erbe der Antike und der Orient*. München: C.H. Beck; and concerning the periodization and decline narratives in literary studies in his earlier article, Bauer (2007).

57 Franz, Kurt (2004): *Kompilation in arabischen Chroniken. Die Überlieferung vom Aufstand der Zanj zwischen Geschichtlichkeit und Intertextualität vom 9. bis ins 15. Jahrhundert*. Berlin e.a.: de Gruyter (Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients, N. F., 15).

58 The method has been tested by a working group in the context of the Bonn Center for Transcultural Narratology (BZTN), cf. Conermann, Stephan (ed.) (2015): *Innovation oder Plagiat? Kompilationstechniken in der Vormoderne*. Berlin: EBV (Narratio Aliena?, 4).

59 White, Hayden (1973): *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-century Europe*. Baltimore, London: Johns Hopkins.

60 Evans, Richard J. (1997): *In Defence of History*. London: Granta Books, criticizes White's distinction between 'event' and 'fact', while Wagner, Irmgard (2007): "Geschichte als Text. Zur Tropologie Hayden Whites." In Wolfgang Küttler, Jörn Rüsen and Ernst Schulz (eds): *Geschichtsdiskurs. Band 1: Grundlagen und Methoden der Historiographieggeschichte*. Frankfurt am Main: Humanities Online, 212–232, turns to the criticism of rigid categories.

61 In his sociological theory, Elias strives not to regard the individual as separate from society. Instead, in his books and theories, he sought to link the individual and society and to find a definition for this state. The concept of figuration may be described as the core statement of his theories. Figuration, in his understanding, describes the intertwining of the individual and society, i.e. the intertwining of interdependent individuals who, by and large, form society.

cept of fluid, constantly moving figurations of human society, processes between author, texts and recipients can also be conceived of as figurations.<sup>62</sup>

As has been stated above, White's categorizations, like the majority of current historical and literary theoretical research, have been developed on a text corpus that can be characterized as European or Western. Categorizations and terminology must therefore be critically evaluated. Apart from their sharp demarcation from one another, to which a more fluid conception is certainly preferable, they must also be examined against the background of their applicability to non-European contexts. For this reason, the reference to Hayden White here is mainly to his basic idea of emplotment. All further categories of analysis must always be checked against the source material and adapted accordingly.

Dissecting the narrative voice of Ibn Iyās, and its possible development and re-plotment for different contexts and intended readers, will help to draw a less blurred picture of the author and to explore his writing techniques and intentions. Besides being a test case for using a literary study methodology to explore the social historical contexts of an elusive author, the study will thus add valuable information to the assessment and use of Ibn Iyās's writings as historical sources.

The first part of this study will be dedicated to a comprehensive stock-check of information on the contexts of which Ibn Iyās and his writings form a part. This includes, first and foremost, a critical reading of information provided by the research literature and the quest for first-hand sources of information. This leads to an integral review of the works attributed with certainty to Ibn Iyās and their preservation. Manuscripts can help us gain information on the author's working process, especially when, like in the case of Ibn Iyās, autographs provide insight into how the author arranged his texts and how he commented and amended them.<sup>63</sup> Besides this, the general state of the tradition can give insight into the reception of an author's work during his lifetime and after.<sup>64</sup> Finally, it is nec-

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Cf. Elias, Norbert (2019): *Gesammelte Schriften*. With assistance of Carmen Thomas. Leipzig, Frankfurt am Main: Deutsche Nationalbibliothek.

62 Elias, Norbert (1970): *Was ist Soziologie?* München: Juventa (Grundfragen der Soziologie), 139–145.

63 Due to the current corona virus pandemic, my planned research trips to the archives in Istanbul had to be postponed to a later, as yet unspecified date. The codicological part of this project therefore will be published separately when the situation once more allows for travel.

64 The high benefit of codicological studies has again been proven by Frédéric Bauden and his research group. Cf. Bauden (2003); see also Franssen, Élise (2012): *Les Manuscrits de la Recension égyptienne des Mille et une Nuits. Étude codicologique, avec Édition critique, Traduction et Analyse linguistique et littéraire du Conte de Jānšāh*. PhD dissertation, online; ead. (2017): "What was there in a Mamluk Amīr's Library?" In Yuval Ben-Bassat (ed.): *Developing Perspectives in Mamluk History. Essays in Honor of Amalia Levanoni*. Leiden, Boston: Brill (Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts, 143), 311–332. For a general introduction into codicology, see Déroche, François; Berthier, Annie and Muhammad Isa

essary to revisit the corpus that has come to us in order to identify the text base for the following narrative analysis.

The inventory will be completed with an initial narratological experiment dedicated to exploring the self-representation of Ibn Iyās's narrative voice. Here, the basic question will be what kind of information the author shares about himself and in what ways he enters into contact with his readers. His choice of topics is even more interesting in this respect, as Ibn Iyās is so scanty with personal information. A further focus will be on the literary presentation of the narrative voice. Dissecting the intentions of an author that made him write, and write in exactly the way he chose to, is a core element of the historical-critical method and all later approaches based on narrative analysis. They are also a bridge between the author's historical person and contexts and the intratextual narrative voice. Contexts, the narrative voice and a writer's intentions closely interact with each other. Fortunately, Ibn Iyās is much more communicative concerning his writing intentions than he is when conveying personal information. A comparative analysis of the preambles or *muqaddimas* (though he never calls them this) will thus establish a basic understanding of Ibn Iyās's own openly communicated contextualization, which allows us to identify his targeted intended readership, the social contexts his work is related to and the intellectual framing of his writing projects.

The basic aim of the study's second part is to fathom Ibn Iyās's way of working and thereby approach his positionality as narrative voice, reporter and commentator about his time through narratological analysis. For this purpose, the second part will concentrate on the representation of transition processes, especially political changes or transitions of rule. This approach is based on the now widely acknowledged hypothesis that historical writing serves the purpose of endowing events with meaning and explaining the course of events by emplotting them into a worldview familiar, or understandable, to the author and his intended readership.<sup>65</sup> By choosing information from different sources, re-arranging them, adding their own material and judgments and especially by choosing narrative modes for the representation of certain (historical) events, each author configures a unique interpretation of the events he writes about, even if he draws heavily on compiled material.<sup>66</sup> By this configuration, he produces

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Waley (eds) (2005): *Islamic Codicology. An Introduction to the Study of Manuscripts in Arabic Script*. London: Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation (Al-Furqān Publications, 102). However, the approach will not be used exclusively or in its full range, as the focus of this study is on narrative and compilation analysis.

65 Hirschler (2006), 4, see also Conermann (2002), for a transculturally comparative perspective Conermann (2017).

66 Franz (2004), although formulated differently in Hirschler (2006), 3.