

Reuven Amitai / Stephan Conermann (eds.)

The Mamluk Sultanate from the Perspective of Regional and World History

Bonn University Press



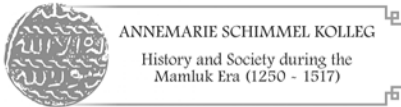


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Volume 17

Edited by Stephan Conermann and Bethany J. Walker



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The Mamluk Sultanate from the Perspective of Regional and World History

Economic, Social and Cultural Development in
an Era of Increasing International Interaction and
Competition

With 14 figures

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Bonn University Press



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Preface

By its very being, Mamluk studies should have an international orientation. The Mamluks themselves were brought from far-away, usually from the steppes north of the Black Sea or the Caucasus. Over the many decades of its existence, the Mamluks dealt with a series of external challenges: Ilkhanid Mongols, Franks, Cilician Armenia, Turkmans, Timurids, Ottomans, Safavids and more. At the same time, the Sultanate maintained relations, often warm, with various powers far away from its borders: the Mongol Golden Horde, Venice, Genoa, the Byzantine Empire, the Hohenstaufens in Sicily (and conversely, the Capetian Angevin empire), west African Muslim kingdoms, Ceylon, etc. Its commercial connections stretched across the Mediterranean, to the south of the Sahara, to the Crimea, to India and elsewhere.

The Mamluk sultans, formally governing in the name of the 'Abbasid caliphs (and referred to as "Partner of the Commander of the Faithful"), claimed rule over all Muslims wherever they might be. Mamluk-controlled Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem were the focus of pilgrimage from all the Muslim world; the last named was also a center of Jewish and Christian religious tourism. The major cities of the Sultanate: Cairo and Alexandria in Egypt, and Damascus and Aleppo in Syria, were the foci of international traders, Muslim scholars and mystics, refugees, immigrants and other sundry visitors from afar. And it was the scholars and mystics who left these cities to head elsewhere or were in contact with other religious figures throughout the Muslim oecumene.

The wider geographic, political, economic and cultural context of the Sultanate found expression in the works of several of the earlier luminaries of Mamluk Studies. David Ayalon, the founder of the systematic study of the Mamluk state and its military-political elite, wrote about the larger Eurasian context of the phenomenon of military slavery, as well as the relations with the Mongols. His fellow Jerusalemite, Eliyahu Ashtor, certainly had a Mediterranean perspective (and beyond) when examining the economic life of the Sultanate. Another important historian of their generation was Peter M. Holt, remembered for his studies of Mamluk-Frankish relations. Perhaps the most prominent repre-

sentative of the next generation of Mamlukists was Ulrich Haarmann, who with his interest in the Eurasian and Turkish background of Mamluk society, as well as European sources for the history of the Sultanate, clearly had wide perspectives.

Yet, in spite of these efforts and others, one might say that most of the work on the Mamluks in the post-WWII era was somewhat inwardly looking: the editing and translation of Arabic texts; the analysis of Mamluk politics and the culture (mostly of the elites), art history and archeology; intellectual and social history, again mainly of the elites; urban studies, etc. With the almost endless sources, and the far-flung Sultanate with its multi-varied population, there was certainly lots to do examining its internal history. In the last decade or two, however, this seems to have begun to change, and more emphasis is now placed on the myriad connections between the Mamluk Sultanate on its various levels, and the surrounding world: Muslim, Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, Eurasian, and more. This may be partially due to a growing interest in global and comparative history, but also to the increasing awareness that indeed, the Sultanate was a focus of different ongoing and changing regional and international links. Finally, perhaps Mamlukists are ever more aware that a dichotomy between internal and external relations never really holds, and in order to understand developments within the Sultanate, one needs constantly to look at the larger picture, and vice versa: the study of foreign connections facilitates a comprehension of interior aspects.

Many of these aspects of the relations of the Sultanate and its elites (and to a lesser extent, its overall population) with the wider regional and global arena find expression in this present volume. The majority of the papers had their origins at a conference held on 18–20 December 2015 by the Annemarie Schimmel-Kolleg for Mamluk Studies at the University of Bonn on the “The Mamluk Sultanate and its Neighbors: Economic, Social and Cultural Entanglements,” co-convened by the two editors of this volume. Several other papers (by N. Luz, B. Walker and K. Yosef) were originally presented at a Minerva Gentner Symposium, held in Jerusalem in June 2014, also convened by the co-editors, who are grateful to the Minerva Foundation of Germany for its support. Finally, two papers (by R. Irwin and one of two by A. Fuess) were first delivered at a conference organized by Amalia Levanoni and R. Amitai in 2006 in Jerusalem and Haifa. That conference did not spawn a collective work as originally thought, and the editors were happy to invite these two authors to join the present volume with their pertinent papers.

The editors are grateful to the team at the Annemarie Schimmel-Kolleg for its assistance at various stages, and also to Mr. Or Amir of the Hebrew University for his assistance with the 2014 symposium in Jerusalem. We are appreciative of the support and advice of our colleague Prof. Amalia Levanoni. Finally, we wish to

express our thanks to the authors of the papers for their cooperation and patience.

Reuven Amitai
Jerusalem

Stephan Conermann
Bonn

August 2018

A Note on Citations, Transliteration and Dates

This volume is a collection of papers from different specializations and disciplines, based on various scholarly approaches and methodologies. It was thus decided to give the authors a certain amount of leeway regarding both their citations methods and transliteration systems from non-Latin alphabets, as a reflection of their individual scholarly background. Overall, we have eschewed abbreviations for journals, encyclopedias and standard reference works, in the interest of clarity for a (hopefully) wide readership; not everyone is familiar with the abbreviations of all the journals in a neighboring discipline or in all the cited languages. Overall Common Era dates are used, but when Hijri dates are also employed, the latter generally comes first; in any case, the distinction should be clear from the context.

I. General Considerations on the International Context of the Mamluk Sultanate

Stephan Conermann (University of Bonn)

The Mamluk Empire. Some Introductory Remarks on a Perspective of Mediterranean History¹

From a classical, phenomenological point of view, space is envisaged as the (terrestrial) ground of human actions.² In the last two decades, however, it has become an established viewpoint in the systematic disciplines like sociology, anthropology and geography to think of space as a constructed reference value – and thus no longer a mere physical-material category. The *spatial turn* therefore stresses a more rational understanding of space: the processual spatial references of social interaction, so to speak.³ Following the tradition of classical social theory (especially Georg Simmel),⁴ action-theoretical approaches in the social sciences became more and more important, compared to a territorial, physical spatial determinism. Culture is accordingly no longer conceived of as a territorial fixed habitat, as implicitly propagated by the *area studies*, but rather as a process of exchange and acquisition.⁵ The pre-modern Mediterranean is understood and studied in this context as a space of interaction.

In what follows, I present approaches to a global history, before turning to other theoretical considerations on how to analyze interactions between individuals, groups, and political organizations. Recent studies on the Mediterranean region eventually lead us to highlight four research works on the relations of the Mamluk Empire with associates in the North; they give a very incisive overview of contemporary studies and research questions in this field. As it turns out, we are just commencing on an interdisciplinary, theoretically profound and methodically precise research of the Mediterranean.

1 This is a shortened version of Conermann 2013. I thank the Stämpfli Verlag for giving me the permission to publish the modified text in this volume of collected articles.

2 Cf. Günzel 2006.

3 Cf. Simmel 1903. For Simmel's theoretical approach, see Glauser 2006.

4 For the *spatial turn*, see Bachmann-Medick 2009 and Döring and Thielmann 2008.

5 See on this Ferguson and Gupta 1997.

Global History

Today, upholding the supremacy and dominance of national history has become just as untenable as considering only the history of single cultures. Global history lies less at the center of the clash of civilizations than it does at the intersection of the interactions; or – if you like – of the conflict between global, long-range developments and local and regional reactions.⁶ Of course, there are typical spaces of interaction – the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, the Baltic Sea. Global history focuses on the apprehension and description of the dialectic between spacious, external relations and spatial processes of integration (which inevitably lead to the drawing of boundaries and fragmentation) as well as between densification and differentiation. It is no longer a matter of tracing the Europeanization of the world but of understanding the interaction among different parts of the world in a process of constructing the present age. Just as a look at non-European history is presumed to widen the analytical circumscribed nature of national histories, global history is presumed to put the universalism of European history into perspective. Looking at the *longue durée* of processes of global history inevitably shakes up the well-established epochal structuring and the underlying parameters of modernization deduced from European development. The time is ripe to allot non-European parts of the world their very own historical existence and to stop locating them within the historiographical periphery of the European or national center.

Our special interest in the countless discussions on global history and phenomena of global history lies in the global dimensions before 1492, the so-called “early modern capitalistic world system.”⁷ “Global” here does not refer to any notion of “worldwide” in a physical sense, but rather to the interconnectedness and interlacing of Eurasian-African spaces. Some might want to generalize this to be the “Old World,” but in fact it refers to the *human web* of the Old World⁸ in times of an “archaic globalization”⁹ or to an *Eurasian connectedness*¹⁰ in the 13th and 14th centuries. To be more specific, it is concerned with the idea (developed especially by Janet Abu Lughod) of a *Pax Mongolica*, evoked, on the one hand, by the Mongols along the Silk Road, and of a space of communication established by Islamic traders and networks across the Indian Ocean, on the other hand.¹¹

6 For global history, the following introductions are helpful: Kossock 1992; Mazlish 1993; Mazlish 2002; Osterhammel 2005; Grandner, Rothermund and Schwenker 2005; Hausberger 2007 and Osterhammel 2008.

7 Wallerstein 1986 which is based on Braudel 1986. For Wallerstein, see Nolte 2005.

8 McNeill and McNeill 2003.

9 Bayly 2007.

10 Darwin 2007.

11 Abu Lughod 1989; Abu Lughod 1993; Abu Lughod 1994.

The world of Islam, which once covered vast areas of Africa and Asia, was precisely not just a religious entity, but rather also conducive to a commercial and cultural cohesion of the space from Seville to Samarkand. This is the beginning of a “process of densification”¹² that is connected to keywords like nationalization, population growth, world-spanning navigation, a permanently interconnected world economy, the intensification of agriculture, and the global diffusion of culture, religion, and technology.

It has to be stated that a sweeping shift occurred between the 13th and the 15th centuries which led to the integration of the Mediterranean region into the global system of transportation and communication as well as the trans-regional processes of exchange.¹³ Even though the Crusaders had once and for all been expelled from the Levant at the end of the 13th century, Europe had by no means been excluded from the Eastern Mediterranean. On the contrary, seen from the perspective of the Mamluk Empire, which from that time on held a pivotal function in global activities, Genoa, Venice, and Barcelona were fully integrated into the trade network.¹⁴ Major disturbances of this pre-modern global exchange system were precipitated by the disastrous plague epidemic in mid-14th century¹⁵ and the Hundred Years’ War (1337–1453)¹⁶ raging in Europe. Not until the “long” 16th century, which stretched from 1420 to 1620,¹⁷ was this crisis in the North overcome. But from a global perspective, what followed in the 17th century was a period of massive changes with far-reaching impacts: In France, India, China, and England, processes of political and social reform started which, over the course of time, were to permanently change the face of the Earth.¹⁸ Large amounts of capital were being released through the emerging European trade companies that increasingly exerted local power.¹⁹ Furthermore, migration movements were taking place on a huge scale between Africa, America, and parts of Asia.²⁰ A main feature of the era lay in the remarkable exchange processes evolving on many levels – even though Europe as well as the Islamic realm were still politically largely fragmented (e.g., Mamluks, Ilkhanate, Golden Horde, Timurids, Hafsid, Merinids), a circumstance John Bayly calls a “Warrior Globalization.”²¹ These were, first and foremost, economic relations. Mamluk Syria and Egypt became the hub between East and West as well as between North and South. An in-

12 Ertl and Limberger 2009.

13 Cf. Jaspert 2009.

14 An overview gives North 2007.

15 An excellent account is Bergdolt 2011.

16 Cf. Curry 2012.

17 Braudel 1974.

18 Cf. Parker 2008.

19 Cf. Chaudhuri 1985; Tracy 1990; Nagel 2007 and Ertl 2008.

20 Cf. Lucassen and Lucassen 1997 and the relevant parts of Oltmer and Schuber.

21 Cf. Bayly 2007.

creasingly circular exchange of commodities, foodstuff, spices, and craft products arose on the Eurasian continent under the influence of various sub-cycles – and Africa was included in these activities:²² (1) the European trade area covering the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean sea; (2) the Middle East, which was connected to Central Asia and Africa via land bridges and was able to make use of sea connections to Europe and India; and, (3) the East Asian trade area extending from China via South Asia all the way to India. The corner marks were China and Western Europe, with the Arabic-Persian region at its core. The main transport routes consisted of the caravan routes through Central Asia and the shipping routes via the Indian Ocean;²³ Europe became a factor in those transcontinental linkages via the Mediterranean. Around 1300, a certain peak of this first world system may be registered. Besides trade goods, religious ideas also came to be circulated; shamanistic and animistic religions blended, were overlaid, and syncretized with Arabic and Turkish-Persian Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity, which had a strong influence on the North and East through the idea of the Crusades.²⁴ The idea of *travelling concepts*, that is, not only the transfer of culture and technology,²⁵ but also intellectual interlacing, played a significant role that has to date been studied only insufficiently.²⁶ *Knowledge flows* occurred not only in fields like astronomy, mathematics, and medicine, but also concerning business practices (commercial and financial techniques), military strategies and nautical knowledge. According to John Darwin, this Eurasian *connectedness* lasted until 1750. Only after that year did the global-imperial world of European hegemony come into being on winding paths. Jürgen Osterhammel very aptly calls this process, which arose against great resistance and much contingency, the “transformation of the world” (“Verwandlung der Welt”).²⁷

Theoretical and Methodological Approaches to the Study of Spaces of Interaction

The identification of the Mediterranean as a space of interaction leads us to questions on the categories we must apply to capture processes of exchange and interlacing, and on which method we should use to work with our material in order to get answers about the *connectedness* of the space and the different

22 Cf. Abu Lughod 1989.

23 Cf. Conermann 1998 and Conermann 2001.

24 Cf. Riley-Smith 1992.

25 Cf. Agius and Hitchcock 1994.

26 Cf. Neumann and Nünning 2012.

27 Osterhammel 2009.

agents.²⁸ Let us use a specific example to illustrate the problems encountered here.

For a long time, it was considered ideal to construct a “comparison” to answer historical social-scientific questions.²⁹ A comparative study in its traditional form compared two or more entities independent from each other, the goal being to determine similarities and differences of certain phenomena, which in turn could help to enlighten them both. So, even though they were related in many ways, they continued to be separate from each other – their existence and identity lay prior to their encounter on a temporal and a systematic level. A comparison was thus only desired – and even possible – when it concerned two communities that were located as far apart as possible from each other on a spatial level.³⁰

Methodological problems also should be mentioned: Distinct units of comparison, which in reality do not exist as such, first have to be constructed in order to be compared.³¹ Exponents of cultural transfer studies also criticize the fact that any comparison ignores the relations between the units of comparison and could hardly capture developments over time.³² Against this backdrop the spaces of interaction became the center of attention. Transfer history, dealing predominantly with the movement of goods, people, and ideas in coinciding perspectives of the country of origin and the destination, experienced a revival.³³ Its exponents advocated the argument that societies are not given entities, but that they come into existence through communicative practices and are thus subject to constant change. First and foremost, however, communities should no longer be conceived of as existing prior to the processes of transfer and exchange, in the sense that two communities that were already identifiable and describable contacted each other in a second step. Rather, such a transfer should be understood as *constitutive* because it in fact brought forth the communities. If a definition of differences were the focal point of each comparison, then the term “transfer” (also as opposed to the concept of interlacing) allows the process to be grasped and operationalized more precisely in numerous aspects: First, the reasons for the transfer – specific situations, specific agents, specific motivations – have to be identified; second, the criteria of selection have to be defined, as only certain

28 The following paragraph is mainly based on Pernau 2011.

29 See Pernau 2011, 30–35 and 153–154. See Kaelble 1999a; Kaelble 1999b; Kaelble 2003; Kaelble 2005; Haupt and Kocka 1996 and Kocka 2003. For transcultural comparisons, see Osterhammel 2003; Höfert 2008a; Höfert 2008b; Drews 2008; Drews 2009; Oesterle 2008 and Oesterle 2009.

30 Cf. Galtung 2000.

31 Cf. Lorenz 1999 and Welskopp 1995.

32 Cf. Borgolte, Schiel; Schneidmüller 2008; Borgolte and Schneidmüller 2010; Borgolte, Dücker, Müllerburg and Schneidmüller 2011.

33 See Pernau 2011, 43–49 and 156–157.

aspects are transferred and never an entire culture; and finally, the results of the transfer have to be discussed.

Exponents and pioneers of a *connected history*³⁴ followed a similar approach, concentrating on the interconnection between the four world religions in the Early Modern Age. Serge Gruzinski, who emerged from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), especially concerned himself with the cultural processes that evolved in Latin America in the wake of the Spanish conquest.³⁵ According to his research, cultural hybrids (*métissages*) evolved from an encounter that essentially featured violence (conquest, slave trade with Africa, revolts, natural disasters, and diseases) and was by no means a “happy hybridity.”³⁶ The approach of connected history inevitably fragmented the concept of culture and made it problematic. In his works, Sanjay Subrahmanya mindicates that we should not assume that precolonial societies were static and only developed their dynamic *vis-à-vis* the West.³⁷ In fact, tight connections and processes of exchange originating from different hubs always existed – in all directions and throughout all time. He argues the case for a fundamental openness of history, which should by no means be interpreted and read from its alleged terminal point: European world domination.

Another standpoint opposite to transfer research is the concept of “histoire croisée,” as shaped by Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmerman.³⁸ They also oppose the method of comparison and call for an elaboration of the theoretical presuppositions of research in order to make them significantly more precise. They are especially concerned with the circulation of ideas, people, institutions, and objects from one social context into another and in different directions, while including the point of view of the researcher. In their view, the scholar cannot immediately interpret the facts, but can only make a second-category interpretation that reflects the preexisting interpretation of the actors themselves. Recently, comparative history and transfer history underwent a rapprochement by changing the objective of the comparison: It is now all about displaying the specific and no longer about showing general causalities and developing historical macro prototypes. Galtung’s objection that a proper comparison can be conducted only between entities that have not been related to each other before and that do not have a common origin becomes less important.³⁹ Transfer history actually *needs* the comparison (as a method). De-

34 See Pernau 2011, 37–43 and 145–146.

35 Cf. Gruzinski 2004.

36 Ahuja 2006, 112 (quoted after Pernau 2011, 38).

37 Cf. Subrahmanyam 1997; Subrahmanyam 2005a and Subrahmanyam 2005b.

38 Cf. Werner and Zimmermann 2002; Werner and Zimmermann 2004; Werner and Zimmermann 2006. See Pernau 2011, 49–56 and 157–159.

39 Cf. Galtung 2000.

termining differences by contemporary actors is the beginning of each and every process of transformation. Transfer leads to changes, not only in the cultures of origin and reception, but also in the object of transfer itself. These modifications can only be conceived properly by utilizing a temporal and geographical comparison. The presumption that a comparison leads to an essentialization is no longer accurate in any comprehensive way. Multipolar exchange must be managed methodologically and through practical research.

One last approach that intrigues our interest concerning the premodern Mediterranean is represented by the idea of “translocality,” as developed by Ulrike Freitag, Achim von Oppen, and Nora Lafi from the Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO) in Berlin.⁴⁰ In the course of the *cultural turn*, history and the social sciences abandoned structural history and the quantifying methods, looking at “culture” in a more general sense.⁴¹ This includes a preoccupation not only with products of the so-called “high culture,” but with all kinds of social interaction to which actors attribute a meaning. Space too became a cultural construct – created through ideas, practices, and symbols. It is a matter of a new segmentation and structuring of space, of regulating the relationship between places. Various fields of action (economic, religious, political, etc.) can lead to different hierarchies between places in this case, though they can also partially overlap. This interaction between the dynamics of trans-local movements and what has been called “establishment,” that is, the (not always successful) attempt of the agents to convert this dynamic into stable systems and structures, may be observed.

Mediterranean Studies

The Mediterranean region has long been the subject of countless essays, especially since Fernand Braudel’s (1902–1985) publication of his professorial dissertation *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l’époque de Philippe II* in 1949.⁴² There, Braudel creates a universal history of the *Méditerranée* at the time of Philip II of Spain (lived 1527–1598).⁴³ The work has three parts: He starts with an elaboration on the history of humans and their relationship to a geographical milieu and then deals with structures like states, societies, and cultures. The focus of the third part lies on political and military events. This outline corresponds to Braudel’s general notion of history, which always moves in three different tempi: *longue durée* (geography, climate), *conjuncture* (economy, social

40 Cf. Freitag and von Oppen 2005; Freitag and von Oppen 2010. See Pernau 2011, 67–75 and 162–164.

41 Pernau 2011, 67. For the *cultural turn*, see Bachmann-Medick 2016.

42 Braudel 1949. For the reception of his theses, see Marino 2004; Molho 2001.

43 Helpful introductions are Horden and Purcell 2005; Balard 2006; Abulafia 2011.

cycles), *événements* (events). Eventually, Braudel's research directs itself against the thesis put forth by Henri Pirenne (1862–1935), arguing that the unity of the Mediterranean created through the Roman Empire as apolitical union was destroyed by the Arabs in the 7th century.⁴⁴ Braudel, on the other hand, assumes that not until the 16th century did fundamental global changes occur. Even though Braudel's approach has had great impact to this day, some have remarked that his research fails to sufficiently take the historical agents into account, and that he conceived of and described the three civilizations of the Mediterranean (Roman Christianity, Orthodox Christianity, Islam) in a way that was too essentialist.⁴⁵

This is not the place to present an extensive research report on the history of the Mediterranean.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, two studies should be mentioned here which arose in the context of the 8-volume global history “Die Welt 1000–2000” (The World 1000–2000), edited by the historians Peter Feldbauer, Bernd Hausberger, and Jean-Paul Lehnens. In his essay “Austausch-, Transfer- und Abgrenzungsraum. Das Mittelmeer”⁴⁷ (Space of Exchange, Transfer, and Demarcation. The Mediterranean), Nikolas Jaspert points to the ambiguity of Mediterranean Studies: “An unreflecting approach that misjudges the peculiarities of individual areas and the small-scale division of the Mediterranean risks evening out singularities and making the case for ‘Mediterraneanism.’”⁴⁸ The small-scale division of the Mediterranean area with its multifaceted internal segmentation led to the fact that “communication and exchange in the Mediterranean area [...] – whether on an economic, cultural, or political level – were essentially shaped regionally.”⁴⁹

Besides the spatial, there was also religious segmentation, especially in Christianity: Besides the Roman and the Greek-Orthodox Church, the Armenians, Nestorians, Syrians, and Copts were home to bigger enclaves, and indeed in many regions, multi-religiosity was the norm. Also, there was strong political fragmentation around the Mediterranean. This includes for the Islamic realm the Ottoman Empire in Anatolia, the Mamluk Empire in Egypt and Syria as well as the authoritative unions of the Hafsids, Abdalwadids, Merinids, and Nasrids in the Maghreb and Spain. The North was even more heterogeneous: Apart from the kingdoms of Castile, Aragon, France, Sicily, and Hungary, the Byzantine Empire and the Papal States, city-states like Pisa, Genoa, Venice, and Ragusa struggled for power.

44 Pirenne 1937. See for the reception of his thesis, Kölzer 1998.

45 See Pernau 2011, 98–101.

46 Cf. Oesterle 2012.

47 Jaspert 2009.

48 Jaspert 2009, 139–140.

49 Jaspert 2009, 143.

On the other hand, scholars have started to understand and research the Mediterranean Sea as a space of communication and therefore to focus on the trans-Mediterranean and transcontinental connections. It is increasingly being interpreted as a social space once characterized by various forms of mobility (migration, traveling, emigration, forced displacement). Furthermore, we find an unmistakable series of technical and cultural interlacing as well as economic interactions. There is some discordance concerning the classification of the era. In his article, Gottfried Liedl argues the case for the above-mentioned global history to be a “formative period of European Modernity” from 1348 to 1648.⁵⁰ He thinks many critical changes were characteristic of that time, especially the shift of external “occidental” aggression (think: Crusades) to an internal event that was a “veritable revolution in the way of thinking” in combination with the phenomena “Renaissance” and “Humanism” as well as a rapid development in military technology and seafaring. It should be added that this seems to be a very Eurocentric interpretation of the development because the date 1348, which roughly coincides with the catastrophe of the plague, cannot be interpreted only as a new beginning, but also as a depression in a process of development that was very dynamic and began in the 13th century.

The Mamluk Empire as a Node for Global Interaction

According to Birgit Schäbler, a main feature of a global history lies in conceptualizing interpretations polycentrically, including regional differences or asynchrony, and focusing on them.⁵¹ Existing spatial interconnections and interactions were not subject to continual historical development, but rather evolved in waves of intensity including regressive phases. One such era of accelerated densification was, as already stated, the age of the Mongols. In the 13th and 14th century, global transportation and communication emerged, putting into motion far reaching processes that included political and military reactions as well as commercial changes, cultural and technological transfer. Only at the end of the late Middle Ages was Europe finally connected with this trans-regional network. By establishing useful bilateral relations with Genoa and Venice (and to a lesser degree also with Barcelona), the Mamluks had a great influence along the Eastern Mediterranean areas, as well as in the Black Sea. A decisive event of global dimension occurred in mid-14th century, when the plague spread from Central Asia via the above-mentioned seas to Europe and eventually claimed the lives of

⁵⁰ Liedl 2008.

⁵¹ Cf. Schäbler 2007.