



ANNEMARIE SCHIMMEL KOLLEG

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

Newsletter No. 12/ January 2016



New Fellows

*Dr. Cécile
Khalifa*

At ASK
From: **October
2015**
To: **September
2016**

Project: *A Mamluk Mirror in
Cyprus: diplomatic and cul-
tural ties between Lusignan
Cyprus and Mamluks (XVth-
XVIIth centuries)*

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Thematic Path for 2015/16

In 2015-2016 our main focus will be “environmental perspectives on the Middle Islamic period”. Environmental history is the study of relations between people and their natural environment through time. Potential venues of inquiry for the Mamluk studies could include the management of and conflicts

resources (land, water, etc.), adaptation of local communities to changing environmental conditions, the environmental impact of state policies, the social impact of environmental disaster, the legal framework of urban water systems, economic studies of imperial water systems, and rural history in general.

18-20/12/2015 **International conference:** *The Mamluk Sultanate and its Neighbors: Economic, Social and Cultural Entanglements* by Prof. Dr. Stephan CONERMANN and Prof. Dr. Reuven AMITAI

This conference aimed at examining the wider geographic context of Mamluk history in matters of politics, society, economy and culture. In the last generation, there has been much important and innovative research on the Mamluk Sultanate of Egypt and Syria, but most of it has been inwardly directed, mainly seeing these various aspects as internal matters. While there has been



some research concentrating on the interaction between the Sultanate with its immediate neighbors of the Sultanate, and even at

times far-flung states and societies, these studies tend to look at the foreign relations of the Sultanate from a centric view. In light of this, the conference organizers, Stephan Conermann and Reuven Amitai, thought that the time has come to engage in a more systematic examination of the contacts and exchanges between the Mamluk Sultanate and the society over which it ruled, and various other states and societies, far and near, in Asia, Africa and Europe.

In many ways, this conference was a continuation of the Minerva Gentner Symposium “The Mamluk Sultanate in Regional and World History” held in Jerusalem in June 2014. It also drew inspiration from new thinking and research about the nature of Mamluk culture, politics, society and the economy, which has shown the dynamism and complexity of this state and the communities that it ruled. In fact, there is a growing awareness among scholars that overall Islamic and Asian societies in the late medieval and early modern periods were significantly more vibrant and thriving than often previously thought, not the least with regard to a rising West.



The conference opened with lectures devoted to general considerations of Mamluk power and foreign policy. Jo van Steenberghe (Ghent) spoke of the nature of the authority of the central government, while Albrecht Fuess (Marburg) discussed the Mamluk need for metals – precious, cuprous and ferrous.

Yehoshua Frenkel (Haifa) looked at the question of Mamluks and Others: how foreigners were seen in the Mamluk Sultanate and how the Sultanate dealt with foreign entities. From these overviews, we passed to a review of different states and societies, more or less working from east to west. Ralph Kauz (Bonn) examined how the Mamluks (and some other Islamic states and territory) were seen by late imperial dynasties in China (Song, Yuan and Ming). The Mongols and the Mamluks were dealt with in three papers: Michal Biran (Jerusalem) concentrated on Mongol Central Asia, Reuven Amitai (Jerusalem and Bonn) on the Ilkhanate of Iran and the surrounding countries, and Marie Favereau (Oxford) with the Golden Horde. All this was on Friday, 18 December. On Saturday, we moved closer to “home.” Cihan Yüksel Muslu (Houston) talked about non-military relations between the Mamluks and Ottomans and John Meloy (Beirut) showed how entangled and central the Hijaz was to Mamluk concerns. The significance of the Red Sea trade was brought home by the presentation of Anne Regourd (Paris). İlker Evrim Binbaş (London) showed how the Syrian intellectual milieu was connected to those of Iran and Anatolia. Julien Loiseau (Montpellier and Jerusalem) surveyed relations between East Africa (Nubia and Ethiopia) and the Mamluks. The last four lectures were devoted to the western Mediterranean.



Nikolas Jaspert (Heidelberg) looked at connections between the Sultanate and Aragon, while Francisco Apellaniz (Paris) examined how Franks were judged in the Mamluk *siyasa* courts. Georg Christ (Manchester) discussed naval cooperation with Venice, certainly an eye opening for many. In the final lecture, Amar Baadj (Oran) brought us back to the Muslim world with his survey of political relations and travel between Ifriqiya (Tunisia) and Egypt in the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods.

Our plan is to publish the papers of this conference, together with those of the Jerusalem symposium of the previous year. We hope that these papers will contribute to the ongoing



lively discussion among scholars, showing the key role played by the Mamluk Sultanate, its elites and the wider population in broad regional developments, and also the ways that other states and societies influenced the Sultanate.

Reuven AMITAI

13/11/2016 Workshop: The Public Intellectual in the Islamic Middle Periods – Network Perspectives
by Torsten WOLLINA/Mohammad GHARAIBEH

In recent decades, studies of state, society, and their relations have increasingly turned their attention to the informal factors, among which the “network” features are one of the most prominent. To elaborate on the concept of networks more and to see where its advantages and its limits are when it comes to intellectual history, the workshop brought together a group of young and experienced scholars whose work is concerned with the analysis of scholarly networks in the Islamic Middle Periods (ca. 12th - 17th centuries), with a geographic focus on Syria and Egypt. The workshop was problem-oriented and focused on both methodological and practical issues involved in studying networks in the period at hand. The workshop was aiming at starting a discussion on the usefulness and applicability of different methods in our respective areas of interest, thereby sharpening and (re)defining notions of “networks”.

Participants of the workshop were: Miriam Ovadia (Berlin), Josephine Gehlhar (Berlin), Paula Manstetten (London) Boris Liebrecht (Leipzig), Torsten Wollina (Beirut), Mohammad Gharaibeh (Bonn), Abdelkader Al-Ghouz (Bonn), Reuven Amitai (Bonn)



Mohammad GHARAIBEH

Ulrich Haarman Memorial Lecture

26/10/2015 - Stéphane PRADINES

The Aga Khan University, UK

Urban archaeology in Mamluk Cairo - First archaeological evidence of the Black Death

AKTC's construction of Al-Azhar Park, located by the medieval city of Cairo, offers much needed green space in one of the most densely populated cities in the world on what was little more than dust and rubble a few years ago. During its construction, the discovery of the 12th-century historic City Wall presented an opportunity for AKTC to use what was once an urban division to unify and link a range of development initiatives in Cairo. Current AKU-ISMC-IFAO-SCA research focused on the walls of medieval Cairo contributes to these activities. It aims to establish a history of Cairo's fortifications in the Fatimid and Ayyubid periods. Initially limited to the Park and focused on military architecture, the project now also incorporates the eastern walls of medieval Cairo, and studies the excavated domestic architecture, street networks, funerary remains, and urban fabric of the city, spanning a period of almost 1,000 years.

This paper presented a well-known history of Mamluk Cairo, but unknown to archeology: plague epidemics during the fourteenth century. Excavations have revealed this history through a unique documentation, the cemetery of Bab al-Guhrayb. The research on the site of the Parking Darrasa took place from 2001 to 2009, with the support of the French Institute of Archaeology and the Aga Khan Foundation. This site is remarkable both for its location in the city at less than 350 meters to the east of the al-Azhar mosque, and for the wealth of the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk remains exhumed. The presentation described the Mamluk graves and the funerary rituals in their historical and urban context, but also as witnesses to a profound social and demographic crisis.



30/11/ 2015 – John COOPER

Blood, Sweat and Toil: The Making of the Medieval Nile Landscape

When medieval Egyptian navigators took to the River Nile, they undertook not just individual journeys within a phenomenal ecosystem, but also the shaping of a navigational landscape across the entire river basin. Technology, knowledge and skill interacted to constitute a human landscape of movement, economy, faith and politics. The biophysical environment both enabled and constrained the possibilities of navigational activity. However the river's variability, on scales both annual and millennial, invited a dynamic human intervention on both an individual and societal level to extend the realms of the possible. At one end of the scale, navigators made their own choices with respect to individual journeys. At the other, it was an elite that decide major infrastructure responses to epochal change in fluvial dynamics or regional geopolitics.



Using archaeological, geological and historical data, this paper outlined a chronological geography of the major waterways of the Nile Delta in the medieval period, and considered the navigational, environmental and political factors implicated in their use, adaptation and creation.

It further considered the ways in which the history of the major medieval ports of the Delta reflects the preoccupations of both sailors and the elite.

16/11/2015 - Hani HAMZA

Waqfiyya of Ibn Taghrībirdī: A Life Portrait of a Mamluk Historian



Ibn Taghrībirdī, a second generation mamluk who compiled thousands of biographies, left no autobiography of himself. Our knowledge of his properties, finances, private life, sexuality or family relations are scarce. His biographers avoided personal details in respect to the privacy of his life. The *waqfiyya*, supplemented by contemporary sources allow us to draw a portrait of this famous historian. Hence, this talk did not cover traditional biographical aspects such as his education, erudition or literary achievements known to students and scholars of Mamluk history. Instead, it started by locating the site of his *turba* which vanished and by reconstructing its plan. The *turba* was Ibn Taghrībirdī's only known construction project and the *raison d'être* for drawing this *waqfiyya*.

From its stipulations and its expense outlay, Hamza assessed Ibn Taghrībirdī's finances and from the beneficiary list his family members and the web of marital and social relations of him are known. The analysis of the *waqfiyya* offered glimpses into the life of a wealthy public figure who lived and died a bachelor with no issue or a concubine, a rare occurrence for that era.

Upcoming

Thirty-Second Ulrich Haarmann Memorial Lecture (February, 2016)

Prof. Ronnie ELLENBLUM (Hebrew University Dept. of Geography): *Affluence, Running Water and Mamluk Jerusalem*

Thirty-Third Ulrich Haarmann Memorial Lecture (March, 2016)

Dr. Daniel VARISCO (Hofstra University)

International Research Colloquium

- ◆ 29/1/2016 Prof. Dr. Markus DREBLER (Bayreuth): *Comparing Marginalized Alid Traditions from the Balkans to Western Iran: Methodological and Theoretical Challenges*
- ◆ 22/1/2016 Dr. Robert LANGER, Dr. Johannes ZIMMERMANN, Benjamin WEINECK, M.A. (Heidelberg): *Research on Alevi History and Culture at Heidelberg University*
- ◆ 11/12/2015 Dorothee KREUZER (Bonn): *Royal Drinking Party or Unfolding the Hexagon? A Close Reading of the Cairo Bustan Frontispiece*
- ◆ 4/12/2015 Dr. Onar İNAL (Arizona/Hamburg): *Izmir and Its Hinterland: An Environmental History of an Ottoman Port-City*
- ◆ 27/11/2015 Dr. Nader PURNAQCHEBAND (Halle): *Ein Held und eine Reise – Die narrative Entfaltung Firdawsis in mittelalterlichen Erzählungen*
- ◆ 20/11/2015 Prof. D. Stefan REICHMUTH (Bochum): *The Early Modern Period and the Islamic World – Comparative Politics*
- ◆ 13/11/2015 Muhammad Yasir Ali KHAN: *Sectarian Discourse in Cultural Contexts: A Case Study of District Jhang, Pakistan (1979-1999)*
- ◆ 6/11/2015 Prof. Dr. Machiel KIEL (Bonn): *Urban Development in the Ottoman Balkans: The Case of Bosnia*
- ◆ 2/10/2015 Prof. Dr. Claudia RÖMER (Vienna): *Meninski's Grammar simplified: Thomas Chabert's Kurze Anleitung zur Erlernung Der türkischen Sprache für Militär Personen' (A Short Turkish Manual for the Military), Vienna 1789*

5/11/2015 Islamic Archaeology Laboratory Opening

On Thursday, 5th November 2015, the Research Unit of Islamic Archaeology officially opened their lab with an opening celebration. More than sixty people attended that night. The celebration was opened by a series of talks given by two diplomats, Mr. Gielisch (from the Jordanian) and Mrs. Hecht-Cronstedt (from the US consulates), Prof. Fohrmann (former Rektor of Bonn University), Prof. Conermann and Prof. Walker (the Co-Directors of the Kolleg) and Prof. Moaz (former Director of the Syrian Department of Antiquities and former Deputy Minister of Culture).

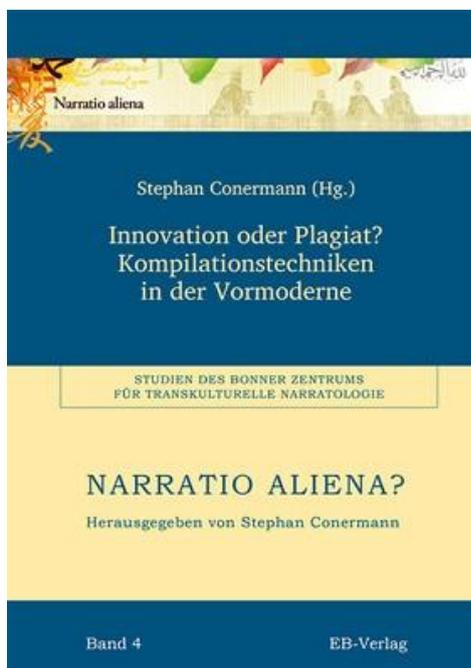
The Research Unit of Islamic Archaeology is a research arm of the Annemarie Schimmel Kolleg in the University of Bonn's Department of Islamic Studies. It promotes, in particular, Mamluk archaeology, administers the Kolleg's Mamluk Archaeology Field School in Jordan, and is the foundation for a new graduate program in Islamic Archaeology at the university.



Prof. Moaz, Mr. Gielisch, Mrs. Hecht-Cronstedt, Prof. Conermann, Prof. Walker, Prof. Fohrmann



Publications



<https://www.mamluk.uni-bonn.de/publications/other-publications>

With the narrative turn in the 1980s, the perception of pre-modern historiographical texts changed and led even in more conservative fields such as the Islamic Studies to a re-evaluation of historiographical writings of the middle ages and the early modern period. Instead of evaluating the sources according to their alleged usefulness, trustworthiness or the originality of the presented “historical facts”, the new perspective led scholars to look at historiographical texts as literary productions of individuals. Muslim historians used to orientate their work towards existing models which they used, redesigned and modified to create something own. Hence, the process of compilation was a common technique that was used by many historians. Despite that fact, the technique of compilation still has a bad reputation among modern scholarship and has often been seen as a kind of plagiarism. But is this acquisition really justified? And how does the process of compilation actually look like in the case of a particular author? How strongly does an author bring his own creative work into the compilation? In the present volume, five case studies show that the process of compilation actually creates a new and autonomous work that clearly reflects the authors own intention and work.

Imprint

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