INTRODUCTION

> I could not say much of the Mamalucs, of whom I knew no auther [*sic*] that has written in particular: neither did they deserve that any should. For they were a base sort of people, a Colluvies of slaves, the scum of all the East, who, having treacherously destroyed the Jobidae, their Masters, reigned in their stead; and bating that they finished the expulsion of the Western Christians out of the East (where they barbarously destroyed Tripoli and Antioch, and several other Cities) they scarce did anything worthy to be recorded in History.[1]

Ever since the extreme negativism of this early eighteenth-century approach to the Syro-Egyptian Mamluk regime (ca. 1260–1516/17 CE),[2] Mamluk studies have progressed steadily, and important steps have been taken to start acknowledging the intrinsic value of this regime's long and crucial contribution to Middle Eastern history.[3] Nevertheless, the pace of scholarship in general, and Mamluk scholarship in particular, is slow, and several periods in Mamluk history remain unexplored, especially from the perspective of their social and political development. This is particularly true for the years between the death of the Mamluk regime's most successful sultan al-Malik al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (r. 1293–1294; 1299–1309; 1310–1341) in June 1341 and the accession to the throne of the amir Barqūq (d. 1399) towards the end of November 1382.

This still rather obscure period of forty years has gained a reputation primarily as an episode of social, economic and political chaos and upheaval, in which the twelve scions that succeeded al-Nāṣir Muḥammad to the throne never managed to equal the unparalleled welfare and *grandeur* his reign came to stand for. On the contrary, abundant accounts

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[1] Anonymous, *The Life of Reverend Humphrey Prideaux, D.D., Dean of Norwich*, London 1748, p. 268 (from P.M. Holt, "The Position and Power of the Mamluk Sultan", *BSOAS* 38/2 (1975), p. 237).

[2] Dates in this study will be Common Era only.

[3] This is best epitomised by the fact that, since 1997, the field of Mamluk studies now even has its own bi-annual journal, *Mamlūk Studies Review*, one of the several ongoing Mamluk projects by the University of Chicago Middle East Documentation Centre, that were initiated by Bruce Craig and played a key role in the recent blossoming of the field.

of failed harvests, famines, pestilence and plague on the one hand, and of seemingly endless conflicts in the cities and in the countryside on the other, were considered a significant indication of the dire straits the regime and especially its subjects were in. As a result, several economic and socio-political phenomena that left their marks on the second half of Mamluk history are claimed—and often undoubtedly correctly so—to have their origins somewhere during these forty years. Scholarship, however, has remarkably enough never focused on this crucial episode. This was largely due to the fact that, for a long time, source material from unstable and confusing times such as these was not deemed useful for any historiographical narrative. Already in 1896, William Muir doomed the study of the period for many decades, when he—as did many after him—concluded that, indeed, this was nothing but an unattractive era of transition that lacked any order worthy of a historian's attention:

> 1341–1382 AD. For the next forty years the Sultanate was held by the house of Nâsir; in the first score by eight of his sons successively, and in the second by his grandsons; from first to last a miserable tale. They rose and fell at the will of the Mameluke leaders of the day, some mere children; the younger, indeed, the better, for so soon as the puppet Prince began to show a will of his own he was summarily deposed, or he was made away with, few of such as reached maturity dying a natural death. The Emirs rose and fell: each had his short day of power; then deposed and plundered, exiled or strangled, others succeeded but to share their fate. There were short intervals of able rule; but for the most part, murders, torture, execution, crime, and rebellion were throughout the period rife. The tale is sad and unattractive, and will be disposed of as briefly as the history admits of.[4]

It was only in 1980, therefore, in an unpublished PhD-dissertation, that a detailed chronological narrative of the period was attempted. But even its author, Werner Krebs, felt obliged to admit that his subject was of minor importance only and had so far been justly neglected.[5]

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[4] W. Muir, *The Mameluke or Slave Dynasty of Egypt. A History of Egypt from the Fall of the Ayyubite Dynasties to the Conquest by the Osmanlis. AD 1260–1517*, London 1896 (repr. Amsterdam 1968), pp. 86–103 (quote from p. 86). For similar approaches, see e.g. S. Lane-Pool, *A History of Egypt in the Middle Ages*, London 1901 (1914), pp. 317–322; G. Wiet, *L'Égypte arabe. De la conquête arabe à la conquête ottomane. 642–1517 de l'ère chrétienne*, in G. Hanotaux (ed.), *Histoire de la Nation Égyptienne*, Tome IV, Paris 1937, pp. 499–510; M.J. Surūr, *Dawlat Banī Qalāwūn fī Miṣr. Al-Ḥāla al-Siyāsīya wa al-Iqtiṣādīya fī ʿahdihā bi-wajh khāṣṣ*, Cairo 1947, pp. 53–66.

[5] W. Krebs, *Innen- und Außenpolitik Ägyptens. 741–784/1341–1382*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Hamburg 1980. See p. 1: "Wir bekennen: Die Jahre des

It actually took another few years before the publication of more concise and slightly more positive reconstructions of the period's history, as smaller chronological units, though, incorporated within the larger surveys of pre-modern Middle Eastern history, by Peter Holt and Robert Irwin respectively.[6] Yet again, Irwin felt obliged to admit that a proper reconstruction of the period's socio-political history in particular still remained confusing and troublesome:

> Study of this confused epoch is complicated by the difficulty in determining who really exercised the power in the Sultanate. Not all of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad's descendants were degenerates or minors—putty in the hands of powerful emirs—but plainly in cases where that was so, it would be necessary to identify the background and intentions of emirs and, since abrupt switches in policy resulted from the frequent coups and murders at the top, it is difficult to find a narrative thread that will make sense of it all.[7]

Individual aspects of the period's socio-political history fared somewhat better in attracting scholarly attention. Ḥayā Nāṣir al-Ḥājjī made detailed reconstructions of the lives of two major characters from the period's political scene, the amir Qawṣūn (d. 1341) and the sultan al-Ashraf Shaʿbān (d. 1377); David Ayalon, Jean-Claude Garcin, Amalia Levanoni, Peter Holt and Ulrich Haarmann focused on specific areas of social and political activity, mostly, however, in a larger conceptual or historical framework (eunuchs, the region of Upper Egypt, mamluks, the sultanate, and mamluks' scions respectively); William Brinner identified the nominal character of the caliph's and sultan's reigns between the years 1363 and 1412; and, most recently, Amalia Levanoni, again,

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Propheten 741 bis 784 zählen nicht zu den bemerkenswertesten Perioden des Vorderen Orients, haben auch, innerhalb des reichlichen Vierteljahrtausends mamlukischer Herrschaft [. . .] nur eine geringe Bedeutung [. . .] nicht zu Unrecht wurde sie von der islamkundlichen Forschung [. . .] ausgespart und von der Mamlukenforschung der letzten Jahrzehnte recht vernachlässigt".

[6] P.M. Holt, *The Age of the Crusades. The Near East from the Eleventh Century to 1517*, (A History of the Near East), London-New York 1986, pp. 121–128; R. Irwin, *The Middle East in the Middle Ages: The Early Mamluk Sultanate 1250–1382*, London-Sydney 1986, pp. 125–151.

[7] Irwin, *The Middle East*, p. 125. Similar feelings prevailed in Holt, "Mamluks", *EI*[2], VI, p. 323: 'It would be otiose in this article to recount in detail the political history of the later Kalawunids.' and in later, equally more general, surveys of Mamluk or pre-modern Middle Eastern history (e.g. U. Haarmann, 'Der arabischen Osten im späten Mittelalter 1250–1517", in U. Haarmann (ed.), *Geschichte der arabischen Welt*, München 1987, pp. 243–244; Linda S. Northrup, "The Bahri Mamluk Sultanate, 1250–1390", in Carl F. Petry (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Volume 1, Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, Cambridge 1998, pp. 253, 287–288).

questioned the source material's ethnocentric judgement of the 1382 transition to the reign of Barqūq.[8]

Though all of undeniably crucial importance and often of outstanding scholarship, finding 'a narrative thread that will make sense of it all', as Irwin put it, has remained problematic until today. This is largely due to the fact that narrative historiography is not the most suitable approach to generate historical insight into the multitude of socio-political events and individuals that coloured the period. When the available source material provides information on much more than a thousand individuals that were all more or less politically involved, and on seventy-four socio-political conflicts in just four decades, it becomes evident that a mere narrative listing of facts and figures can only result in a situation in which one can no longer see the forest for the trees, and chaos appears prevalent.[9] So far, unfortunately, the results of this deficient approach have only been rather extreme

[8] See Ḥ. Nāṣir al-Ḥājjī, "al-Aḥwāl al-Dākhilīya fī salṭanat al-Ashraf Shaʿbān b. Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn, 764–778 h./1362–1376 m.", *ʿĀlam al-Fikr* 3/3 (1983), pp. 761–822; Ḥ. Nāṣir al-Ḥājjī, "al-Amīr Qawṣūn: ṣūra ḥayya li-niẓām al-ḥukm fī salṭanat al-mamālīk", *al-majalla al-ʿarabīya li-l-ʿulūm al-insānīya* 8/32 (1988), pp. 6–55; D. Ayalon, "The Eunuchs in the Mamluk Sultanate", *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, Jerusalem 1977, pp. 267–295 (repr. in D. Ayalon, *The Mamluk Military Society*, London 1979, III), esp. pp. 282–294; J.-Cl. Garcin, *Un centre musulman de la haute Égypte médiévale: Qūs*, Cairo 1976; A. Levanoni, *A Turning Point in Mamluk History: The third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad ibn Qalawun (1310–1341)*, (*Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts* 10), Leiden 1995, pp. 81–132; A. Levanoni, "Rank-and-file Mamluks versus amirs: new norms in the Mamluk military institution", in Th. Philipp & U. Haarmann (eds.), *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, Cambridge 1998, pp. 17–31; Levanoni, "The Mamluk Conception of the Sultanate", pp. 381–384; A. Levanoni, "al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ", *EI*², VIII, pp. 986–987; A. Levanoni, "al-Maqrīzī's Account of the Transition from Turkish to Circassian Mamluk Sultanate: History in the Service of Faith", in H. Kennedy (ed.), *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt (c. 950–1800)*, (*The Medieval Mediterranean. Peoples, Economies and Cultures, 400–1453* 31), Leiden 2001, pp. 93–105; P.M. Holt, "al-Nāṣir", *EI*², VII, pp. 992–993; P.M. Holt, "Shaʿbān", *EI*², IX, pp. 154–155; U. Haarmann, "The Sons of Mamluks as Fief-Holders in Late Medieval Egypt", in Tarif Khalidi (ed.), *Land Tenure and Social Transformation in the Middle East*, Beirut 1984, pp. 141–168; U. Haarmann, "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage: Mamluks and their Sons in the Intellectual Life of Fourteenth Century Egypt and Syria", *JSS* 33 (1988), pp. 81–114; U. Haarmann, "Joseph's Law—the careers and activities of mamluk descendants before the Ottoman conquest of Egypt", in Th. Philipp & U. Haarmann (eds.), *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, Cambridge 1998, pp. 55–84; W.M. Brinner, "The Struggle for Power in the Mamluk State: Some Reflections on the Transition from Bahri to Burji Rule", *Proceedings of the 26th International Congress of Orientalists, New Delhi, 4–10 January 1964*, New Delhi 1970, pp. 231–234. Additionally, there is J. Wansbrough, "Ḥasan", *EI*², III, p. 239.

[9] For a list of those conflicts, see Appendix 3. In all, information was retrieved on one thousand four hundred and thirty sultans, amirs and mamluks who all played, at the very least, an institutional socio-political role between the years 1341 and 1382.

generalisations, like the following quite remarkable summary of the period's political history by the pioneer of Mamluk studies, David Ayalon:

> Coalitions and combinations of forces [. . .] were generally of a most temporary nature, and the stability of each sultan's rule was to a large extent dependent on his ability to take full advantage of the rivalry among the various units. A detailed presentation of the vast material supplied on this topic by Mamluk sources is of no special interest [. . .].[10]

No period in history deserves such a blanket rejection of its own historical dynamism. In fact, Stephen Humphreys, in a recent review article on Mamluk politics, made a case for giving priority to the study of this period's political dynamics in particular.[11]

Therefore, the study presented here aims to heed this call and to contribute to the filling of a vacuum in academic research that has existed for far too long. To this end, it proposes to search for the dynamics of action and reaction that shaped the period's politics and moulded their social background, and that will enable, eventually, a reconstruction of its political development that will claim to make more 'sense of it all'.

Ultimately, it may even be postulated that, rather than being of no special interest, this episode and the information it reveals on the Mamluk political process in general should be considered of more interest than any other episode in Mamluk history. This is due to the fact that, for the majority of years between 1341 and 1382, the dynamics of that process were not 'cloaked' under any institutional disguise and therefore were more significant and revealing than ever.

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[10] See D. Ayalon, "Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army", *BSOAS* 15 (1953), p. 218. For a similar critique on Ayalon's judgement, see W.W. Clifford, "State Formation and the Structure of Politics in Mamluk Syro-Egypt, 648–741 AH/1250–1340 CE", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago 1995, p. 17. For similar, though less extreme generalisations on the timeframe, see I.M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1967, pp. 20–21; R. Chapoutot-Remadi, "Liens et relations aux sein de l'élite mamluke sous les premiers sultans Bahrides, 648/1250–741/1340", unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Université de Provence. Aix-Marseille I 1993, pp. 67, 82; Levanoni, *Turning Point*, pp. 79, 116.

[11] See R.S. Humphreys, "The Politics of the Mamluk Sultanate: A Review Essay", *MSR* 9/1 (2005), p. 223. For a similar call, see also Tsugitaka Sato's statement, concluding his book on the *iqṭāʿ* system, that "the fate of both Egyptian and Syrian society after the reign of Sultan al-Nāṣir needs further, and more careful study from a comprehensive view based on the contemporary sources" (Tsugitaka Sato, *State and Rural Society in medieval Islam. Sultans, muqtaʿs and fallahun*, (*Islamic History and Civilization. Studies and Texts* 17), Leiden-New York-Koln 1997, p. 239).

This study will maintain that in the political process—as especially Ira Lapidus and Michael Chamberlain have previously argued in more general terms—Mamluk institutions, including the sultanate, came second only to the individuals that populated them, and to the social and political interaction they generated among themselves in particular.[12] This is why detailed prosopographical analysis of this socio-political interaction in the years between 1341 and 1382 lies at the basis of this study.[13] The results of that analysis, enabling the first solid interpretation of the period's political culture and development, are presented here via a reconstruction of that interaction from three perspectives: institutions, individuals, and conflicts.

In keeping with a long tradition of Middle Eastern military government, mamluks gained their momentum of political power and dominance on the thirteenth-century battlefields of Egypt and Syria, a military momentum that would remain an essential characteristic of the regime they initiated. Being rooted in the military corps of the last Ayyubid sultan, al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb, this regime continued to derive its authority and legitimacy primarily from its coercive force. However, at the same time, the generally defensive nature of that momentum eventually—as will be detailed below—turned the men of that regime from a military force, who were equally involved in politics and government, into a body politic, whose background and authority continued to be militarily defined, but whose concerns were social and political rather than military. In particular, the long first half of the fourteenth century and the internal and external status quo that pertained to most of the third reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn (r. 1293–1294; 1299–1309; 1310–1341) should be deemed largely responsible for this 'politicisation'—or perhaps rather 'demilitarisation'—of the Mamluk military regime.[14] As a result, despite the fact that

[12] See I.M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1967; Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350*, (*Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization*), Cambridge 1994; and additionally also Clifford, "State Formation". The insights offered by these three studies in particular have been of fundamental importance for the present work. For a call to implement such 'middle range theories of social interaction', see W.W. Clifford, "*Ubi Sumus*? Mamluk History and Social Theory", *MSR* 1 (1997), pp. 45–46.

[13] A reduced sample of the results of this prosopographical research may be found in Appendix 2, where the period's main political characters are listed. Recently, Stephen Humphreys equally made a call for more prosopographical research like this (Humphreys, "The Politics of the Mamluk Sultanate", p. 228).

[14] In this context, Northrup, for instance, notices a parallel 'de-mamlukization' (Northrup, "The Bahri Mamluk sultanate", p. 262).

the thirteenth-century military institutional framework, from which this body politic continued to stem, remained an essential element in the nature of the political process, it came to be superseded by socio-political *modi operandi* that went far beyond the military.

As noted above, this growing divergence between the institutional framework and socio-political practice is one of the main parameters of this study. Especially in the period immediately after Muḥammad's reign, this split became a major characteristic of the socio-political process, occasionally even defined as "the breakdown of the established political system".[15] At the same time, despite this divergence, it will equally be maintained that both remained two sides of the same coin. While institutions came second to practice only, neither can be properly analysed without the other, for only together did they engender interaction, power, and political development.

Therefore, this study's first chapter will focus on that subordinate, yet indispensable institutional framework of Mamluk politics and on the part it still played in Mamluk society between 1341 and 1382. Consisting of mostly military institutions whose authority and prerogatives were largely derived from the sultanate and its unremitting caliphal legitimisation, the exercise of political power as described in this chapter will be conveniently captured under the heading of 'Legitimate Power'.

The use of this terminology actually helps to picture both the association with and the distinction from this study's second chapter, on the period's socio-political practice, similarly captured under such a heading: 'Effective Power', as it were Legitimate Power's superior *alter ego*.[16] This chapter will focus on individuals and the nature of their socio-political relationships. It will analyse how the institutional framework was used to enhance and create power via the set-up of comprehensive households and supplementary networks of supporters, and it will establish what variants of this Effective Power there were in the period between 1341 and 1382.[17]

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[15] Humphreys, "The Politics of the Mamluk Sultanate", p. 223.

[16] For the use of the term 'Effective Power' in this context, see also Northrup, "The Bahri Mamluk sultanate", p. 287. It will be used to represent a social type of power, for 'the ability to get things done' irrespective of any type of institutions and as essentially generated in the interaction between individuals.

[17] For, yet again, Stephen Humphreys' recent call for such a reconstruction of Mamluk households, see Humphreys, "The Politics of the Mamluk Sultanate", p. 227.

And finally, the third chapter will continue in this vein and analyse how these households and networks competed for power during those four decades. It will, therefore, focus on the motives and strategies behind the period's seventy-four socio-political conflicts and situate them again within the balancing processes of Effective Power.[18] Hence, it will become possible to use insights thus gained to conclude with a reconstruction of the period's political history, demonstrating how an alternative predominant order of Effective Power relapsed repeatedly into the period's five moments of socio-political chaos, a cycle only the amir Barqūq managed to break in 1382.

The sources

There are, of course, some drawbacks and limits inherent in this study's approach to the political history of the period between 1341 and 1382 that need to be acknowledged and taken into consideration.

Though individuals, groups, and their socio-political behaviour are this study's subject, the deeper emotional and behavioural grounds for actions performed and decisions taken mostly cannot and will not be incorporated in the analysis. As a work of history, and an 'exploratory essay',[19] far more emphasis will be put on the how and what of socio-political processes than on their why, and if this has resulted in an occasional overemphasis on the less emotional, material character of these processes, then this can only be acknowledged.

An important reason for such an emphasis, is, of course, the nature of the source material that allows for such insights to be gained. Since the majority of them are chronicles, and they all provide narratives, which are of an unremittingly personal character, one generally needs to be wary of putting too much confidence in the factual accuracy of their accounts.[20] And when an analysis of political processes and,

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[18] As mentioned above, these seventy-four conflicts and their main characteristics are listed in Appendix 3.

[19] For the term 'exploratory essay', see Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice*, p. 3.

[20] See e.g. N.O. Rabbat, "Representing the Mamluks in Mamluk Historical Writing", in Kennedy (ed.), *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt*, pp. 59–75; U. Haarmann, "al-Maqrīzī, the master, and Abū Ḥāmid al-Qudsī, the disciple—whose historical writing can claim more topicality and modernity?", in Kennedy (ed.), *The Historiography of Islamic Egypt*, p. 149; A.F. Broadbridge, "Academic Rivalry and the Patronage System in Fifteenth-Century Egypt: al-'Aynī, al-Maqrīzī, and Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī",

very often covert, behaviour has to be based on such material, one needs to be even more careful. As suggestive as the abundance of their illustrations of those processes may be, they can never be considered exhaustive, nor, strictly speaking, representative of an obscure political process that remains largely shrouded in the clouds of premodern history. At the same time, however, the sources' involvement also means that whatever their meddling with the stories they narrate, in order to present them convincingly, they always had to embed them within those social and political processes that were familiar to themselves, their audience, and the social environment this study hopes to revive. Whatever those stories' historical accuracy, therefore, they instinctively or subconsciously reflected the processes this study is actually looking for. Moreover, as will be detailed below, the coherent, plagiaristic nature of Mamluk historiography even suggests that such involvement translated rather into omitting certain facts than in totally transforming or making up historical accounts.[21] It may therefore be safely assumed that the period's source material allows not just for—though inherently conjectural—quite convincing interpretations, but also for the reconstruction of a general line of political developments that is derived from information on events and main characters that were ubiquitous in the period's source material and therefore as close as one can get to Mamluk historical reality.[22]

One drawback which follows from this, and which seriously affected this study and the rendering of its analysis in this book, is the overwhelming wealth of material which is available and which so far largely prohibited any narrative attempt to present a coherent picture of the period's history. This material spans many years, it reflects an eventful and unstable history, and it is very diverse in nature, in particular with respect to the processes of socio-political conduct that

MSR 3 (1999), pp. 85–107; A.F. Broadbridge, "Royal Authority, Justice, and Order in Society: The Influence of Ibn Khaldūn on the Writings of al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Taghrī Birdī", *MSR* 7/2 (2003), pp. 231–245; R. Irwin, "al-Maqrīzī and Ibn Khaldūn, Historians of the Unseen", *MSR* 7/2 (2003), pp. 217–230.

[21] See e.g. D.P. Little, *An Introduction to Mamluk Historiography*, Wiesbaden 1970.

[22] Because of this repetitive character of Mamluk narrative historiography, the following approach has been adopted to condense the critical apparatus: if possible, only a reference's presumably original or nearly original source or sources are mentioned, in chronological order; if more source material exists, this is simply indicated by the adding of 'e.g.', for example. For a similar approach, see R. Amitai-Preiss, *Mongols and Mamluks. The Mamluk-Ilkhanid war, 1260–1281*, (*Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilisation*), Cambridge 1995, p. 6.

defined that fragmented history. It has, therefore, been considered inescapable to represent this wealth and variety through the reproduction of an often wide range of examples that may, occasionally, interfere with, or even interrupt the general flow of the argument. This has been deemed unfortunate, but at the same time equally necessary to render the analysis as comprehensive as possible and to give full credit to the riches of the period's political history.

The abundant narrative historiographical material that, despite some lack of historical accuracy, remains extremely illustrative and informative of the Mamluk political processes and developments in the period between 1341 and 1382, was transmitted chiefly in two distinct formats: biographical dictionaries and chronicles.[23] Of major importance for this study in the first category were two dictionaries written by the Syrian contemporary scholar and administrator Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī (1297–1363): the multi-volume comprehensive continuation of a predecessor's work, the *Kitāb al-Wāfī bi-al-Wafayāt*, and the condensed and more focused *Aʿyān al-ʿAṣr wa Aʿwān al-Naṣr*. Both contain an unmatched wealth of information on the individuals al-Ṣafadī often had received direct information on or was personally involved with, until shortly before his death in 1363. His *Sitz-im-Leben* as a mamluk's son, as an important Syrian administrator and as an acquaintance to many a Syrian political character turned him into a privileged and involved witness, and a very useful source for this study.[24] On the basis of the *Aʿyān*, but with the addition of a lot of new information for the period after 1363, the Egyptian scholar Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (1372–1448) wrote his own well-known dictionary, *al-Durar al-Kāmina fī Aʿyān al-miʾa al-thāmina*.[25] And similarly, the later

[23] Only this study's main sources and their coherence will be presented here; for their full bibliographic details, and a complete list of the primary sources used, see the Bibliography.

[24] See e.g. D.P. Little, "al-Ṣafadī as Biographer of his Contemporaries", in D.P. Little (ed.), *Essays on Islamic Civilization: presented to Niyazi Berkes*, Leiden 1976, pp. 190–211 (repr. in D.P. Little, *History and Historiography of the Mamluks*, London 1986, I); F. Rosenthal, "al-Ṣafadī", *EI*², VIII, pp. 759–760; D.P. Little, "Historiography of the Ayyubid and Mamluk epochs", in C.F. Petry (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Volume 1, Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, Cambridge 1998, pp. 431–432.

[25] See e.g. F. Krenkow, "The Hidden Pearls. Concerning the Notables of the Eighth Islamic Century", *Islamic Culture* 2 (1928), pp. 527–539; A.A. Rahman, "The life and works of Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani", *Islamic Culture* 45 (1971), pp. 203–212, 275–293; 46 (1972), pp. 75–81, 171–178, 265–272, 353–362; 47 (1973), pp. 57–74, 159–174, 255–273; F. Rosenthal, "Ibn Ḥadjar al-ʿAsḳalānī", *EI*², III, pp. 776–778.

historian Ibn Taghrī Birdī (1411–1469) wrote his own valuable continuation of al-Ṣafadī's work, *al-Manhal al-Ṣāfī wa al-Mustawfī baʿda l-Wāfī*, and often exceptionally facilitated the historian's job by referring to the sources he had copied from.[26]

As mentioned above, copying from predecessors' accounts, generally without acknowledgements, is also what made up considerable parts of many contemporary or near-contemporary chronicles. And actually, from that perspective, quite insightful observations can be made on the narrative traditions that determined the historiography of the period between 1341 and 1382, as it may be found in Mamluk chronicles written roughly in the century after 1341.

Generally, a major geographical distinction can be discerned between chronicles compiled in Syria and those written down in Egypt.[27] The Syrian side of this specific period's historiographical tradition is mainly represented by a number of Damascene chronicles, which are all continuations of the works of the Damascene scholar al-Dhahabī (d. 1347). Especially the works of Muḥammad Ibn Shākir al-Kutubī (d. 1362), the *ʿUyūn al-Tawārīkh*, and of his contemporary Ibn Kathīr (c. 1300–1373), the *al-Bidāya wa al-Nihāya*, are of interest for the local and more general social and political insights they offer, up to the year 1359 and 1366 respectively. Although each of the latter two works occasionally contains reports and stories that are not to be found in the other, they do offer many identical accounts of the events of these years, often almost matching word for word and indicative of their deep interdependence.[28]

The Egyptian 'school' on the other hand—wealthier in information for this study since the centre of political gravity largely remained in Egypt—clearly consisted of more than only one historiographical tradition, even within some of the individual chronicles that covered it. Until the reports of the year 1354, it is very likely that the origin of many narratives can be traced back to one largely lost contemporary chronicle, the *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir* by the

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[26] See e.g. A. Darraj, "La vie d'Abu l-Mahasin Ibn Tagri Birdi et son oeuvre", *AI* 11 (1972), pp. 163–181; G. Wiet, *Les Biographies du Manhal Safi*, (*Mélanges de l'Institut d'Égypte* 19), Cairo 1932; W. Popper, "Abū al-Maḥāsin", *EI*², I, p. 138.

[27] See L. Guo, "Mamluk Historiographical Studies: The State of the Art", *MSR* 1 (1997), pp. 29–32.

[28] See *GAL*, II, pp. 46–48; SII, pp. 45–47; F. Rosenthal, "al-Kutubī", *EI*², V, pp. 570–571; H. Laoust, "Ibn Kathīr Historien", *Arabica* 2 (1955), pp. 87–103; H. Laoust, "Ibn Kathīr", *EI*², III, pp. 817–818.

well-connected military man and historian al-Yūsufī (1297–1358).[29] Donald Little has demonstrated how this definitely was the case for reports by others—especially the contemporary al-Shujāʿī's *Tārīkh* as well as the early fifteenth-century annalistic chronicles by al-Maqrīzī (1364–1442) and by al-ʿAynī (1361–1451), the *Sulūk* and the *ʿIqd al-Jumān*—on the end of the reign of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, claiming at the same time quite convincingly that, even despite today's loss of al-Yūsufī's text beyond the report on the year 1338, this dependence could safely be extended until the accounts of the year 1345.[30] But, as this year was only chosen since it was, by chance, the last to have been preserved from al-Shujāʿī's history, and since those chronicles, in particular the most elaborate and detailed among them, al-Maqrīzī's *Sulūk*, show no significant change from the pre-1345 period in the nature and presentation of its historical material, it seems safe to assume that such interdependence with—if not dependence on—al-Yūsufī's *Nuzha* continued until the last year reported in it, namely 1354.[31]

Beyond 1354, however, such interdependence becomes less straightforward to determine. Only from the reports on the year 1363 onwards do some parallels re-appear, especially when remarkably detailed lists of promotions and appointments start to pop up in the narratives of al-Maqrīzī and al-ʿAynī, as well as in those of the contemporary author Ibn Duqmāq (ca. 1350–1407)—in his *Jawhar al-Thamīn* and, as from the year 1367, similarly in his *Nuzhat al-Anām*[32]—

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[29] On this author, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Durar*, IV, p. 381: '[. . .] he compiled a large history in about fifteen volumes, which he called *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir*, beginning with the regime of al-Manṣūr [Qalāwūn] and coming to an end in the year 1354 [. . .]'. For a partial reconstruction of this very detailed history, for the years between 1333 and 1338, see al-Yūsufī, *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir*, A. Hutayt (ed.), Beirut 1986. See also Little, "Historiography of the Ayyubid and Mamluk Epochs", pp. 426–427.

[30] Little, "Four Mamluk Chronicles", pp. 252–268. See also Little, "Historiography of the Ayyubid and Mamluk Epochs", p. 427.

[31] In this study, the most striking parallels between texts are occasionally referred to in the footnote apparatus by inserting 'identical in . . .' for a word for word match in two sources, or 'similiar in . . .' for less literal parallels.

[32] The manuscript of the *Nuzhat al-Anām* used for this study was the most complete one preserved (Bodleian Ms. Marshall 36); this hitherto unknown manuscript contains the report of the years 1367 until 1378 and was copied according to the colophon in 1386; until now, it was only catalogued as the untitled work of an obscure 'al-Bayrūtī'; the fact that it was the second extant copy of the *Nuzha* was revealed after close examination and comparison with the only other extant manuscript, dated 1382 (Gotha Ms. Orient A 1572) (an alleged third manuscript, Ms. Cairo Dār al-Kutub 1740 *tārīkh*, turned out to be missing from the Cairo Dār al-Kutub).

and of Ibn Ḥajar, after 1372, the first year to be recorded in his chronicle, the *Inbā' al-Ghumr*. As with the earlier tradition, this later Egyptian narrative strand would also certainly need further specialised research. For the time being, however, the road such research is very likely to take is indicated by some explicit remarks to that extent. In his own chronicle, the Egyptian historian Ibn Bahādur al-Mu'minī (d. 1473) claims that al-'Aynī, in his *'Iqd al-Jumān*, mentions his extensive borrowing from a great number of histories, among which "the history of al-Yūsufī [. . .], [. . .] of Ṣārim al-Dīn Ibrāhīm b. Duqmāq and [. . .] of the judge Nāṣir al-Dīn Ibn al-Furāt [. . .]."[33] Secondly, Ibn Ḥajar, in the introduction to his chronicle that includes the period between 1372 and 1382, also refers very explicitly to his methodology and sources:

> Most of what is mentioned in [my chronicle], have I either seen with my own eyes, taken over from [people] I consulted, or found in the writings of those I trust among my predecessors and peers, like the great history of the *shaykh* Nāṣir al-Dīn Ibn al-Furāt, whom I have studied a lot of Hadith with, and like [the work] of Ṣārim al-Dīn Ibn Duqmāq, whom I met a lot. Most of what I transmit is from his writings and from the writings of Ibn al-Furāt via [Ibn Duqmāq's], [as well as from the works of] [. . .] Ibn Ḥijjī, [. . .] al-Maqrīzī, [. . .] and others.[34]

All the preceding clearly hints at the existence of more than one major historiographical tradition for the period between 1341 and 1382: at least one in Syria, and two subsequent ones in Egypt.[35] And within the latter, the history of al-Yūsufī on the one hand, and allegedly also those of Ibn Duqmāq and, especially, of Ibn al-Furāt (1334–1405) on the other were of vital importance. It is therefore extremely unfortunate that the parts of Ibn al-Furāt's *Tārīkh al-Duwal wa l-Mulūk*

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[33] See Ibn Bahādur al-Mu'minī, *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Naṣr fī Tārīkh Mulūk Maṣr*, MS. Cairo Dār al-Kutub 4977 *tārīkh*, fol. 1.

[34] Ibn Ḥajar, *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, I, pp. 2–3.

[35] An outsider among these traditions actually was Ibn Khaldūn (1332–1406), who stayed in Egypt after 1382 and who had close contacts among the socio-political elite, an element which allegedly fed greatly into the history of the era he recorded in volume five of his *Kitāb al-'Ibar* and which, despite his own *Sitz-im-Leben* that undoubtedly needs to be taken into consideration, still remains very similar in contextual character to and as insightful as the narratives of the Egyptian historiographical traditions of the 1370s and 80s. These historical accounts of his so far do not seem to have received even part of the attention his Muqaddima has been given. On Ibn Khaldūn's activities in Egypt, see W.J. Fischel, *Ibn Khaldūn in Egypt: his public functions and his historical research, 1382–1406: a study in Islamic historiography*, Berkeley 1967.

that deal with the period between 1341 and 1382 are not known to have been preserved.[36]

Of greater importance for this study than the exact nature of this interdependence, though, remains the fact that the prevalence of such traditions resulted in an occasionally even complementary uniformity in the period's source material, deeply rooted in the society it evoked. In their own historical process, these contemporary traditions, and especially the way their constituents reconfirm, contradict and complement each other, gave shape to a near-contemporary critical mass of material that enables us to come very close to the historical processes and realities they claim to be narrating.

[36] Zie G. Flügel, *Die Arabischen, Persischen und Türkischen Handschriften der Kaiserlich-Königlichen Hofbibliothek zu Wien*, vol. II, Wien 1865, p. 49; C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*, 2 vols. & 3 suppls., Leiden 1943–1949 & 1937–1942, vol. II, pp. 61–62; SII, p. 49; *Tārīkh Ibn al-Furāt*, vols. IV–V, H.M. al-Shammaʿ (ed.), Basra 1967; vols. VII–IX, Q. Zurayq, N. ʿIzz al-Din (eds.), Beirut 1936–1942.