

The Ottomans and the Mamlūks through the Eyes of Arab Travelers (in 16th–17th Centuries)

Traveling across boundaries was not unfamiliar to inhabitants of either side of the lines that separated Mamlūk Bilād al-Shām from Anatolia.¹ At the White Bridge (Ak-Köprü),² they crossed the Ceyhan/Pyramos River, which served as the border of the Mamlūk Sultanate (*jarākisa*; Çerkezler).³ Yet, prior to the Ottoman conquest the traffic over the Ceyhan River was mainly southwards to the religious and cultural centers of the pre-modern Abode of Islam. Muslims from Anatolia (al-Rūm) traversed Bilād al-Shām on their way to fulfill the duty of the *ḥajj*, or stayed in al-Shām visiting Jerusalem and other holy shrines.⁴ The following report illuminates this reality:

When Bahā' al-Dīn Walad (Bahā-e Valad) died [quitted the ephemeral world (*'ālam fānī*) to the realm of permanence (*bāqī*)], two years later Mawlānā [Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī, d. 1272] set out for Syria (*bi-jānib shām*) to pursue the external sciences (*'ulūm zāhir*) and to raise his perfection to the ultimate degree. It is said that this was his first journey.

1 I.e. Asia Minor north to Little Armenia, that was seized from the Armenians by the sultan Baybars al-Manṣūrī. On the eve of the Ottoman onslaught against the Mamlūks, these Taurus regions of Anatolia (*bilād al-rūm*) were ruled by the Turkoman emirate of the Qaramanids (Qaramān Oğluları; Karamanoğulları Beyliği; 1256–1487). See Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Qalqashandī (756–821/1355–1418), *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā fī ṣinā'āt al-inshā'* (Cairo: al-Mu'assasa al-miṣrīya al-'amma lil-ta'līf, 1963; 14 vols.), 4: 131 (quoting Ibn Faḍl Allah al-'Umarī), 133; for a summary of Qaramanid (Karaman) history, see Metin Kunt, "The Emergence of the Ottomans", in Michael Jones (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History* vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 842–43, 851–53, 857.

2 Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Amīrī al-Ghazzī al-Dimashqī (1499–1577), *al-Matāli' al-badriyah fī al-manāzil al-rūmiyah* ed. Mahdī A. al-Rawwaḍīyah (Abu Dhabi: Dār al-Suwaydī lil-Nashr wal-Tawzi'a, 2004), 89, 99.

3 Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Ḥimṣī (841–934/1458–1528), *Ḥawāḍith al-zamānwa-wafayāt al-shuyūkh wal-aqrān* ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz Ḥarfūsh (Beirut: Dār al-Nafā'is, 1421/2000), 502.

4 Shihāb al-Dīn Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad Ibn Ḥijjī al-Sa'dī al-Ḥisbānī al-Dimashqī (751–815/1350–1414), *Ta'rikh ibn hijjī: ḥawāḍith wa-wafayāt 796–815/1393–1413* ed. A. al-Kundari (Beirut: Dār al-Ḥazam, 2003; 2 vols.), 1: 183 (798/1396), 199 (799/1396); Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Maqrīzī (766–845/1364–1441), *al-Sulūk li-ma'rifat duwal al-mulūk* ed. S. 'A. 'Ashūr (Cairo: Matba'at Dār al-Kutub, 1427/2007; 3 parts in 12 vols.), 4: 371.

And when in auspiciousness he arrived at the city of Aleppo he stayed at the Madrasa-ye Ḥalāvīyah.⁵ Several companions from among his father's disciples attended upon him and he resided there for a while. It happened that the King of the Commanders (*malik al-'umarā'*) of Aleppo, Kamāl al-Dīn b. 'Adīm,⁶ was the ruler of the realm (*malikmulk*) of Aleppo.⁷

The biographer continues his hagiographic narrative and tells that Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn continued his miraculous journey across the Syrian lands. He even is said to have visited the city of Hebron (*masjīd-e khalīl al-rahman*) in southern Palestine, which is far away from Aleppo.⁸

Travel northwards was much more limited.⁹ It seems that apart from diplomatic embassies, only merchants traveled to and fro across the sultanate's borderlands, carrying various commodities, including slaves, to the centers of this unique military régime.¹⁰ Indeed, only a handful of Shāmi authors wrote about their experiences in the Ottoman territories in the years before the crushing victories of Salīm (Selim I) in 1516–17.¹¹

A case in point is the report by Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī (767–837\1366–1434),¹² who accompanied the sultan al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh, while this Mamlūk sultan led a military expedition deep into Anatolia (*al-Bilād al-Rūmīyah*) in summer 820/1417.¹³ Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī was keen to project the image of a littérateur. He aspired to portray himself as a man of letters, a strict follower of the highly admired Arabic literary tradition who travels along the paths paved by earlier erudite scholars. To build up this self-representation, he claimed that Jamāl al-

5 The name of this Sufi order pops up in several travel records; it will be mentioned again further below.

6 Clement Huart identifies him with the well-known historian of Aleppo (1192–1262): *Les saints des derviches tourneurs [Récits traduits du persan et annotés]* (Paris: E. Leroux, 1918–1922), 1: 62–634; idem, *A History of Arabic Literature* (New York: D. Appleton and company, 1903), 199–200.

7 Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Aflākī (d. 761/1360), *Manāqib al-'arīfin* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1959–1961), 1: 77; John O'Kane (trans.), *The Feats of the Knowers of God* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 57.

8 al-Aflākī, *Manāqib al-'arīfin*, 1:78; O'Kane, *The Feats of the Knowers of God*, 58, 59.

9 One of the few who traveled from Syria to Anatolia is Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, who narrates that he sailed from Latakia to Alanya (in 1330 or 1332). See Ross E. Dunn, *The Adventures of Ibn Battuta* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 137–145.

10 Ibn Ḥijjī, *Ta'rikh ibn hijjī*, 381.

11 Cf. Ibn al-Ḥimṣī's note on a diplomatic mission to the Ottomans. The historian incorporates in the narrative his own evaluation of the differences between Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī and Yavuz Salīm. Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, *Ḥawādith al-zamān*, 494.

12 On him, see G. J. H. van Gelder in Julie Scott Meisami, and Paul Starkey (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* (London: Routledge, 1998; 2 vols.), 1: 334.

13 Al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh departed Cairo and encamped in Syria on three occasions in the years 817, 818, 820/1414, 1415, 1417. Cf. al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk*, 4: 253 (815/1413), 268 (816/1413), 369 (on the deportation of Mamlūk emirs to Ottoman lands in 818/1416), 375, 399 (information that reached Cairo on Ottoman conquests).

Dīn ibn Nubāta's¹⁴ account of his journey motivated him to produce a similar work.¹⁵ It is worth mentioning that although Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī's expedition report posed as a private letter, nevertheless it was performed publically. The best-known scholar of those days, Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, read aloud it in two Cairene mosques in 813/1416.¹⁶

A rare example of a visit to Turkish Anatolia by a Syrian traveler is the following story. The assumed account tells of a Sufi who called at Konya, where the guardians of al-Rūmī's shrine-tomb interrogated him:

The much admired Chalabī asked him: Where is your home and where have you come from? The dervish replied: from the realm of Syria (*malk-e shām*). I have come in love of Mowlānā of Rūm to rub my face (*rū-m*) with the dust [of his grave (*khāk*)] and to pay him a visit (*ziyārat-e ū*). For many years I lived in blessed Jerusalem (*quḍus mubārak*) as a pious resident (*mujāwir*) and I attended upon [the sepulchral shrine] of his eminence Abraham al-Khalīl al-Raḥman [in Hebron]. And he spoke at great length about the magnificence of that region (*diyār*) and the delightful aspects of that sepulchral shrine (*mazār*).¹⁷

The story goes on to tell of the miraculous arrival of four envoys who carried Abraham's coffin from the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron to Konya and placed it in al-Rūmī's shrine. The legend projects a common vision of a united Islamdom, to use Marshall Hodgson's vocabulary. It is sound to deduce from it, as from other reports that were presented in this section, that Shami and Anatolian Muslims shared a combined imaginative space. I shall return to this point in due course.

With the Ottoman victory at Marj Dābiq in 1516 and the integration of the Mamlūk territories into the expending Ottoman Sultanate, the old center of power, Cairo, was replaced by a new one, Istanbul (*dār al-sulṭānah*). The change in the geography of power reshaped travel patterns. Istanbul attracted Arab visitors, who were keen to cement friendly relations with the seat of power.¹⁸ An

14 On him see Thomas Bauer, "Ibn Nubātah al-Miṣrī (686–768/1287–1366): Life and Works- Part I: The Life of Ibn Nubātah", *Mamluk Studies Review* 12 (2008): 1–35.

15 While visiting Jerusalem, this famous Mamlūk author wrote a journey account (*riḥla*), describing his experiences in the city. Taqī al-Dīn Abū Bakr Ali Ibn Ḥijja al-Ḥamawī (767–837/1366–1434), *Thamrāt al-awraq* ed. Muḥammad A. Ibrāhīm (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-ʿAṣriyyah, 1426/2005), 244.

16 We should follow al-Maqrīzī's timeline of events, namely that the reading took place in 820/1417. See *al-Sulūk*, 4: 417.

17 al-Aflākī, *Manāqib al-ʿarīfin*, 2: 922–923; Huart (trans.), *Les saints des derviches tourneurs*, 2: 371; O'Kane (trans.), *The Feats of the Knowers of God*, 645–646.

18 Abū al-Wafā' b. ʿUmar al-Ḥalabī al-ʿUrḍī (993–1071/1585–1661), *Ma'ādīn al-dhahab fi al-a'yān al-musharrafah bi-him Ḥalab* ed. Muḥammad al-Tūnǰī (Aleppo: Dār al-Milāḥ, 1407/1987), 53, 54, 61, 69, 70, 71, 100, 106, 151, 164, 227 (*fa-ittakhad^a quṣṭanṭiniyat^a ka'bat^a arabihⁱ wa-manba^a ṭalabihⁱ*), 228.

early example of this new trend is Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Amīrī al-Ghazzī al-Dimashqī (1499–1577),¹⁹ who states that he departed from Damascus on 18 Ramadan, 936/16 May, 1530.²⁰

Continuous History

This chapter aims at analyzing several travelogues that were written during the 16th and 17th centuries by Arabs who visited Istanbul (*al-Qunṣṭantīniyah*). These texts shed light on the image of the Ottoman Turks and their representation in early modern Arabic writing from Bilād al-Shām and Arabia, as well as on the authors' political attitudes. The texts produced by them contribute to our efforts to reconstruct the political and administrative history of the Ottoman state, as well as to our interpretation of the representation of this new regime in Arab political discourse at that period.

Heavy influence by earlier norms of travel accounts, of technique and topics characterized Arab travelogues from the Early Ottoman period. This is recognizable in the employment of stylistic conventions, the prevalent use of rhymed prose (*saj'*) and long quotations from past works. The effects of this weight of the past are also visible in the frequent naming of authors and titles. However, this literariness of these narratives should not lead us to reject their historical value altogether. These travel accounts notably reflect the social-political positions of the Arab 'ulamā' of 17th- and 18th-centuries Syria and northern Arabia. Moreover, the documents produced by those members of the religious apparatus who traveled to Istanbul can be read as ego-documents. Thus, for example, al-Muḥibbī describes his meetings with 'ulamā' in Istanbul, as well as major mosques of that city he visited.²¹ I shall return to this point in few lines.

The narratives produced by the travelers reflect a vision of an unbroken Islamic history. They envisioned Islam as a unifying force connecting Muslims of the past and present, fashioning a cohesive abode that stretched from Anatolia to Arabia, from Rumeli to Syria and Egypt. In their world vision, these features of the civilization of Islam linked diverse ethnic components and remote locations. Travelers often strengthened this picture by reporting on praying in the great congregational mosque and by mentioning that they spent nights in local *ma-*

19 On him see Muḥyi al-Dīn Ibn 'Arabī, *A Prayer for Spiritual Elevation and Protection* [*al-Dawr al-a'lā (Ḥizb al-wiqāya)*] trans. and ed. Suha Taji-Farouki (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2006), 28–30.

20 Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāli' al-badrīyahfī al-manāzil al-rūmīyah*, 23.

21 Faḍl Allāh b. Muḥibb Allāh al-Muḥibbī al-Dimashqī (1031–1082/1621–1671), *al-Riḥlatān al-Rūmīyah wal-Miṣrīyah* ed. 'ed. 'Abd al-Salām Ra'tif (Damascus: Dār al-Zamān, 2012), 77–90, 92–96.

drasas or *zāwīyas*. In addition, they also often report on meetings with scholars and other men of religion.²² In their account these a-historic bonds created the united Ummah of Believers. Hence, it is not surprising to discover that the authors, all of whom were learned Muslim scholars, depicted a holistic picture of the world of Islam. Moreover, we should interpret the naming of past authors and the titles of their works,²³ as well as quotations from these earlier works,²⁴ as an additional connecting node that was used in an attempt to depict an imagined picture of a continuous Islamic history and to paint a homogeneous and timeless chain of transmission of knowledge.

Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, who was already mentioned above, provides his readers, in a diary (*ta'liq*) that he wrote en route, with details of his journey from Damascus to Istanbul. In these lines he describes the long road that connected the Syrian lands with the Ottoman capital.²⁵ He tells his audience about the flora and fauna along the road, about scholars and institutions of learning, about rituals and Sufism. On almost every page he incorporates poems or verses. Hence the text is more than a travelogue, rather it is an intellectual itinerary. It seems that the author aspired to construct a self-image of religiosity and scholarship.²⁶ These features of his journey account can also be traced in other contemporary travelogues.

Certainly the documentation studied here does not reflect the position of the vast majority of the Arabic-speaking Muslim population of Bilād al-Shām during the two first centuries of Ottoman rule.²⁷ We should bear in mind that the ac-

22 It should be emphasized that this highlighting of combined traits was not a new development that first appeared in travelogues written during the period investigated here. Without doubt these elements are visible in earlier periods. A salient early example of this descriptive jargon is the account by Ibn Baṭṭūṭah, who visited the Mamlūk Sultanate and Anatolia during the 14th century. Abū 'Abd Allah Muḥammad Ibn Baṭṭūṭah al-Ṭanjī (703–779/1304–1377), *Tuḥfat al-nuẓẓār fī gharā'ib al-amṣār wa-ajā'ib al-asfār* ed. Abd al-Hadi al-Tazi (Rabat, 1417/1997), 2: 160–163; eds. And trans. C. Defremery and B. R. Sanguinetti as *Voyages d'Ibn Battuta* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1893), 2: 255–258.

23 Zayn al-'Ābidīn Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh Kibrīt al-Ḥusaynī al-Mūsawī (1012–1070/1603–1660), *Kitāb Riḥlat al-shitā' wal-ṣayf* ed. M. S. al-Ṭanṭawī (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1385/1965), 148 (al-Maqrīzī), 162, 192 (al-Suyūṭī), 188 (al-Qazwīnī).

24 A case that illustrates this narratological strategy is the reference to *Maqamāt al-Ḥariri*. See Ibrāhīm b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Khiyārī al-Madanī (1037–1083/1628–1672), *Riḥlat al-Khiyārī: Tuḥfat al-udabā' wa-salwat al-ghurabā'* ed. R. M. Al-Sāmarrā'ī (Baghdad: Wizārat al-Thaqāfah wal-Afah wa1389/1969; 3 vols.), 1: 338.

25 Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāli' al-badrīyah fī al-manāzil al-rūmīyah*, 21.

26 Ralf Elger, “Der Raum als Zeichen göttlicher Macht und des Wirkens der Zeit im Libanon-Reisebericht *al-manāzil al-mahāsiniyya fī r-riḥlaat-tarābulusiyya* des Yahyā al-Mahāsini (st. 1053/1643)”, in Roxane Haag-Higuchi, Christian Szyska (eds.), *Erzählter Raum in Literaturen der islamischen Welt* (Wiebaden Harrassowitz, 2001), 74.

27 See Ayalon's note on historiography in early Ottoman Egypt. David Ayalon: “The End of the Mamluk Sultanate (Why did the Ottomans spare the Mamluks of Egypt and wipe out the

counts illuminate the position towards the ruling Ottomans of small groups that were keen to cultivate friendly relations with the governing echelon in Istanbul.²⁸ The travelogues analyzed in this study were written by authors who depended, politically and economically, on the Ottomans. This affected the picture created by their pens. Moreover, the sample of texts studied by me is rather small and it is almost impossible to deduce from them a general conclusion as to the political mood of the Arabic-speaking rank and files in the Ottoman domains.

Al-Ghazzī, for instance, traveled to fortify his social-political position within the Ottoman religious establishment. This may be seen in his account of the arrest of the judge Ibn Farfūr in Aleppo, and of the maneuvers by Ibn Isrāfīl, the new *qādī* of Damascus.²⁹ This deduction as to the motives that drove travelers to provide accounts of the roads taken by them and their literary style is also supported in the writings of Kibrīt al-Madanī (visited Istanbul in 1039/1630), who uses his flattering tongue to praise the sultan Murād IV (r. 1623–1640).³⁰

Al-Khiyārī (d. 1083/1672), to provide another 17th-century example to illuminate my argument, tells his readers that during his stay in Yenī Shahir (Yenişehir) he read the Qurʾān and *Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī* with the Sheikh al-Islam, who happened to visit the place, and even got an *ijāzah* from him.³¹ This sense of communal identity is expressed even more strongly in his description of Egypt. He opens his account of the Nile Delta by picturing the towns of Bilbays and al-Khānakah.³² Arriving in Cairo on Friday, he says that he hurried to visit the tomb of al-Shāfiʿī.³³ There he met with the guardian (*qayyim*) of the shrine, whom he presented with a special gift, poems that he wrote in praise of the great *imām*.³⁴ The next day he had a meeting with Muḥammad al-Bakrī, whom he had met earlier in Arabia.³⁵ At the Azhar mosque he met with ʿAlī al-Shabrāmallisī (d. 1082), whom he depicts as “Light of the Universe and Islam”.³⁶ Al-Khiyārī also

Mamluks of Syria?)”, *Studia Islamica* 65 (1987): 144–47; a point there is dismissed by Benjamin Lellouch, “Le douzième ‘Ġuz’ perdu des ‘Badāʾī’ al-Zuhūr d’Ibn Iyās à la lumière d’une chronique turque d’Égypte”, *Arabica* 45/1 (1998): 89.

28 Faḍl Allah al-Muḥibbī, *al-Riḥlatān*, 101 (*laqaytʿ biha aʿyānʿ baladinā al-shāmīyin*).

29 Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭālīʿ al-badriyahfī al-manazil al-rumīyah*, 278; Najm al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ghazzī al-Dimashqī al-Shāfiʿī (977–1061/1570–1651), *al-Kawākib al-sāʾirah bi-aʿyān al-miʾah al-ʾashirah* ed. Khalīl al-Manṣūr (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ʾilmīyah, 1418/1997), 2: 22; cf. Abdul-Karim Rafeq, “Relations Between the Syrian ʾUlamāʾ and the Ottoman State in the Eighteenth Century”, *Oriente Moderno*, n.s. 18 (79/1) (1999): 67–70.

30 Kibrīt, 143–145, 151.

31 al-Khiyārī, *Tuhfat al-udabāʾ*, 1: 306, 310–11.

32 al-Khiyārī, 3: 5–8.

33 al-Khiyārī, 3: 9.

34 al-Khiyārī, 3: 19–21.

35 al-Khiyārī, 3: 28 (in Muḥarram 1065/November 1654).

36 al-Khiyārī, 3: 40.

visited the tomb of Ibn al-Fāriḍ³⁷ and was among the participants of the annual festival celebrating the departure of the *maḥmal* from Cairo.³⁸ As expected, he often inserts quotations from earlier sources, such as *Ḥusan al-muḥādara* by al-Suyūṭī (849–911/1445–1505), into his description of Cairo.

Time and again travelers report on past events that are connected to the places that they visited during their Anatolian adventures. The a-historic nature of their compositions is often emphasized by their editorial strategy. Often they quote earlier works that tell of past achievements by Muslim warriors and rulers. The naming of these cited works is a clear indication of the popular reception of geo-historical accounts. In the collective memory these achievements were connected, presumably, with the places that were the subjects of the accounts. They were highly admired by their contemporary Ottoman-era audiences.

Along their way, travelers called at shrines of renowned Muslims, schools, and Sufi brotherhoods and their lodges. Throughout the accounts of the journeys we come across descriptions of mosques, tombs, markets, caravanserais and other urban and rural constructions that are generally identified as “Islamic architecture”.³⁹ The reports often tell of their authors’ participation in religious rituals. Al-Muḥibbī informs his readers that at the Sultan Ahmet [Aḥmad] Mosque in Istanbul he attended the Prophet’s birthday festival (*mawlid al-nabī*).⁴⁰ Navigating the Anatolian highways and visiting Istanbul, the Arab travelers called at several *lieux de memoire*.⁴¹

These locations and buildings commemorated the imagined shared past that was said to provide a sense of forces uniting all Muslims. These were connecting elements that served a supplementary linking node which united the Arab lands with the heart of the Ottoman sultanate. No wonder they are often mentioned by the writers. Those travelers who were familiar with the history of the Ottoman dynasty⁴² extolled venerated Muslim heroes, who occupied a visible place in Turkish collective memory. They mention various monuments that were built by Ottoman sultans and governors.⁴³

A case in point is the account of *mawlāna* Khinkar (Jalāl al-Dīn al-Rūmī) and his shrine in Konya (Qunya).⁴⁴ Praising the sultan (*mawlāna*) Sulayman, al-

37 al-Khiyārī, 3: 113.

38 al-Khiyārī, 3: 120.

39 al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabāʾ*, 1: 261, 263, 272.

40 al-Muḥibbī, *al-Riḥlatān al-Rūmīyah wal-Miṣrīyah*, 90 (it was celebrated on 10 Rabiʾ I 1051/19 June 1641).

41 Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire”, *Representations* 26 (1989): 7–24.

42 Kibrīt, 147–152.

43 al-Muḥibbī, *al-Riḥlatān*, 52–53 (Yavuz Selim).

44 al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabāʾ*, 1: 211–12 (visited the place on 8 Rabiʾ II 1080/4 September 1669).

Khiyārī mentions the magnificent mosque the he has built in Baylān (Belen).⁴⁵ While al-Muḥibbī describes the caravanserai (*khān*) that Bayram Bāshā (d. 940/1533), who headed the sultanate administration in the days of Salīm and Sulayman, built near Adana.⁴⁶ Al-Khiyārī reports his experiences while taking part in the yearly festival that commemorates the Prophet's mystical night journey (*laylat al-isrā wal-mi'rāj*).⁴⁷ Al-Ghazzī narrates his visit to [Mūsá] Muṣliḥ al-Dīn [b.] Muṣṭafá, known as "Merkez Efendi" (d. 959/1551),⁴⁸ a Sufi sheikh of the Khalwatīyah,⁴⁹ an order that became very popular during the days of sultan Bayazid II (d. 1512).

The tomb of the Umayyad epic hero al-Sayyid Baṭṭāl al-Ghāzī (Seyit Battal Gazi Külliyesi)⁵⁰ is another example to this combining narrative that connects the early history of the Islamic caliphate with the topography of sixteenth century Ottoman Anatolia. This popular *roman de chevalerie* is well researched. It is accepted that the first strata of the geste circulated already in the early Abbasid period.⁵¹ The Turkish layer of it is said to be connected to the Danishmendid ghazi principality in the region of Malatya.⁵²

45 al-Khiyārī, *Tuhfat al-udabā'*, 1: 192 (visited on Friday, 25 Rabī' I 1080/23 August 1669). Actually Süleymān I built a caravanserai in 1550, to which Selīm II added a small mosque in 1566–1574. See Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh, *The Image of an Ottoman City Imperial: Architecture and Urban Experience in Aleppo in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 113.

46 al-Muḥibbī, *al-Riḥlatān*, 49.

47 al-Khiyārī was at the time on his way back to Damascus from Istanbul. *Tuhfat al-udabā'*, 3: 52–54 (27 Rajab 1080/21 December 1669).

48 al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāli' al-badrīyah*, 215.

49 Helvetiyye in Turkish; an order that was established by the Persian Sufi 'in T Khalwatī (d. Tabriz, 800/1397). See M. Winter, "Egyptian and Syrian Sufis Viewing Ottoman Turkish Sufism: Similarities, Differences, and Interactions", in Eyal Ginio and Elie Podeh (eds.), *The Ottoman Middle East: Studies in Honor of Amnon Cohen* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 108–109.

50 Suraiya Faroqhi, "Sayyid Gazi Revisited: The Foundation as seen through Sixteenth and Seventeenth century", *Turcica: Revue d'Études Turques* 13 (1981): 90–122; Filiz Ye-nişehirlioğlu, "The Tekke of Sayyid Battal Gazi", *Anadoluvu Çevresinde Ortaçağ* 2 (Ankara, 2008): 121–164.

51 Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (224–310/838–923), *Ta'rikh al-rusul wal-mulūk* ed. M. A. Ibrahim (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1386/1967), 7:191 (A. H. 122/740); Abū al-Qāsim 'Alī Ibn 'Asākīr (499–571/1106–1176), *Ta'rikh madīnat dimashq wa-dhikr faḍluhā wa-tasmiyat man ḥallahā min al-amathil au ijtaḏā bi-nawaḥihā min waridihā aw ahalihā* ed. M. al-'ed. M. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1415/1995), 33: 401–408 ('Abd Allah Abū Yaḥyá, 3647); this biography is transmitted verbatim by the Mamlūk encyclopedist Ibn Faḍl Allah al-'Umarī (700–750/1301–1349). Franz Taeschner (ed.), *Al-'Umarī's Bericht über Anatolien: in seinem Werke Masālik al-abṣār fi mamālik al-amṣār* (Leipzig: O. Harrassowitz, 1929), 64–68; Guy Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate* (Cambridge, University press, 1905), 152.

52 Yorgos Dedes (ed. and trans.), *Battalname* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 1: 1–25.

Already in the thirteenth century Arab geographers mention the site on the eastern slopes of Üçler Hill that is over looking Seyit Gazi. Al-Harawī,⁵³ whose description is also transmitted by Yāqūt,⁵⁴ says: “The tomb of Abū Muḥammad al-Baṭṭāl is atop a hill at the boundaries of the land”.⁵⁵ In the Mamlūk period the popular war epic of al-Baṭṭāl was performed in public.⁵⁶ The travelers discussed in this paper visited these structures on the slopes of the hill at Seyit Battal Gazi.⁵⁷ Al-Baṭṭāl’s venerated shrine functioned as a communal and historical node. This location, like that of the tomb of his companion the *ṣaḥābī* ‘Abd al-Waḥḥāb Ghāzī in Siwas,⁵⁸ connected Muslims from different periods and places and created a feeling of a mystical historical continuum.⁵⁹ The 16th–17th centuries travelogues, as well as contemporary architectural evidence, illuminate the social role of popular Arabic and Turkish war epics during the early Ottoman period.

A similar mood is reflected in al-Muḥibbī’s report of his visit to Istanbul (Islāmbül). This section of his account incorporates a long paragraph that describes the shrine of another famous companion (*ṣaḥābī*) of the Prophet: “his holiness (*ḥaḍrat*) Abū Ayyūb [(Ayyup) al-Anṣārī]”.⁶⁰ He honors him with a short poem:

We crossed smoothly a land with no conspicuous or expected [encounters]
 Only the enemies of our community (*milla*), running dogs or pigs.
 Expecting that the victorious armies of Islam (*dīn allah*) will tomorrow govern it⁶¹

The story of Ḥoca Naşr al-Dīn (in modern Turkish Hoca Nasrettin), that was not unfamiliar to Mamlūk audiences, and his tomb in Aq-Shahir (Akşehir, the white town; a Karamanid (Qaramān)-Ottoman border town) were very popular in

53 Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Abī al-Bakr al-Harawī (d. 611/1215), *Kitāb al-ishārāt ilā ma‘rifat al-ziyārāt* ed. A. ‘Umar (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-diniyyah, 1423/2002), 55.

54 Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī al-Rūmī (1179–1229), *Mu‘jam al-buldān* ed. F. Wüstenfeld (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhus, 1869), 4: 861 (s.v. Niqīyah).

55 J. Meri, *A Lonely Wayfarer’s Guide to Pilgrimage: ‘Alī ibn Abī Bakr al-Harawī’s “Kitāb al-ishārāt ilā Ma‘rifat al-ziyārāt”* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 152.

56 Moshe Perlmann, “Samau‘ al al-Maghribī, Ifḥām al-Yahūd [Silencing the Jews written c. 565/1169–1170]”, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 32 (1964): 100 (Arabic); Abū al-Fidā Ismā‘īl Ibn Kathīr (701–774/1301–1373), *al-Bidāyah al-nihāya* ed. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Cairo: Hajar, 1998), 13: 110–116 (esp. 115).

57 al-Khiyārī, *Tuhfat al-udabā’*, 1: 223.

58 Marius Canard, “Les principaux personnages du roman de chevalerie arabe Dāt al-Himma wa-l-Baṭṭāl”, *Arabica* 8/2 (1961): 166.

59 On this role of the book see Y. Frenkel, “The Mamluks among the Nations: A Medieval Sultanate in its Global Context” in Stephan Conermann (ed.), *Everything is on the Move: The Mamluk Empire as a Node in (Trans-)Regional Networks* (Bonn University Press: Mamluk Studies, vol.7, 2014), 61–79.

60 Faḍl Allāh al-Muḥibbī, *al-Riḥlatān*, 74.

61 al-Khiyārī, *Tuhfat al-udabā’*, 1: 285.

Ottoman Eastern Anatolia.⁶² The story, which according to some opinions has its roots in the Nāṣir al-Dīn Jukhā Arabic folk tales from the Abbasid period,⁶³ was known to the 16th- and 17th-centuries Arab travelers who passed through Asia Minor. They visited the shrine that is believed to be the tomb of an admired personality and reported on their experiences there.⁶⁴ Narrating the story of Nāṣir al-Dīn Khawjā, al-Muḥibbī mentions a work on this literary hero by the prolific late Mamlūk writer Ibn Ṭūlūn al-Dimashqī, and directs the reader to consult this text.⁶⁵

The journey accounts studied in the present project reflect a vision of social continuity, despite changes in dynasties and capital cities. Ibn Ṭūlūn, for instance, refers in his account of Sultan Yavuz Salīm's (Selim) to the advances of the victories of the king (*malik*) of Rūm,⁶⁶ a geographical label and not an ethnic one. This might reflect his admiration of the new political order that overcame his hometown. Due to this attitude he refrains from employing ethnic terminology. Not only the Mamlūk regime (*jarākisah*) was viewed as "*dawlat al-atrāk*", but in certain quarters of the Ottoman elite, the term Turk held a negative image of a rustic boor.⁶⁷

The Mamlūk past is not presented in the journey reports as a remote land, a forgotten chapter in history that ended with the Ottomans' achievements. According to these authors, the Mamlūks' fame did not vanish from the collective memory of the Arabs of Syria. The Ottoman Turks' regime was envisioned as a continuation or even as a renewal of the Mamlūk Circassian (*jarākisah*) Sultanate. Al-Ghazzī, for example, reports on his meeting with an offspring of the mamlūk sultan al-Ashraf Ināl, who lived in Istanbul.⁶⁸ He mentions the lineage of this royal household, but says nothing on Ināl's failure, or that of other Mamlūk sultans, to hold back the Ottomans.

Moreover, Anatolia is said to be connected with Syria not only by symbolic knots but also with actual ties, as we can deduce from the accounts of the Lala Mustafa Pasha Complex (*Külliyesi*) in Ilgin (984/1576). It is said that this in-

62 Ulrich Marzolph, "Timur's Humorous Antagonist, Nasr eddin Ḥoca", *Oriente Moderno* 15/2 (1996): 489 (quoting Evliya Çelebi in 1058/1064).

63 See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Akhbār al-ḥamkā wal-mughaffilīn* ed. 'Abd al-Amir Muḥannā (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Lubnani, 1410/1990), 46–48.

64 al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabā'*, 1: 217.

65 al-Muḥibbī, *al-Riḥlatān*, 57.

66 Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Alī Ibn Ṭūlūn al-Ṣāliḥī (1473–1546/880–953), *I'lām al-warāb biman wulliya nā 'ib^m min al-atrāk bi-dimashq al-shām al-kubrā* ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Duhmān (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1964/1984), 229–31.

67 Benjamin Lellouch, "Qu'est-ce qu'un Turc? (Égypte, Syrie, XVI^e siècle)", *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [Online] (16 December 2013) URL: <http://ejts.revues.org/4758>.

68 al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāli' al-badrīyah*, 273.

stitution was supported by a pious charity (*waqf*) that the founder had established in Damascus.⁶⁹

Common Interests and Court Societies

It has already been said that the Arab travelers who visited the Ottoman capital during the 16th and 17th centuries were busy searching for patrons. The accounts of their travel across Anatolia and of their stay in Istanbul reflect acquaintance with local scholars and even friendship. Often they mention their meetings with religious functionaries who served in locations they visited. Certainly they were not turban-crowned altruists. They cultivated amity in the hope that it might generate financial rewards that material benefits might ensue from encounters with Ottoman officials in Istanbul.⁷⁰

It is evident that Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī was keen to collect potential favors and that he expected to join those scholars and members of the religious establishment whom the ruling echelon favored. No wonder that he states that he departed Damascus (Ramadan 936/May 1530) and traveled northward to Bilād al-Rūm during the days of the sultan Sulaymān the Magnificent (the Lawgiver), whom he acclaimed as “*Sulaymān al-zamān wa-Iskandar al-‘aṣr wal-awān*”.⁷¹ These words echoed the imperial image that the sultan and his court cultivated.⁷² Al-Khiyārī, to add another example, describes warm, welcoming and friendly receptions.⁷³

The travelers who reported on meetings with Ottoman officials depicted them as devout Muslims who took care of the believers’ well-being.⁷⁴ Al-Khiyārī expresses warm sentiments as his caravan encounters the royal convoy of the sultan Mehmet IV “the Hunter” (Mehmet Dördüncü Avcı; r. 1648–1687), who was on his

69 al-Muhibbī, *al-Rihlatān*, 55.

70 Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāli‘ al-badriyah*, 135–136; cf. Ralf Elger, “Badr al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ghazzī”, in Roger M. A. Allen, Joseph Edmund Lowry, Devin J. Stewart (eds.), *Essays in Arabic Literary Biography: 1350–1850* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2009), 98–102.

71 al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, 6: 35; al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāli‘ al-badriyah*, 21. On the use of these titles among Turkish rulers see C.E. Bosworth, “Laḳab”, *EF* 5: 629a. Already Baybars bore the title “Alexander of his time”: see Denise Aigle, “Les inscriptions de Baybars dans le Bilad al-Šam. Une expression de la légitimité du Pouvoir”, *Studia Islamica* 97 (2003): 57–85; Reuven Amitai, “Some remarks on the inscription of Baybars at Maqam Nabi Musa”, in David J. Wasserstein and Ami Ayalon (eds.), *Mamluks and Ottomans: Studies in Honour of Michael Winter* (London: Routledge, 2006), 54–66.

72 Cornell H. Fleischer, “The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleyman”, in Gilles Veinstein (ed.), *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps* (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1992), 159–178.

73 al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabā’*, 1: 273, 281–82 (1080/October 1669), 309.

74 al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabā’*, 1: 213.

way to games.⁷⁵ The sub-text of these accounts unmistakably depicts the Ottoman Sultanate as a rich and powerful entity that every Muslim should be proud of.⁷⁶

The special affinity that the Arab travelers had with the Ottoman sultans is visible in the respect for the Ottomans' military achievements that they demonstrated. They congratulated the armies of *jihād* and uttered anti-Christian feelings.⁷⁷ Thus for example al-Khiyārī praises Mehmet the Conqueror (*al-sultān al-ghāzī Muḥammad khān*). He tells of the great army of the sultan Murād, who visited Iskenderun and built there a bridge (*kubrī*) many years before our traveler himself crossed over it (in 1072/1661).⁷⁸ He also eulogizes the sultan Mehmet III (r. 1595–1603), who constructed a magnificent caravanserai between al-Masisah and Adana.⁷⁹ Likewise he expresses great esteem for the Ottoman armies that he observed marching to and from the battlefields.⁸⁰ An additional case in point is his report on the conquest of the island of Crete (Candia) by Köprülü Zade Fazil Ahmed Pasha in 1669.⁸¹

Moreover, the section on Istanbul in al-Ghazzī's travelogue could create among his audience the impression that they are reading a chapter in the "praise of location (*faḍā'il al-balad*) literature."⁸² In line with the rules of this genre, the author does not limit himself to the description of the urban landscape but also reports the merits of the new Islamic center in the Mediterranean basin. In addition, he provides a long list of people he met in Istanbul.⁸³ Indeed, his account of his experiences in Istanbul and his reports of meetings with high-ranking Ottoman officials, some of whom served previously in Damascus, looks more like an academic curriculum vitae (*mashyakha*) than a portrait of the landscapes that he visited.⁸⁴

Moreover, the flattering language employed by the travelers is salient throughout their accounts.⁸⁵ Hence we should not be surprised that only seldom do they employ anti-Ottoman tones.⁸⁶ Furthermore, this praising of the Otto-

75 al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabā'*, 1: 285.

76 al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabā'*, 1: 274.

77 al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabā'*, 1: 84–85.

78 al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabā'*, 1: 193, 197.

79 al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabā'*, 1: 267.

80 al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabā'*, 1: 343.

81 al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabā'*, 1: 316–318.

82 al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāli' al-badrīyah*, 121.

83 See al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabā'*, 1: 290–304 (*lam nazal dā' in rājīn* in 1080/November 1669), 335 ("I collected *al-barā'a al-sultāniyya*").

84 al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāli' al-badrīyah*, 263. See also in Shihāb al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ibn al-'Imād al-Ḥanbalī (1623–1679), *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab* ed. M. al-Arana'ūṭ (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1413/1992), 10: 364.

85 al-Muḥibbī, *al-Riḥlatān*, 71.

86 al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāli' al-badrīyah*, 133.

mans was not, it should be said, restricted to the writings of those who traveled to their capital, thus for example al-Nahrwālī—the historian of Mecca—extols the great sultan Sulaymān Khān and the sultan Murād III.⁸⁷ This positive attitude towards the Ottomans is even more visible in the history of Yavuz Salīm's (Selim I) conquest of Cairo that a Meccan historian wrote in the 17th century.⁸⁸ Opening his account with praises of the Ottoman dynasty and a mytho-history of the Turks from the days of the Saljuqs, the author provides a story of wars, plots and adventures. In rich and vivid words he narrates the story of Salīm and the pursuit of Ṭīmān bāy, the last Mamlūk sultan in 1517. Quite clearly, the Ottomans are the heroes of the day in this historical story.

Changes

Despite what I said above about the political position behind the travelogues' accounts, it is appropriate to say that now and then the reader stumbles upon mild nostalgic sounds, which should not be read as critical ones or as an anti-Ottoman voice. Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, for example, complains that the intellectual production in Ma'rat al-Nu'mān during his days cannot be compared with the intellectual activity the town witnessed in the days of the historian Ibn al-Wardī.⁸⁹ Describing a river crossing, he quotes an inscription (*maktūb*) that said: "This [bridge] was constructed by our Master the sultan Qāyṭbāy, may God have mercy on him and forgiveness".⁹⁰

Moreover, despite this rapprochement between the Arabs and the Ottoman Turks, changes can be traced. They are clearly visible in the use of Turkish (*al-lughā al-rumīyah*) that replaces the Persian elements that were employed in the Arabic of the Mamlūk court. Quite often, Turkish words are utilized to describe the landscape. Thus for example al-Khiyārī speaks of bridges (*kubri*),⁹¹ woods (*orman bil-turkiya*),⁹² ports, (*iskale*)⁹³ straits (*bughaz*),⁹⁴ and villages (*koi* –

87 Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad bn Aḥmad al-Nahrwālī al-Ḥanafī (911–990/1511–1582), *al-I'lām bi-a'lām bayt allāh al-ḥaram [Die Chroniken der Stadt Mekka]* ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Leipzig: F. A. Brockhous, 1857), 5–6 (*amīr al-mu'minīn aladhī jalasa 'alā kursī al-khilāfa*).

88 'Abd al-Malik b. Ḥusayn al-'Āṣimī al-Shāfi'ī al-Makkī (1049–1111/1639–1699), *Samt al-nujūm al-'awālīfīanbā' al-awā'il wal-tawālī* (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmīyah, 1419/1998; 4 vols.), 4: 66–85 (quotes al-Nahrwālī on p. 83).

89 al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāli' al-badrīyah*, 58.

90 al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāli' al-badrīyah*, 81.

91 al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabā'*, 1: 197, 198, 264, 270; Taysīr Khalaf (ed.), *Mawsū'at riḥlāt al-'al-wal-muslimīn ila' Filasṭīn* (Damascus: Dār Kan'ān, 2009; 8 vols.), 3: 63, 65.

92 al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabā'*, 1: 222.

93 al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabā'*, 1: 236.

94 Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāli' al-badrīyah*, 247 (*yenice*).

koyat).⁹⁵ Reporting the arrest of Ibn Farfūr, al-Ghazzi describes the arrival of an *ūlqān* (messenger) carrying the detention order.⁹⁶

I am not arguing that the travelogues obliterate altogether the differences between the past and the present, between Turks and Arabs. An example of such differences is a remark on the varying praying styles of the Turks (*‘ādat al-rūmīyah*) and the Arabs.⁹⁷ Al-Ghazzi’s text reflects a clear vision of us (Arab Muslims) and them (Turkish Muslims). Despite the frequent remarks on praying in Anatolian mosques and visits to schools and Sufi lodges, he also distances himself from practices and rituals that he came across during his journey. An example that supports this deduction is his account of the city Aq-Shehir (Akşehir),⁹⁸ where the grave of Khawjā Naṣīral-Dīn is.⁹⁹ “They consider him” he writes “a passionate saint about whom numerous funny stories are told, accounts that reveal his confusion and troubles”.¹⁰⁰ Similar to this is his report on the Friday prayer in the mosque of Qara-Ḥiṣār (Karahisar/Afyon), where after the noon prayer the public sang hymns in Turkish and Arabic, adding that the preacher performed “unorthodox” service during this event.¹⁰¹

Writers even voiced what can be interpreted as direct critical views, albeit rarely. Waiting tensely in Istanbul to be received by some high dignitaries, Badr al-Dīn al-Ghazzī blames the Ottomans (*arwām*) for failing to pay attention to those who wish to communicate with them (*la ya ‘rifun^a miqdar aḥadⁱⁿ wa-lā yaltafitun^a ilā man ṣadar^a aw warad^a*).¹⁰²

Conclusion

In the writings studied by me, early accounts of the conquest of the Mamlūk lands do not reflect any sign of the local populations’ resentment. Salīm’s victorious advances southward and his defeat of the Mamlūk armies are not portrayed as a conquest by an alien force. The interpretation of history advanced by the 16th- and 17th-century Arab authors did not maintain that with the Ottomans’ achievements, the Arabs were subjugated by a foe.

95 al-Khiyārī, *Tuḥfat al-udabā’*, 1: 285, 286 (we crossed villages: *wa-mararrna bi-koyat*; prosperous village: *koi amir*), 335 (*koi min koyat al-naṣara*).

96 Najmal-Dīn al-Ghazzī, *al-Kawākib al-sā’irah bi-a’yān al-mi’ah al-‘āshirah*, 2: 22.

97 al-Khiyārī in *Mawsū‘at riḥlāt al-‘al-l wal-muslimīn ila’ Filasṭīn*, 3: 64.

98 al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāli’ al-badriyah*, 104.

99 al-Muḥibbī, 56; and see above.

100 al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāli’ al-badriyah*, 105.

101 al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāli’ al-badriyah*, 106.

102 al-Ghazzī, *al-Maṭāli’ al-badriyah*, 135, 209, 210.

This picture is in line with the official travel report of Yavuz Sultan Selim, which gives the impression of an advance through al-Shām towards Miṣr, with regular visits to sanctuaries, holy shrines and mosques and meetings with local religious dignitaries. This is not surprising. Yet, it should be emphasized that the travelogues studied by me construct a similar picture. By using an elaborated narratological technique, the Arab travelers represented an unbroken line of scholarly life and created a unifying historical narrative.

Indeed, some may reject this reading on the grounds that the travelers were occupied by the prospects of jobs and rewards, and were careful not to anger their hosts. Yet I believe that the thesis that the authors assumed that the Mamlūks and the Ottomans had a great deal of similarity is not without basis. The politics of power of those two dynasties explains, at least partially, why the authors of the travelogues saw similarity instead of deep differences. This political explanation is based upon the general resemblance between the Mamlūk *atrāk* and the Ottoman Turks politics.

Both sultanates were bureaucratic states. Mamlūk Cairo and Ottoman Istanbul were governed by court societies. In both cases the ruling royal elite lived apart from the common people over whom it ruled. Foreign soldiers were the backbone of these two regimes. Manumitted “Turkish” slaves in the case of the Mamlūk Sultanate, and gathered boys (*devshirme*) in the case of the Ottoman Empire. The religious establishment played the role of go-between the ruling court and the commoners. To maintain their families, this urban class of learned Muslim scholars depended heavily on the ruling elite, which provided them with financial resources. Due to this political-economic dimension of the links between the rulers and the religious establishment, a great degree of similarity between the inhabitants of the Qal‘a and the dwellers of the Top Kapı Sarai can be noticed.

The travelogues reveal the attitude of a small echelon among the Arab-Muslim learned elite towards the Ottomans in the first two centuries of their rule over Syria and Arabia. They are a source for the study of polity, social interests and of public mood, at least to a certain degree.¹⁰³ The Ottoman conquest did not change the basic pattern of connections between the Mamluk rulers and the religious apparatus. The approach of these Arab authors, and perhaps that of the vast majority of the population, was pragmatic. They perceived the sultans who resided in Istanbul as legitimate Muslim leaders. This attitude is reflected by the Egyptian historian al-Jabarti, who states that:

103 The travelers who departed from the territories that were governed by the Mamlūk sultans and called at the sultans’ courts in Istanbul were joined by travelers from other parts of the early modern Arab world. Such travelers, for example those who sailed from the Maghreb to Istanbul, are beyond the scope of this study.

At the outset of their reign, the Ottomans were among the best to rule the Nation of Islam (*umūr al-ummah*) since the Rightly-Guided Caliphs. They were the strongest defenders of religion and opposers of unbelievers, and for this reason their dominions expanded through the conquests which God gave to them and to their deputies. They controlled the best inhabited regions on earth.¹⁰⁴

This version of history is at odds with the contemporary rhetoric of the Arab nation state. However, the clarification of these conflicting representations of the past is beyond the present study. The story of Ottoman failure and their de-legitimization should be discussed in a different context.

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