

Mamluk Studies - A Western Perspective

Ulrich Haarmann*

* Professor of Arabic and Islamic History, University of Kiel, Germany.

Abstract

In this paper a twofold objective is pursued. The first is the discussion of the legitimate place the Mamluk period deserves to be granted within Middle Eastern history. This question entails an analysis of the reasons both for the glaring neglect extended to the history of Egypt under Ottoman sway (1517-1798) in the research of past decades, as well as for the considerably more benevolent attitudes to be found among Arab and Western historians vis-a-vis the Mamluk sultanate (1250-1517). In its second part the state of the art in Mamluk historical studies is presented. Sources, i.e. archival materials and narrative texts, as well as the secondary literature are critically and summarily presented in their intrinsic qualities and deficits, their horizons and their discourse. An agenda of research priorities is also suggested. Although contemporary Arab research is covered in this article, it nevertheless is a piece written from an unmistakably Western perspective and calls for a similar evaluation of the field through Arab eyes.

1. Preliminary Remarks

In Western research on the history of the Islamic Middle East for decades special, at times almost exclusive, attention was granted to the "classical", early, period from the time of the Prophet to the golden days of early Abbasid history, epitomized, rightly or not, in the caliphate of Harun al-Rashid. The ensuing late medieval and early modern periods (in the European terminology of periodization), i.e. the 13th to 18th centuries, by contrast enjoyed glaring neglect, if we leave aside a few chapters (like the history of the Crusades) which were of immediate relevance to European history.

This negligence has always been especially palpable in reference to the periods of Ottoman sway over Arab lands. this verdict is valid for Western and Middle Eastern historians alike. Even a great European historian such as Leopold von Ranke, after all the founder of the modern school of historical thought, resorted to Italian rather than Turkish sources when he related, as he did, the history of the Ottomans. He "was persuaded that the Ottoman understanding of history did not compare favorably with the Venetian sense of history and... therefore did not feel obliged to use the additional information", sc. provided by Turkish historiography¹. For him universal history was the history of the Germanic and Romance peoples unfolding from antiquity through the Middle Ages into his own time, the nineteenth century. Sources accruing from the outside, even if this outside was the object of research, were dismissed as a priori inappropriate or insufficient.

I shall not go here into the question whether this attitude can and should summarily be qualified as "orientalism". The latter notion has lost much of its persuasiveness (and innocence) ever since Şâdiq al-'Azm has brilliantly shown that the "orientalist" projections of Western artists and scholars, as they were stigmatized by Edward Said, are epistemologically necessary for any outsider who tries to cope with the essentials of a foreign cultural system². What can be stated, though, is the effect this disinterest in the inner dynamics and categories of "oriental" history had on the science of Islamic history in the West. It took long before one began to appreciate Islamic history in its own right. When, after 1900, the German Carl Heinrich Becker finally began to introduce the critical research methods of modern European history into Islamic history, he continued to regard Islamic culture as a twin of Christian Europe with hellenism and antiquity as a common parent. And correspondingly he paid more attention to the beginnings of the - as he saw it - Islamic special development than to its later manifestations. Still, Becker (who later on, in the Weimar Republic, served as Prussian minister of culture) was one of the first to turn his attention to genuinely medieval subjects, e.g. to Fatimid historiography.

In his famous article on Egypt in the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (written before World War I when Egypt at least legally still formed part of the Ottoman Empire) he divided the cultural history of the country in Islamic times into four separate, yet basically equal periods, an Arab, an Arab-Persian, a Persian-Turkish, and an all-turkish era. But Becker's enthusiasm belonged to the early times. His most significant scholarly work is research on papyri from early Muslim Egypt. The further we advance in time, the less interested he becomes. The period after 1517 is taken care of in a few lines; Egypt (and most of the Arab Middle East) had by then become the inconspicuous and unexciting periphery of an empire centered around the Turkish capital Istanbul.

The nonetheless striking disdain of Arab historians for the Ottoman period, cherished for a very long period, is based on different grounds. The experience of subjugation under Turkish domination was still very much present in the generation of all those intellectuals writing around and after World War II. And, of course, there was also the ubiquitous temptation to heap collective frustrations - accumulated in the first and not always so successful experiences with political independence and national rebirth - upon the Turks whose rule allegedly had stifled Arab culture and prosperity. Such an attribution of historical responsibility to the foreign, "barbarian", Turk (a profoundly unjust stereotype³, as has been shown in recent research) proved exonerating and was therefore, to a certain degree, understandable. All the more one has to admire the modern trend in Arab historiography to look more judiciously at the political, administrative and cultural achievements in the centuries of Arab-Turkish common citizenship in the Ottoman Empire. The, as I see it, reductionist, or even primitive, notion of "the age of decadence" (*'aṣr al-inḥiṭāṭ*) appears to be losing much of its fascination for the Arab public in our days. In the Maghreb, but also in countries of the Arab East, the Turkish contribution to Arab history is being given new and fair treatment. Historians like Abdeljalil Temimi in Tunis, 'Adnan al-Bakhit in Amman or 'Abd ar-Rahim 'Abd ar-Rahman in Cairo deserve to be singled out as paragons in this important intellectual and scholarly movement.

The period before the Ottoman conquest of Egypt, Syria and Iraq at the beginning of the sixteenth century, i.e. the Mamluk period proper, has never suffered from such a profound disinterest or, respectively, denigration at the hands of Western or of Arab historians. Mamluk Egypt and Syria were basically positive chapters in the collective memory - all Mamluk depotism, mismanagement and cruelty notwithstanding (I am thinking of Gamal al-Ghitani's great novel *Zayni Barakāt* and his revivification of the plight of the populace in early sixteenth century Cairo). The Mamluk heritage continues to

be enshrined in the immense historical literature of fifteenth century Egypt and, far more importantly yet, in the grand architecture that dominates and shapes even present-day Cairo, Damascus, Aleppo and Jerusalem. Mamluk "silver age" glory contrasts favorably with the following "dark" centuries of Ottoman rule. And, more relevant yet, the military feats of the Mamluk sultans in their bouts with the pagan Mongols and the crusaders in the late thirteenth century, the salvaging of Arab Sunni Islam from infidel (and heretic) hands, served as an indelible model for righteous leadership and for the necessary defence against unbelieving foes even in our days.

The same difference of interest, as far as the Mamluk and Ottoman periods are concerned, can be seen in Europe: Whereas the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries in the history of Egypt and the Fertile Crescent were, until the appearance of André Raymond's great study of Cairo's economic life between 1650 and 1798⁴, for all practical purposes non-existent in Western scholarship, the Mamluks have always fared better. This, quite naturally, also has to do with the fact (mentioned before) that it was the Mamluks who destroyed the last vestiges of Crusader rule in the Holy Land and that they, as masters of the Indian "rich trades" - to use Emmanuel Wallerstein's beautiful term - and as sovereigns over Jerusalem, were the indispensable partners as well as counterparts of the Mediterranean Christian powers in the later Middle Ages and thus were never lost out of sight by European medievalists.

2. State of the Art

In the past fifty, especially thirty, years Mamluk studies have worldwide gone through a period of enormous growth. It may seem appropriate to hold on for a moment, to review the developments the field has taken during the past generation and to look into the future. Which are the most striking achievements, which the most deplorable deficits - both on the level of making primary sources accessible and in secondary literature? In which respect does this particular discipline contribute to the general discourse on Middle Eastern history? To what degree does the work done by Arab and by Western scholars supplement or possibly contradict each other? It is not feasible and meaningful to turn such an essay into a fullfledged critical bibliography. I will point at trends (and try to illuminate these with a selected documentation), rather than emunerate the hundreds of books and articles devoted to this domain. My own limited horizons and subjective criteria of selection will be palpable ubiquitously in the following lines. My failure to name a scholar or a book work must therefore in no way be construed as a negative or critical opinion.

The efflorescence of Mamluk studies is perhaps best proven by the recent

decision of the Chicago Middle East librarian Bruce D. Craig (Middle East documentation Center, The University of Chicago, 5828 South University Avenue, Chicago IL 60637, U.S.A., Fax 001-312-753-0569) and of his assistant John Meloy to prepare a comprehensive *Bibliography of Mamluk Studies*. Without such a tool it will soon be impossible to find orientation in an ever growing discipline to which especially Arab - predominantly Egyptian - scholars contribute. For them Mamluk history is local history and thus of immediate concern. M.A. theses and dissertations submitted to Egyptian universities (Cairo University is only one of them) are probably the largest item to be considered in our days. Lamentably most of them remain unpublished and thus, for all practical purposes, inaccessible (unlike U.S. dissertations available through University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106). In some cases we are lucky to at least learn of their existence. This is the case with the recent list of M.A. and Ph.D. dissertations supervised by the Mamluk specialist Sa'īd Ashūr that was included into his *Festschrift* edited by Ḥassanein Rabie' and published in Cairo University in 1992, pp. XVI-XX. Another repertory of theses is contained - albeit well hidden - in Muḥammad Muḥammad Amin's *Catalogue des documents d'archives du Caire de 239/853 - 922/1516*, Cairo: IFAO 1981; I have retrieved, and arranged, these dissertations (containing most valuable editions of Cairo Mamluk documents) in my review of Amin's book (*Welt des Islams* 27/1987/p. 130).

Bruce Craig's important work will be completed in the near future and can then serve as a most welcome comprehensive repertory. It will supplant the huge Mamluk bibliography (arranged somewhat arbitrarily according to subject matter) that is appended to Ira Marvin Lapidus' famous book *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*, Cambridge, Mass, 1967, pp. 217-42 (a total of 573 entries). This summary list (without any commentary) was replaced, in the second edition of the work (Cambridge, England 1984), by "Bibliographical notes" (pp. 192-97) which contain a brief characterization of the given literature. Such a succinct *bibliographie raisonne* can also be retrieved from Jean Sauvaget's *Introduction to the History of the Muslim East, A Bibliographical Guide Based on the Second Edition as Recast by Claude Cahen*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1965, pp. 176-83 (Egypt, Syria, Arabia and Iraq). The book is, of course, outdated by now, but nevertheless it remains more informative than the more recent French revamped version by Claude Cahen, *Introduction "l'histoire du monde musulman médiéval*, Paris 1982, pp. 157-64 (Egypt, Syria and Arabia). Bibliographical essays on the period of the Mamluk sultanate can furthermore be found in the articles "Mamlūk" and "Mamlūks" by David Ayalon and Peter M. Holt, respectively, in the new edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. VI, pp. 314-33, as well as in Ulrich new edition of the *Encyclopaedia*

of *Islam*, vol. VI, pp. 314-33, as well as in Ulrich Haarmann's contribution to the collective *Geschichte der arabischen welt*, Third Edition, Munich 1994, pp. 669-75.

3. Documents

One of the most important developments in Mamluk studies during the last generation is the unprecedented opening-up of archival sources. Whereas Hans Ernst's volume on mamluk royal decrees preserved in St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai (*Die mamlukischen Sultansurkunden des Sinai-Klosters, Wiesbaden 1960*)⁵ deals with a marginal group of addressees, viz. the Greek clerics of St. Catherine's, the two more recent discoveries of documents have to do with mainstream, i.e. Muslim, society. One is the find of documents in the Islamic Museum in the Haram in Jerusalem. A first inventory of these private documents, mostly of the late 14th century, that were detected by Amal Abul-Hajj and Linda Northrop, is available in Donald Little's *Catalogue of the Islamic Documents from al-Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem*, (Beiruter Texte und studien vol. 29), Wiesbaden 1984. Hoda Lutfi (Cairo) has used these documents for her impressive social history of Jerusalem in Mamluk, especially early Circassian, times (*Al-Quds al-mamlukiyya. A History of Mamluk Jerusalem Based on the Haram documents*, Berlin 1985; "A Study of Six Fourteenth Century Iqras from al-Quds Relating to Muslim Women", *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 26/1983/pp. 246-94). The considerable scope and value of the Jerusalem documents is stated in several articles by Donald P. Little, notably his "The Significance of the Haram Documents for the Study of Medieval Islamic History", *Der Islam* 57 (1980), pp. 189-219.

Yet richer is the treasure trove of archival materials - a total of 888 private documents, with a clear emphasis on purchase, exchange and endowment deeds - as listed in Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn's *Catalogue des documents d'archives du Caire*, mentioned before. Here we are no longer in Jerusalem, a comparatively small provincial town, but in the imperial capital city. Amīn owes much to his predecessor in the field of archival studies at Cairo University, 'Abd al-Latīf Ibrahim 'Alī, who opened up the *waqfiyya* of Sultan Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī in his (lamentably unpublished) dissertation⁶ and made himself a name as editor of numerous endowment deeds. With Amīn's complete inventory at hand, one can now - provided one gets the necessary permission from the Egyptian authorities - start editing and evaluating the individual documents.

Much progress has been made in the past three decades. The Egyptian historian of architecture, Salih Lam'i Mustafa, has used the corresponding

waqfiyyāt for his research on the building activities of Barqūq and his son Faraj. M.M. Amīn (Cairo) - together with numerous of his students (Zaynab Maḥfuz, 'Ali Ḥasan Zaghlūl, Jirjis Fām Makha'īl, Muna Zakariyya, Ḥasan Sayyid Jawda al-Qaṣṣās, Ḥusni Nuwayṣir, Muḥammad Mustāfa Najīb, Jamal Ibrahim Mursi al-Khūli and Sāmi Aḥmad 'Abd al-Ḥalīm) - Ḥayāt Nasir al-Ḥajji (Kuwait), Leonor Fernandes (New York) and Doris Behrens-Abouseif (Munich) - to give only a few names - have submitted editions of numerous of these documents, sometimes as appendices to editions of chronicles or to monographs. Nevertheless, only a very small step in this direction has been taken so far. Hundreds of documents have remained virtually *terra incognita* to this day.

Other collections of private documents, hitherto largely untapped, should at least briefly be mentioned here. There are scraps of documents from Mamluk times circulating on the international market for antiquities (I saw such specimens in Montreal, Canada), and there is, last but not least, the huge collection of the Archduke Rainer (or: Vienna) papers in the Austrian National Library. To my knowledge only Muhammad Hassanein Rabie of Cairo University, in his famous study on the economic history of Egypt from early Ayyubid times to the end of the third sultanate of al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn (*The Financial System of Egypt A.H. 564-741/A.D. 1161-1341*, London 1972), has so far made extensive use of them for Mamluk history.

We must, however, not contend ourselves with the palaeographically and philologically impeccable editing of such documents. They must be reduced to their main function: For the historian they are, first of all, important - yet by no means exclusive - unbiased sources in disciplines as far afield as art history (the premises of the endowed building, including the decoration of the ceilings and walls, is often meticulously described), economic history (why does the assistant of the Law professor receive the same salary as the janitor of the foundation?), cultural history (which are the travelling privileges of the Ḥanafi or Shāfi'ī mutaṣaddir, which kind of religious poetry is to be recited in the Ṣūfī khānqāh, what delicacies are to be distributed among the pupils in the sacred month of Ramaḍān?), geography (which third of which village in Daqahliyya or Qūṣiyya province served to finance the endowment), juridical procedure (who attested in which capacity the propriety of the legal act?), prosopography (who will inherit the tawalli of an endowment according to the wāqif?) etc. A few researchers have begun to use the Cairo documents - mainly *waqfiyyāt* - along these lines. In the first place, once more, Muhammad Amin with his magisterial work on *waqf* and social history (*al-Awqāf wa'l-ḥayāt al-ijtimā'iyya fi Miṣr 648-923 H./1250-1517 A.D.*, Cairo 1980) must be cited. Others are, e.g. the four Americans Calr Petry (Evanston), Leonor Fernandes (New York),

Shaun Marmon and Jonathan Berkey (both in Princeton) who have done excellent work, based on the Cairo documents, on social and educational institutions in Mamluk Egypt. Two recent glossaries (on Mamluk historical⁷ and architectural terminology⁸) help the beginner in this thorny yet rewarding field.

Other documentary sources from fields like numismatics and epigraphy should at least be given passing mention. Mamluk Numismatics have recently, with the relocation of Steven Album's huge collection of choice Islamic coins at the University of Tübingen in Germany, experienced a new boom. The curator of the collection, Lutz Ilisch, is doing research also with Mamluk coins. The recent Berlin Ph.D. thesis by St. Heidemann on numismatic evidence on al-Burli's interim rule in early Mamluk history (*Das Aleppiner Kalifat A.D. 1261. vom Ende des Kalifates in Baghdad über Aleppo zu den Restaurationen in Kairo, Leiden 1994*) continues a tradition established, and furthered, by scholars like Paul Balog, Jere Bacharach and Boaz Shoshan.

4. Narrative Sources

The plethora of narrative historical sources from Mamluk times is patent and has, as a phenomenon, provoked preliminary questions. How is this enormous productivity of Mamluk historical authors to be explained? Is it - as I have argued in my dissertation *Quellenstudien zur frühen Mamlukenzeit* (Freiburg 1969) - a result of a "popularization" of historical writing, discernible also in the unmistakable coalescence of the discourse of historiography and of the contemporary popular novel (such as the *Sirat Baybars*)? After all, it was in Mamluk Egypt, not in Abbasid Baghdad, that the *Arabian Nights* were given their final structure and form. Or is this growth rather to be interpreted as a function of the mushrooming of institutions of higher education with the concomitant salaried positions for scholars (not just historians) at large? Or is it not also a reflection of the ascendancy of an Egyptian local historical pride and consciousness as well as an increasing urban readership? Muslim Egypt was no longer just, as has been said, a "place"⁹. In Mamluk times it had become the undisputed core region of Sunni Islam. This status was a source of unadulterated pride that may well have sought to articulate itself in historical research directed explicitly to Egyptian matters. To Cairo one came and here one stayed, not only to make a pleasant break on one's way to the Holy Places of the Hijāz.

Leaving this overriding question pertinent to cultural sociology aside for the time being, we face the very mundane concern how the numerous chronicles, biographical dictionaries, handbooks of administration and epistolography, *ādāb* anthologies and poetic *diwāns* with their rich historical information can be best made accessible for scholarly research. This richness is, as it is so often, both a blessing and a curse.

We have the rare chance - to begin with the positive aspects - to study and compare numerous texts of the same period, which describe the same events and personalities, with one author often copying from the other and *vice versa*. More than this, we frequently have first and final versions of one of the same work side by side, thus gaining insights into the individual process of literary and scholarly production. To the envy of the classical scholar who has no Greek or Roman originals preserved, we possess numerous autographs of the luminaries of this time. We know the highly individualistic handwriting of chroniclers such as Shams al-dīn al-Jazarī (d. 739/1338) or of Shams al-dīn al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1348).

The historiography of Cairo and Damascus under al-Malik al-Nāṣir in the first third of the fourteenth century is exceptionally fertile ground for such investigations. To give only one example. For the last volumes of his seventy volume *Tārīkh al-Islām*, al-Dhahabi (like numerous other contemporary Egyptian and Syrian chroniclers) exploited the history of his fellow Damascene al-Jazari. We not only have Jazari's original text both in the *muswadda* and the *bayāḍ*, but also excerpts Dhahabi made in his own hand from Jazari's text, and then, fourthly, again as an autograph, the final results, Dhahābī's *Tārīkh al-Islām* in the Aya Sofya manuscript. By carefully comparing those passages preserved in the four texts we discover, one, that not the final version of Jazari's *Hawādith al-zamān* but rather his brouillon served Dhahabi as his repertory¹⁰, two, that Dhahabi in one instance could not read his own handwriting and changed what he himself had taken from Jazari into an equally plausible different rendering: The subject matter is the alleged embezzling of funds by a Shāfi'i supreme qāḍi of Damascus. Jazari, the original, writes of modest eight thousand dinars; Dhahabi, when copying the word *thamāniyat* (*alf*), omitted the dots and, later on, read his own text as an enormous *bi-mi'at* (*alf*), i.e. hundred thousand dinars, a figure we find in *Tārīkh-al-Islām*. When going through the numerous fourteenth, fifteenth, and early sixteenth century texts relating this story, we can - depending on whether the sum is 8.000 or 100.000 - at once see which source, Jazari's *Hawādith* or Dhahabi's *Tārīkh al-Islām*, has been used by the compiler¹¹.

This type of painstaking research is possible in Mamluk historiography. The price one pays for this luxury is the necessity to first pave one's way through the jungle of numerous texts, many of which have not been properly edited so far. It is Donald P. Little's merit to have brought order into the network of dependencies of early Mamluk chroniclers and biographers (*An Introduction to Mamluk Historiography, Wiesbaden 1970*). He would resort to preliminary work by Claude Cahern, Otto Spies and Eliyahu Ashtor ("Some Unpublished

Sources for the Bahri Period", *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization - Scripta Hierosolymitana* vol. 9, Jerusalem 1961, pp. 11-30); in my dissertation I myself tried to elaborate some of Little's results.

Once this web of textual dependencies has been unravelled, we know which source is most authentic and therefore most apt for an edition. Unfortunately scholarly reality does not function this way. For twenty-five years now we have known that al-Jazari, whom I introduced above, is the pivotal narrative source for the history of both Syria and Egypt during the rule of Qalawun and his successors until the year of Jazari's death in 737/1336. But, apart from Nu'man Jubran's edition of the years 694 to 696 H. (*Studien zur Geschichte und Sozialgeographie von Damaskus im ausgehenden dreizehnten Jahrhundert*, Ph.D. dissertation Freiburg, 1987), nothing has happened. A comparable neglect of a truly prime source can be observed in the case of Badr al-dīn al-'Aynī's (d. 855/1451) famous fifteenth century chronicle 'Iqd al-jumān. Ever since Donald Little's research, we are aware of al-'Aynī's central place in the historiography of Circassian Egypt. Al-'Aynī is, in many respects, and at least for early Mamluk history, far more important than his contemporaries al-Maqrizi (d. 845/1442) and Ibn Taghribirdī (d. 874/1469). Still it took long years before the edition of his book was undertaken. Leaving two one-volume partial editions aside, the edition of 'Iqd is now in the hands of Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn whose merits for Mamluk studies, as we can see in this case again, are becoming truly indispensable !

These skeptical remarks should not make us blind for the enormous editorial achievements of recent years. Several central historical texts of Mamluk times have been printed or are approaching a good end. One may want to begin with al-Nuwayrī's (d. 732/1332) huge encyclopaedia *Nahāyat al-arab* whose final - and historical - sections are being edited in Cairo. Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadi's (d. 764/1363) gigantic biographical dictionary (twenty-nine volumes with a total of more than ten thousand *vitae* of Companions of the Prophet, rulers, notables, authors of the most variegated scholarly and artistic disciplines) is now also in its final leg; all the missing volumes have been entrusted to Arab, French and German editors and are under preparation. Hopefully Ṣafadi's dictionary of contemporaries, *A'yān al-'aṣr*, will follow suit; a first step in this direction has been taken with the edition of volume three (letters *tā'* to 'ayn) by Khaled Kchir (Tunis). Fuat Sezgin's facsimile reproduction of this work by no means replaces the critical edition, a verdict valid (if we leave vol. I and some small sections of vol. II aside) also for Frankfurt facsimile edition of the huge *Masālik al-abṣār* by Ibn Faḍlallah al-'Umari (d. 748/1348).

This list would be incomplete if one did not mention Ibn al-Dawādārī's (died

after 737/1337) nine-volume universal chronicle *Kanz al-durar wa-jāmi al-ghurar* the last parts of which (vol. 2 on pre-Islamic history and vol. 4 on the Umayyads) are in the press; the series is edited by the German Archeological Institute in Cairo. The German based *Bibliotheca Islamica* (responsible also for the edition of al-Şafadi's *Wāfi*), has, a few years ago, issued the last volume of Ibn Iyās' *Badā'i az-zhūr* (text and index, ed. Mohamed Mostafa). So this famous source on the last years of Mamluk rule and on the gradual establishment of Ottoman sway in Egypt is eventually available in *toto*. Many-volumed projects of comparable importance - such as al-Dhahabi's *Tarīkh al-Islām* (two editions of this huge work in progress, one in Beirut, one in Damascus), Ibn Wāsil's *Mufarrij al-kurūb* (dealing not only with Ayyubid, but also early Mamluk history; ed. Muḥammad Ḥasanayn Rabi' Cairo), al-'Ayni's *Iqd* (see above) and Ibn Taghrībirdi's prosopography *al-Manhal al-şāfi* (also Cairo) - are, so one may hope, on an equally good way towards completion.

I shall not go into the numerous smaller editorial projects, both in the field of historiography proper and of works on *inshā'*. The list would just become too long. In the latter category, *inshā'*, the research done by the Czech scholar Rudolf Vesely (he published Ibn Nāẓir al-Jaysh's *Tathqīf al-tarīf* and is now working on Ibn al-Hijja's *Qahwat al-inshā'*, a source with unknown details on the reign of Sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh) may be singled out. The numerous dissertations produced, over the past twenty five years, at the University of Freiburg on early Mamluk chronicles, are also worth mentioning (B. Schafer, S. Kortantamer, A. Melkonian, M.S. Elham. N. Jubran, G. Graf). Much is being done inside and outside the Arab world. The number of chronicles registered by Brockelmann and other reference works as unpublished which still await an edition is gradually growing smaller. Early printings - sometimes of the last century - are being replaced by scholarly editions. In this connection it is saddening to state that Gaston Wiet's scrupulous and lavish edition of al-Maqrzī's *Khitat*, begun before World War One in one of the series of the French Institute in Cairo, has come to a halt. Instead of taking up where he broke off one has reprinted the old and unreliable Bulāq edition.

So much is going on in the field of publishing primary sources that there is now even a real danger - owing to the lacking communication between the individual editors in spe - of producing double work. This is a most lamentable luxury and a real tragedy for the scholar concerned. It has happened, even within the walls of one and the same city, with al-Musabbiḥi's famous Fatimid chronicle (two editions, one by William Milward, the other by Thierry Bianquis and Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid). And one must also mention the section describing the Mamluk system of government in 'Umari's *Masālik al-abşār* which was

edited in Lebanon and Egypt in the same year (ed. Ayman Fu'ād Sayyid, Cairo 1985, and Dorothea Krawulsky, Beirut 1985).

5 Studies

In order to avoid such frictions, yet more should be done to facilitate the contacts between the major centers of Mamluk studies. Specialized journals (like the *Index Islamicus*, the *Annales Islamologiques* of the French Institute in Cairo, the MIDEO of the Dominican Institute in Cairo, and, of course, the *Majallat ma'had al-makhṭūṭāt al-'arabiyya* in Kuwait) with long sections on history have helped to reduce this problem. The centers of Mamluk studies have just become too numerous. An additional complication results from the popping up of numerous new publishing houses all over the Arab world whose activities become known in outside quarters often only by chance.

In the Middle East one must name in the first place, this goes without saying, Cairo with its numerous history departments and research institutions, notably the *Markaz taḥqīq al-turāth* in the National Library in which many wonderful editions of Mamluk historical texts were prepared, especially in the late sixties and seventies when Sa'īd Ahsūr, Ḥassan and Ḥasanayn Rabī were active there with their teams of collaborators. But also the smaller Egyptian university towns, Tunis (Mounira Chapoutot-Remadi, Khaled Kchir), Beirut (Riḍwān al-Sayyid, Dorothea Krawulsky, Louis Pouzet, Maher Jarrar), Damascus ('Adnān Darwīsh; Bernadette Martel-Thoumian), Jerusalem (David Ayalon, Reuven Amitai-Preiss), Haifa (Amalia Levanoni), Beer Sheva (Boaz Shoshan), Amman ('Adnān al-Bakhīt, Muṣṭafa al-Ḥiyāri), Irbid (Nu'mān Jubrān) and, proceeding from west to east, Riad ('Abd al-'Azīz al-Khuwayṭir) and notably Kuwait (A. al-Muhanna, Ḥayat al-Ḥajji) must be given due prominence. Again, this list is by no means comprehensive let alone complete. Some research institutes such as the French Institutes in Cairo (IFAO) and Damascus (IFD) of the German Institute for Oriental Research in Beirut with its two series *Beiruter Texte und Studien* and *Bibliotheca Islamica* serve as efficient clearing stations between the Arab world and Europe also in Mamluk historical studies.

In the West one may begin one's (necessarily fragmentary) *tour d'horizon* with Canada (Donald P. Little/McGill University Montreal; Linda Northrop, Toronto) and the great U.S. names like Princeton (both the University and the *Institute for Advanced Study*), Harvard and Chicago (including Northwestern University where Carl Petry teaches). Also the University of California in Santa Barbara (Stephen Humphreys), Berkeley (Ira M. Lapidus) and Los Angeles as well as the University of Washington (Jere Bacharch) and of Utah should be named. In England, Belgium and France Oxford (Peter Holt, Donald Richards),

London (Robert Irwin), Leuven (J. Vermeulen), Aix-en-Provence (J. Cl. Garcin, Sylvie Dnoix, Andr Raymond) and Paris (Jacqueline Sublet) enjoy prominence in Mamluk research. In Germany Bonn (Annemarie Schimmel), Freiburg (Hans Robert Roemer, Doris Behrens-Abouseif, Otfried Weintritt), Tbingen (Heinz Halm, Dorothea Krawulsky, Lutz Ilisch) and Kiel (Ulrich Haarmann) may legitimately be singled out. Japan must no longer be left aside also in such a survey on Mamluk studies¹².

It would be futile to attempt an even approximate survey of the secondary literature that has been, and is being, produced on Mamluk Egypt and Syria. What can meaningfully be ventured upon, is a table of current research and an indication of the fields that, in my assessment, would deserve particular support.

We fortunately have a few good general descriptions of Mamluk history. Besides numerous books written in Arabic - e.g. by Sa'īd 'Ashūr - there are précis available in European languages (here I restrict myself to works of more recent vintage), notably Bernard Lewis' chapter "Egypt and Syria" in the *Cambridge History of Islam*, Peter M. Holt's *The Age of the Crusades. The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517* (London 1986; detailed attention is given to the dynastic and institutional history) as well as his contribution "Mamlūks" to the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (the neo-Mamluks of Ottoman times are included). This articles "Mamlūk" (David Ayalon) and "Miṣr. D 5. The Mamluk period 1250-1517" (Ulrich Haarmann), also in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, as well as Haarmann's chapter V in Haarmann, ed., *Geschichte der arabischen Welt*, Munich 3 1994, may be added. Robert Irwin's *The Middle East in the Middle Ages. The Early Mamluk Sultanate 1250-1382*, London 1986, is a delightful book, placing particular emphasis on military servitude (and its psychological fundaments). It only covers the dawlat al-Turk up to Barqūq's sultanate. Hopefully the second volume will follow before too long. Little known is Werner Krebs' Hamburg doctoral dissertation of 1980, *Innen-und Außenpolitik Ägyptens 741-784/1341-1382*, a highly informative work that would have deserved broader circulation.

Smaller sections of Mamluk history (rules of individual sultans) have been made the topic of specialized investigations. Again without any claim for comprehensiveness, I name Shajar al-Durr (Götz Schregle), Baybars I (F. sadeque, 'A. Khuwayṭir, P. Thorau), Qalāwūn (L. Northrup), al-Ashraf Khalīl (K. Müller), Kitbughā (H. al-Ḥajji), Lājīn (P. Holt), al-Malik al-Nāṣir (H. al-Ḥajji, A. Levanoni), Barsbāy (A. Darrag), Qāyitbāy and Qānṣawh al-Ghawri (C. Petry). Work on some of the lesser sultans is under way.

Other works are explicitly devoted to the relations between the Mamluk

sultanate and exterior regions. 'Ali b. Ḥusayn al-Sulayman and Donald Little have studied the important Egyptian contacts to the Hijāz. Peter Holt has devoted much of his time in recent years to the diplomatic contacts between the early Mamluks and mediterranean Christian powers; a volume on this subject is soon to appear in the series *Islamic History and Civilization*. Baybars I's establishment of Egyptian rule south of the first cataract as well as his (and his successors') dealings with the Golden Horde and the Ilkhanids has also been treated in several studies written by Arab, Western and Soviet scholars (cf. e.g. Fāyid Hammad 'Ashūr, *al-'Alāqāt al-siyāsiyya bayn al-mamālik wa'l-Mughūl fi l-dawla al-mamlū'iyya*, Cairo 1976; Salih zakorov, *Diplomatischeskiye otonosheniya Zolotoy Ordy s Egiptom*, Moscow 1966).

In Jordan in particular, studies on the history of certain geographical regions of Mamluk Syria have been compiled. One may want to name volumes on Ghazza (Maḥmūd 'Ata'allah), Şafad (Tāhā Thalji al-Ṭarāwina), Karak ('Adnān al-Bakhīṭ), Jerusalem (Yūsuf Ghawānima), Transjordan (Y. Ghawanima) and the Syrian desert (*Muṣṭafā al-Ḥiyāri, al-Imāra al-Ta'iyya fi bilād al-Shām*, Amman 1977). Similar work has been done on the Egyptian provinces (e.g. Martinas Müller-Wiener on Ayyubid and Mamluk Alexandria). This historical research *strictu sensu* has often been supplemented by archaeological surveys; cf. e.g. Hayat Salam-Liebich, *The Architecture of the Mamluk City of Tripoli*, Cambridge, Mass. 1983, or Mohamed-Muain Sadek, *Die mamlukische Architektur der stadt Gaza*, Berlin 1991. The latter, art historical and architectural, studies stand in a scholarly tradition inseparably connected with the name of Sir Archibald Creswell. George Scanlon, Christel Kessler, Layla Ibrahim, Michael Rogers, Archie walls, Michael Burgoyne (*Mamluk Jerusalem*, Jerusalem: British School of Archeology 1987) and, last but not least, Michael Meinecke with his masterful synopsis of Mamluk architecture (*Die mamlukische architektur in Ägypten und Syrien 648/1250 bis 923/1517*, 2 vols., Glückstadt 1992) are, on one way or another, in Creswell's debt.

The Mamluk phenomenon - i.e. the recruitment of a ruling caste and political elite exclusively from the pagan outside and the exclusion of the second generation from the privileges of the fathers - has intrigued many outside observers ever since Mamluk days. European travellers to Mamluk Egypt were again and again baffled by the - as they saw it - absurdity of the Mamluk system of government. Has the "principle of Joseph" (a foreigner rising to highest political rank in Egypt) remained in force, all through the centuries? - they wondered. If we are so well informed about Mamluk rule and military organization, credit is largely due to David Ayalon. His numerous articles - supposed to supplant the grand monograph never published - are neatly

collected in by now four volumes of the London series *Variorum Reprints*. They contain enormously rich data, no Mamluk scholar can dispense with. Peter Holt and Stephen Humphreys have refined Ayalon's research, placing particular emphasis on the elements of change in the Mamluk institution. The forthcoming book by Amalia Levanoni also underscores this historical, i.e. dynamic, dimension. It describes and explains the gradual disintegration of the traditional Mamluk ruling caste of Qalāwūn's days from roughly 1315 onwards, a process characterized by the rise of, first, the emirs, and then, second, the *Mamālik sulṭāniyya*, into the privileged positions available in state and army. It is sad that Annemarie Schimmel's "Habilitation" (post-Ph.D. thesis), a cultural and social history of Mamluk (especially late Mamluk) Egypt, that was submitted to the University of Berlin in April 1945 during the last days of the Third Reich, has never been printed. Many of Ayalon's discoveries and categories are already contained in this voluminous study, whose value rests not the least on an insightful analysis of Mamluk Turkish and Circassian names. The peculiar status of the sons (and, for that matter, grandsons) of full-fledged Mamluks, as well as their careers, stands in the focus of my own present research.

The ethnic tensions resulting from Mamluk-Turkish rule over an Arab Muslim population has recently attracted increasing scholarly attention. How did the local 'ulamā' cope with the everyday experience of being ruled by uncouth, foreign, often illiterate, Turks whose only merit was bravery in the jihād against the enemies of Islam and who even dared adjudicating inner-Mamluk strife according to the Chinghizid Yāsa, not the Sacred Law of Islam? The career of Abu Hāmīd al-Qudsi (d. 888/1483), who, in the beginning of his career, lauds his fellow 'ulamā', and later on, extols the alien Mamluk rulers as the "salt of Egypt", epitomizes the complicated relationship between foreign rulers and native subjects. What do we know about the linguistic backgrounds and literary traditions of the Mamluks, what about the vestiges of Shamanism in their religious convictions? In this field Turcologists and Islamicists have a largely unknown common domain to investigate. A. Schimmel (Harvard and Bonn), J. Sauvaget (with his important article on names and surnames of the Mamluks), A. Zaqaczowski (Warsaw), J. Eckmann (Budapest), Tibor Halasi-Kun (New York), L. Bordoiglieti (Los Angeles), Barbara Flemming (Leiden), John M. Smith (Berkeley), U. Haarmann and - more recently R. Amitai-Preiss (Jerusalem) have devoted a good part of their scholarly endeavours to the Turkish (in the beginning also Mongolian) linguistic, cultural and religious presence on the Nile.

With the latter topic we have already entered the precinct of social history and of a very popular, almost vogueish, sister discipline: historical anthropology or *histoire de mentalités*. In order to study mentalities of the past, the historian needs an

exceptionally rich corpus of material. If any pre-Ottoman Muslim historical sources fulfill this quantitative requirement, it is Mamluk historiography. We can compile a long list: The private documents (e.g. the inventory of the private library of a late 14th century Jerusalem dignitary), the chronicles and biographical dictionaries with their extensive, albeit inevitably partly stereotypical information on thousands of individuals, the contemporary *khiṭāṭ* works, legal tracts (including guidelines of the correct juridical procedure and collections of *fatāwā*, but also treatises on proper conduct of the members of the various social segments), manuals on catastrophes like famines (see now Adel Allouche's expert English translation of al-Maqīzī's *Ighātha*, Salt Lake City 1994) and the Plague, scientific tracts (here David King is the great connoisseur), military handbooks, but also cook-books (like *Kanz al-fawā'id* recently edited by David Waines and Manuela Marin) as well as material sources like textiles (one may remind of Leo Mayer's great book *Mamluk costume*, Geneva 1952), heraldic emblems, samples of art (miniatures and metalwork), and - last but not least - the literary heritage such as the Arabian Nights and Mamluk anthologies of *adab* and poetry (Otfried Weintritt's analysis of al-Nuwayrī al-Iskandarānī's vast and at the same time obscure *Kiāb al-Ilmām* and the studies by Muḥammad Zaghlūl Salām, *al-Adab fi l-'asr al-mamlūki*, vol. Cairo 1971, and Bakrī Shaykh Amin, *Muṭalā'āt fi l-shi'r al-mamlūki wa l-'uthmāni*, Beirut 1399/1979, are important contributions to the latter field). Taken together these immensely rich sources will enable us, some day in the not too distant future, to reconstruct late medieval Egyptian and Syrian social reality with a good chance of success.

Important steps in this direction have been taken. We are privileged to have Maḥmūd Rizq Sālīm's eight volume encyclopaedia of the scholarly and literary yield of Mamluk times, Aḥmad 'Abd al-Rāziq's various essays on selected groups (women, minor officials) and social habits (gifts and bribery), the by now almost classical expert studies on the 'ulama' and their activities (I. Lapidus, C. Petry, b. Bartel-Thoumian, J. Berkey), on the judiciary, its ethos and dealings (M.M. Amin, J. Escovitz, G. Guellil, J. Nielsen, E. Startain), on saint-worship and its place in Mamluk society (A. Schimmel, C. Petry, L. Fernandes, Ch. Taylor) as well as on the broad, illiterate populace (W. Brinner, I. Lapidus, H. al-Hajji, B. Langner, B. Shoshan, N. Jubran), and, last but not least, the penetrating French investigations into the social and cultural "space" of Mamluk Egypt (A. Raymond, J. Cl. Garcin, S. Dnoix, D. Behrens Abouseif). All these initiatives are most valuable contributions towards a forthcoming synopsis. Many studies in Arabic, of a comparable scholarly calibre, remain unmentioned here and should be supplied by an Arab colleague in a similar publication.

The intellectual and artistic life of the time and academe as a way of life in

Mamluk Egypt has, all the rich archival and narrative sources notwithstanding, attracted surprisingly little attention so far. The studies by A. Al-Muhanna, E. Sartain and E. Homerin, e.g., on the Mamluk discourse on Ibn 'Arabi and Ibn al-Farīd as well as on the rivalries between contemporary scholars like al-Sakhāwī (d. 903/1497) and al-Suyāṭi (d. 911.1505) who profoundly hated each other, remain an exception. I already referred to the poor wretch Abu Ḥāmid al-Qudsi whose weird tract on the blessing of the arrival of the Mamluks in Egypt is in the press (ed. by the late Subhi Labib and by Ulrich Haarmann, Stuttgart and Beirut 1995).

As has been said before, hardly anything is, in my view, more urgent in Mamluk studies than the systematic exploration of the literary (prose) writings of Mamluk authors. Ibn Taghrībirdī, e.g. not only wrote his famous chronicles and biographical dictionaries, but also works on *adab*. It suffices to look into Brockelmann's (outdated and therefore not even complete) entries to realize how much material awaits the researcher in this particular field.

Far more progress has been made - partially at least thanks to neo-Marxist tendencies in the seventies? - in the field of economic history. Heinz Halm has used the cadastral survey given by Ibn al-Ji'ān's (d. 885/1480) *K al-Tuhfa al-saniyya* as well as the material contained in Ibn Duqmāq's (d. 809/1407) *K. al-Intisār* to reconstruct the changing feudal geography of Mamluk Egypt and to reproduce it both in his catalogue (*Ägypten nach den mamlukischen Lehensregistern*, I and II, Wiesbaden 1979 and 1982) and in a detailed map produced for the famous *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients* (TAVO). T. Sato's copious work on the Egyptian *iqṭā'* has been mentioned. Subhi Labīb wrote his commercial history of Egypt in the late Middle Ages (*Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens im Spätmittelalter*, Wiesbaden 1965) and Hassanein Rabie his London thesis on the Egyptian finances and taxes in Ayyubid and early Mamluk times (*The Financial System of Egypt A.H. 564-741/ A.D. 1161-1341*, London 1972) as early as the sixties. Eliyahu Ashtor's numerous studies on general questions of economics, on salaries, prices, as well as precious metals in late medieval Middle Eastern history must not remain unmentioned. Many issues (not touched upon in this survey) remain disputed to this day. To give one example: Is Avram Udovitch right in his by now famous article "England to Egypt 1350-1500: Long-term Trends and long-distance Trade (IV)", *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*, London 1970, pp. 115-28, when he claims that the economic decline of Egypt after the mid-fourteenth century (the advent of the Plague) is primarily to be explained by demographic factors? With the depopulation of the countryside, he argues, the Mamluks lost their economic basis and greedily turned to urban sources of revenue, thus impairing hitherto prosperous sectors of Egypt's economy

including the lucrative international trade. Furthermore, so he contends, the large-scale importation of white slaves from Eastern Europe - without any compensation on the export side - ruined the Egyptian balance of trade which had hitherto always been held to have been healthy in view of the enormous profits from the Indian trades.

With new documents being explored, the plausibility of this and other theses (the list could be continued at length) on Mamluk history can more easily be examined. There is certainly no scarcity of questions to be directed to the voluminous and multifarious body of historical relics and documents, as well as to the historiography preserved from Mamluk times. It is an indication of the maturity of the field that one now even begins to study the attitudes of modern times vis-à-vis the Mamluks as important agents of Egyptian and Islamic history, the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the Mamluks, that is, as one can say in German. Similar studies have already been written, with impressive results, about the Pharohs (Maria Haarmann), Umayyads (Werner Ende) and Seljuqs (Martin Stohmaier) as actors on the scenes of twentieth century Egyptian, Arab and Turkish nationalism. A similar yield may be expected from an ongoing study of modern popular and literary writings about the Mamluks (Abir Buschnak). What is more weighty in our collective memory - and this takes us back to the beginnings of this paper - Mamluk glory or Mamluk tyranny?

Notes

- 1 . Ranke's position vis-a-vis the history of the Ottomans is clearly elaborated by Baber Johansen, "Politics and Scholarship: the Development of Islamic Studies in the Federal Republic of Germany", in: Tareq Y. Ismael, ed., **Middle East Studies. International Perspectives on the State of the Art**, New York 1988, pp. 71-130, here p. 82. Johansen's insights are based on the work of Ernst Schulin, **Die weltgeschichtliche Erfassung des Orients bei Hegel und Ranke**, Göttingen 1958.
- 2 . We owe Sadiq al-'Azm the notion of "orientalism in reverse": see his **al-Hstishrāq wa'l-istishrāq ma'kusān**, Beirut 1985. Further literature along those lines is quoted in Ulrich Haarmann, "Der Islam im ersten Jahrzehnt seines fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts", in: Martin Forstner, Ed.: **Festgabe für Hans-Rudolf Singer. Zum 65. Geburtstag am 6. April 1990 überreicht von seinen freunden und Kollegen**, Frankfurt 1991, pp. 589-605, here p. 592 and note 2.
- 3 . See my article "Ideology and history, identity and alterity: The Arab image of the Turk from the 'Abbasids to Modern Egypt", **International Journal of Middle East Studies** 20 (1988), pp. 175-96.
- 4 . **Artisans et commerçants au Caire au 18ème siècle**, 2 vols., Damascus 1973-4.
- 5 . Also this work contains a copious and most carefully compiled bibliography of Mamluk primary and secondary literature.

- 6 . See now however Khaled Ahmad Alhamzeh, **Late Mamluk Patronage: Qansuh al-Ghuri's Waqf and his Foundations in Cairo**, Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio State University, 1993.
- 7 . Muhammad Ahmad Duhmīn, **Mu'jam al-alfaz al-tārikhiyya fi l'asr al-mamlukī**, Beirut 1410.1990.
- 8 . Muhammad Muhammad Amin and Laylā A. Ibrahim, **Architectural Terms in Mamluk Documents** (648-923 H./1250-1517), Cairo: AUC Press 1990.
- 9 . Patricia Crone and Micheal Cook, **Hagarism: the Making of the Islamic World**, Cambridge 1977, p. 114.
- 10 . Cf. Haarmann, **Quellenstudien**, p. 55.
- 11 . Cf. Haarmann, "**Die Leiden des Qa5** di Ibn as-Sā'ig. Ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte der Stadt damaskus im.
- 12 . We have, e.g. Professor Tsugitaka Sato's profound study on **State and Society in Medieval Islam. studies on the Iqṭa' System in Arabian Society**, Tokyo 1986, with due emphasis on the Mamluk period and incidentally an excellent bibliography (pp. 52-81). Part two, chapter two deals with the iqṭ' system under Sultan Baybars chapter three with the different **rawks** under Lajin and al-Nasir Muḥammad. In part three, chapter three, al-Maqrizi's **Ighātha** is discussed, including the modern debate about the purpose of this book.
- 13 . Jahrhundert", in: Hans Robert Roemer and Albrecht Noth, eds., **Studien zur geschichte und Kultur des vorderen Orients. Festschrift für Bertold Spuler zum siebzigsten geburtstag**, Leiden 1981, pp. 108-22, here p. 111.

* * *