

Stephan Conermann (ed.)

Mamluk Historiography Revisited - Narratological Perspectives

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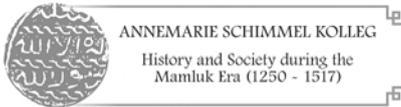
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Stephan Conermann

On the Art of Writing History in Mamluk Times¹

When reading historiographies, modern historians of premodern societies sometimes have to decide what they want: to reconstruct everyday life? or to deal with indigenous discourses? Depending on one's choice, historiographical texts can be interpreted very differently. If tracing "actual" social orders and events is deemed more important, then criteria such as "credibility," "reliability," and "adherence to facts" come to play a greater role than the underlying literary composition or the social and temporal threads of discourses woven into it. Most scholars prefer not to know how a chronicle "works," how it is structured, which narrative strategies are used, or which genre-specific principles are operative. Rather, they desire to know only whether the described experiences are "true." Since the latter attitude was (and still is) widespread in the scientific community, all three editions of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* contain multiple negative assessments of premodern Muslim historians.² They are described as "unreliable" or "unoriginal"; they are considered to have copied from their predecessors' works without mentioning their sources; or in fact to offer nothing new at all. In a historical work apparently the only part considered reliable is that in which the author describes his own time, based on his own experience, knowledge, or the statements of eyewitnesses. The non contemporary parts of earlier chronicles are of interest only when they enable the recovery of lost writings. Otherwise, these are simply omitted in editions – although they are often greater in scope than the parts concerning current affairs. Incidentally, this also occurs with poetic inputs, also considered to be "irrelevant."

Particularly compilations that, by definition, are a collection of texts created by "excerpting, citing, and merging" from several sources³ were (and are) the objects of harsh criticism. In antiquity, compilations were used mainly to pre-

1 The first part of this Introduction (up to the summaries of the contributions) is based on a translation of Conermann (2015), 7–17. I thank the EB-Verlag for permitting me to re-use the text.

2 See Krenkow/Little 1995, 759a, or Cahen 1986, 768b.

3 Fedaku 2012, 282–283.

serve existing materials and to make them more broadly available. Later, historians sought to gather all traditions handed down from various sources and to compile this knowledge into one work. However, with the rise of a new “culture of knowledge” in the 18th and 19th centuries, philosophers and intellectuals began questioning this central concept of knowledge systematization in the premodern era, preferring the discovery of new knowledge over the study of existing materials. Compilations now came to be considered “a mental lack of independence and originality.”⁴ This pejorative assessment is still attached to the compilatory activity of early historians, even to the extent of alleging plagiarism: The mere copying of a work causes it to lose its scientific claim. The accusation of plagiarism is, in fact, one of the fundamental points of criticism of historical research in the 20th century brought against the works of premodern Muslim historians. Furthermore, the accusation of “Oriental storytelling” was quite frequently raised.⁵ Only after the responses to Hayden White’s *Metahistory* in the 1970s and 1980s⁶ did the narrative turn approach redirect the focus toward historiography. This gave way to a cautious reappraisal of historiographical writings from the Islamic Middle Ages and the (early) modern era,⁷ where no longer solely the usability, credibility, and originality of the “historical facts” in the relevant works were considered the only criteria for evaluating a source. Like other types of text, historiographies could now be considered as literary products created by individuals. Nevertheless, the accusation of plagiarism persisted, so that even today, the view is still widespread in contemporary research that text passages compiled from original texts are less interesting and therefore less valuable than original texts by an author. This conclusion assumes that an author contributes little to nothing to a text composed of various texts written by others and is largely in line with the definition by Helmut Utzschneider and Stefan Ark Nitsche in their otherwise excellent *Arbeitsbuch literaturwissenschaftliche Bibelauslegung*.⁸ There, they propose a methodology for the exegesis of the Old Testament which stands in contrast to other forms of textual appropriation:

“We shall speak of *compilation* [emphasis in the original, SC] when at least two basic or original texts with similar duktus were intertwined and interwoven, so that from this a new text was created which selectively includes the duktus and the materials of the present records. What is characteristic of this process of compilation is, above all, that

4 Fedaku 2012, 284–285.

5 See, for example, Mommsen 2008, 6.

6 See Paul 2011 and Doran 2013.

7 See Conermann 2002, Shoshan 2004, Hirschler 2006, and Guinle 2011. For the European medieval historiography, see Schütte/Rzehak/Lizius 2014.

8 Utzschneider/Nitsche 2005.

the compiler himself does not speak, or only very sparingly, in the text of the compilation.”⁹

Utzschneider and Nitsche designate the underlying basic text as the “independent text” or the “original text” and the second text inscribed on this basic text or multiple templates as the “non independent text” or the “editing text.”¹⁰ Clearly, an author who uses compilation as a work technique is considered to be less an independently writing individual than a purely reproductive writer.

In contrast to such a perception, and in defense of a new understanding of compilation as a writing technique of independently working authors, stands the investigation of Kurt Franz. His book, published in 2004, focuses on the description in Arab historiographies of the 9th to 15th centuries of the revolt of the Zang in Mesopotamia between 869 and 883 against the Abbasids.¹¹ Unlike many others, Franz considers compiling a literary activity, compilations textual products, and the compilation process a relationship between writers as well as between texts. The very carefully argued and exemplarily structured study impressively argues that premodern compilation means something completely different from mere plagiarism. At the very end of the paper, Franz provides us with a definition of the term “compilation” based on the results of his analysis; this should be kept in mind by any Muslim scholar (or any historian, for that matter) who works with premodern historiographical texts:

“Historiographic compilation means, in the simple case, the reductive, materially dependent, and – with regard to the choice of materials, arrangement, and text shape – more or less independent transmission of good to a particular object or interval of at least one, usually only one identifiable written template by one self-identifying writer within a chronicle or a chronological part of the work alongside other such traditions. The resulting compilation forms a text that represents a revision analects or transcript, according to the compiler’s work as an editor, writer, collector, or narrator. The compilation chronicle is typically composed of a sequence of texts that overlap neither in subject nor in terms of time. Generally, the writer endeavors to be objective and abstains from introducing intentional distortions or inventions, but sometimes limits the documentary value of transmissions. The succession of several stages of such traditions in at least one dependency line results in an intertextual compilation process. Because of spatial distance from the scene of the reported subject, increasing temporal distance from the original submission, and the increasing complexity of the compilation process, the factual correctness of individual traditions suffers and distorts the relationship between actual and alleged dependency.”¹²

9 Utzschneider/Nitsche 2005, 248.

10 Utzschneider/Nitsche 2005, 247.

11 Franz 2004.

12 Franz 2004, 274–275.

Thus, Franz no longer defines compilation as “stealing” the intellectual property of others, but as an independent work technique specific to premodern Islamic chronicles and historiographies. According to his definition, compilations may be seen as textual products; and in contrast to the above presented viewpoint of Utzschneider and Nitsche, Franz judges the act of compilation explicitly as the intentional action of an individual. Tracing the compilation process reveals not only intertextual connections and dependencies, but also makes the story of the connections between authors (more) comprehensible, providing insights into the reception and analysis of texts in different (cultural) historical contexts.

This reassessment of the innovative opportunities available to premodern historians in the form of compilation should be considered together with the information we have about the work techniques of premodern Muslim historians. Although Franz Rosenthal already touched on the subject in 1947 in his study “The Technique and the Approach to Muslim Scholarship,”¹³ it was Ulrich Haarmann who provided interesting insights into this topic in the context of his dissertation from 1970.¹⁴ Among other things, his thesis examine the chronicle *Ḥawādith al-zamān* of the Ḥadīth-scholar and notary al-Jazarī (1260–1338), which is especially fascinating because it served at least eight, mostly much more renowned early Mamluk historians as the main template for their own historiographies. In addition, it was also used by all well-known Mamluk historians of the 15th and 16th centuries.¹⁵ For example, al-Jazarī’s contemporaries Ibn ad-Dawadārī (ca. 1288–1336) and Mufaḍḍal b. Abī Faḍā’il (died after 1358) took most parts from al-Jazarī’s work for their own chronicles of the years 1260–1300.¹⁶ Remarkably, Ulrich Haarmann is also not entirely free of solely judging a chronicle by its “truthfulness.” He writes that especially those parts of al-Ġazarī’s *Ḥawādith al-zāmān* dealing with the period after 1279/1280 offer worthwhile reading, since from that point on the presentation is based on personal experience and eyewitness accounts. However, according to Haarmann, the author is too careless in his beliefs. Compositional shortcomings are also listed: The author mechanically joins individual reports to units that self-contained but not logically linked. Furthermore, details are repeated, often using vulgar language, and too often interspersed with superfluous anecdotes.¹⁷

However, more importantly, the text is available to us in two entirely different versions. The Codex Gotha includes a brouillon (*musawwada*) stemming from the direct environment of the author. Although more than three people were involved in the writing, 95 % appear to have been written by al-Jazarī himself or a

13 Rosenthal 1947.

14 Haarmann 1970.

15 Haarmann 1970, 7.

16 Haarmann 1970, 115.

17 Haarmann 1970, 25–26.

secretary working on his behalf.¹⁸ Scribe B made numerous annotations, marginalia, and additions, excerpting them from other important contemporary works of history, perhaps in order to generate a “personal” chronicle by the template complemented in this way.¹⁹ The additions and corrections can be found on the intentionally blank lines left by the first text producer, but mostly on numerous pasted-over slips. The (few) other additions made by another user of the text date from a later time. Evidently, according to Haarmann, the brouillon was handed directly by al-Ğazarī to an Egyptian manuscript dealer (or a chronicler), who provided for the distribution of the text. After 1325, the same middleman – or some third person – added notes ascribed to Ibn ‘Abd al-Zāhir (1233–1293) and the works of other important chroniclers.²⁰ It comes as a bit of a surprise to discover that preliminary versions were commercially distributed as well.

The Paris Code, on the other hand, contains fragments of the final version²¹ representing a multiple revision of Gotha. Through the juxtaposition of the brouillons (Hs Gotha) and the final edition (Hs Paris), we obtain information about the composition and style standards among the chroniclers of the time. Thus, in the Parisian manuscript, only events and obituaries are listed among the individual years, while the brouillon Gotha also exhibits extensive geographic notes. Paris presents the individual reports of the obituaries in a significantly more detailed and better structured manner: Mistakes have been eliminated, and additions to the narration have been eloquently incorporated.²²

As interesting as these results are for our topic, no exact synopsis of both texts exists. The dating of the brouillon Gotha and the knowledge drawn by mainly Egyptian historiographers of facts from texts based on al-Jazarī’s *Ḥawādith al-zamān* indicates that – again according to Haarmann – al-Jazarī’s text was used directly by one and indirectly by a number of chroniclers in Kairo between 1305 and 1320.²³ An example for this practice is the *Mukhtār* written by the religious teacher al-Dhahabī (1274–1348), which refers to excerpts drawn from his own hand before the transcript of his voluminous “History of Islam” (*Ta’riḫ al-islām*) as a collection of material from the chronicle of al-Jazarī.²⁴ These are verbatim excerpts of carefully selected quotes not found in other sources. A careful comparison of the two texts reveals exactly which passages of a template seemed worthwhile to a later compiler (al-Dhahabī’s *Mukhtār*) to be copied

18 Haarmann 1970, 28.

19 Haarmann 1970, 30–34.

20 Haarmann 1970, 35–36.

21 Haarmann 1970, 46–48.

22 Haarmann 1970, 56–58.

23 Haarmann 1970, 36–37.

24 Haarmann 1970, 50–54.

and included in a separate work (*Ta'rikh al-islām*). Since he was pursuing a different question, Ulrich Haarmann unfortunately only hinted at this in his work, but did not elaborate on it extensively.

So, how did the premodern Mamluk chronicler work? Haarmann gives us some valuable hints: The author used the brouillon as a basis,²⁵ which means two different things. On the one hand, there were the author's own hand-made excerpts from foreign templates, which he usually held in notebooks as well as on small slips or on the edge of already used sheets of paper. On the other hand, this can also be understood as the next text level, that is, the rough draft or the draft of a work by hand or on dictation of the author. At the end of the process stood the fair copy (*bayād*), which represented an improvement and final elaboration of the text of the *musawwada*.

If we understand compilation as the writing process of a chronicler resulting in a final version, we should analyze this creative act with more exactitude than Haarmann did. This enables us to gain further insights into the working methods of a premodern historian. Against this backdrop, it is worth looking at the various publications of Frédéric Bauden on al-Maqrīzī's (d. 1442) famous work *al-Mawā'iz wal-i'tibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wal-āthār*. Some years ago, Bauden more or less accidentally found a workbook of the Egyptian author containing the "fruits of his reading" over a substantial amount of time.²⁶ There are hundreds of entries of all kinds: summaries, abstracts, paraphrases, excerpts, remarks, and reflections, as well as shorter and longer notes. The breadth of the material al-Maqrīzī touches on highlights his intellectual curiosity: In addition to entries on historical topics, we find ones on other areas such as numismatics, meteorology, genealogy, medicine, and geography. At the end of the sheets there is still room for later comments and addenda. One may assume that al-Maqrīzī virtually summarized texts while reading templates, so that the notebooks were used for remembering and consulting, and the material gathered could then be used for different purposes. Some of the options were to reproduce it literally, to embellish it, or to recombine and narrate it with the help of other texts. In cases of doubt, inspired by his own notes, al-Maqrīzī also reiterated the original versions. Cards were also inserted into the notebook with comments suggesting that they served as chapter drafts. Thus, when al-Maqrīzī set about writing a new book, he had the opportunity to quickly construct a framework. Thus, we are dealing here with relatively well-known scientific technique al-Maqrīzī developed throughout his life, one he always used during the actual writing process.

25 Haarmann 1970, 124–125.

26 See Bauden 2003a-b, 2006, 2008a, 2009.

This lucky find and that of further manuscripts enables us to relatively accurately reconstruct the work technique of the premodern historian.²⁷ The final versions of books are available to us in the form of a manuscript authorized by the author (*mubayyaḍa*, *mubyadḍa*), based on a raw version (*musawwada*, *mus-wadda*) that, as in the case of al-Jazarī's *Ḥawādith al-zamān*, could well have even reached the book market. The intermediate step consists of summaries of direct templates made specifically for a work (*mukhtaṣar*, *mukhtār*). Previous to these versions lie the notebooks (*tadhkira*, *majmūʿ*, *taʿlīq*) and the original manuscripts from the sources the author read and used and often containing a number of marginalia here from his hand. In the case of al-Maqrīzī, we not only have all the stages of a book preserved among the 23 autographs found so far, we also have some manuscripts of the sources he used and commented on for his work – all of which provides us with a deep insight into his writing workshop.

In one of his essays, Frédéric Bauden addresses the synoptic method used in this volume: the precise direct comparison of the text and the original.²⁸ From a close comparison of some biograms in the notebook with later versions and with the source, i. e., with aṣ-Ṣafadī's (1297–1363) biographical dictionary *Wāfi bil-wafayāt*, Bauden comes to the following conclusion:

“The various traces of al-Maqrīzī's work that have reached us enable us to analyze his writing process almost as precisely if he were a modern author. Among these traces, the notebook plays a major role. Thanks to it, we know that al-Maqrīzī would summarize a source progressively as he was reading it. The case of al-Ṣafadī's *al-Wāfi* is particularly edifying. Reading one biography after another, al-Maqrīzī would take notes of the data he was interested in according to the use he wanted to make of them: in this particular case, to provide the biographies of the persons whom he mentioned in his opus magnum, the *Khīṭaṭ*. The selections he made reveal why al-Ṣafadī's biographical dictionary was of interest to him: he wanted to rely on a source which was up-to-date and above all contemporaneous with the facts reported. This concern underlines al-Maqrīzī's probity in this particular case; he tried to exploit the most trustworthy sources, even though it was often to the disadvantage of these sources: *al-Wāfi* is never quoted in the *Khīṭaṭ* nor in any of al-Maqrīzī's other works where, nevertheless, he took advantage of the selected data. Furthermore, the analysis of a single biography permits us to understand how al-Maqrīzī reused the data in the course of time in his various works, how and when these data were reorganized and which additional (unquoted) sources he later utilized.”²⁹

This approach might be described as a compilation technique, though we should best use this term neutrally, especially since, on closer inspection, al-Maqrīzī's working mode is much closer to the approach of modern historians than is usually assumed.

27 See Bauden 2008b.

28 See Bauden 2009a.

29 Bauden 2009a, 136.

Remarkably, in the Mamluk period, there was a clear awareness of what we would today call plagiarism. Normally, discussions of inappropriate adoption of foreign ideas were almost exclusively related to poetry.³⁰ However, ironically, the example of al-Maqrīzī shows that this accusation was sometimes made against historians as well.³¹ In some biographies describing the life of al-Maqrīzī, the scholar al-Sakhāwī (d. 1497), using testimony from his teacher Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 1449), vehemently asserted that the portrayed had taken the rough draft of a text by his colleague al-Awḥadī after his death in 1408, had then corrected and improved it, and subsequently published it under his own name as *Kitāb al-Mawāʿiẓ wal-ʿitibār fī dhikr al-khiṭaṭ wal-āthār*. Particularly grave, he felt, was the fact that al-Maqrīzī had not mentioned his source and its author. Coincidentally, parts of a first version of al-Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ* have survived, revealing 19 sheets that do not correspond to the author's handwriting. Frédéric Bauden took a close look at these pages and determined with some certainty that they were indeed excerpts from the work of al-Awḥadī. After a very careful comparison of these texts with the final version of al-Maqrīzī's *Khiṭaṭ*, Bauden concluded that the accusation of plagiarism cannot be denied despite some minor modifications of the original.

To sum up, early modern historians followed their predecessors, using existing, exemplary works as the foundation to be transformed and modified to their own needs. Compiling from those sources available to them was an established method among Muslim historiographers. Although one of the outstanding characteristics of medieval Arabic historiography, compilation still enjoys a bad reputation today and is even considered plagiarism. But as we have seen, compiling is not just a matter of pure copying.

Against this background, all authors in this volume study Mamluk historiographical texts not primarily with regard to their facticity, their finer philological points, or their statements regarding specific events. Rather, the focus lies on what we can, using the narrative structures, learn from these sources about the mental (i. e., emotional and cognitive) operations that process the experience of time using the medium of memory into orientations for practical life.

In his contribution, Yehoshua FRENKEL focuses on narratological perspectives in Damascene chronicles. He regards the Mamlūk period as one of a rich and diverse literary productivity. Damascene chronicles regularly inform their readers about letters from pilgrims on their way to Mecca, and Frenkel shows that Mamlūk historical sources not only serve as a rich database, but also provide insights into the notion of history and the views of those living during the period

30 For this, see Heinrichs 2004.

31 For the following passages, see Bauden 2009b.

1250 to 1517. Mamlūk historical reports provide important data about both their producers and their consumers. Because memories can reveal only a limited view of the past, studying these historical records (such as chronicles, biographies, and necrologies) means studying historiography and social memory. In support of his argumentation, Frenkel presents different types of documents: the “ego-document,” which is structured like other Mamlūk historical narratives, but tells the story from a personal perspective; and “eyewitness accounts,” which report on the personal experience of others. The author argues that the historians want their readers to believe the narrator is just as reliable as the witness source himself. Therefore, they wanted their reports to be received not as legendary anecdotes but as the historical truth. Frenkel explains that Mamlūk chronologists made wide use of references to the structures of past historians, citing from earlier historical writings. Yet they did not copy only an abstract from earlier writings but long passages. A good example is al-Yūnīnī’s account of the year 702/1303, where he reports on an earthquake hitting Egypt, the details of which are based on an official letter sent from Cairo to Damascus. Because al-Yūnīnī was not satisfied with presenting a bare description, he inserted a long quotation from Zakariyā b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī’s (605–682/1208–1283) book *‘Ajā’ib al-Makhlūqāt*. Frenkel stresses that al-Yūnīnī believed that this extract would substantiate his report by adding a deep historical background. Authors also compared their recounted events with Biblical stories, for example, Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-‘Umārī, who compares the thrust of the Mongols with king Nebuchadnezzar and his conquest of Jerusalem, as reported in the Old Testament. These narrative techniques are not rare at all. In his conclusion, Frenkel mentions that Mamlūk authors often did not present their texts as a new formation, but as a continuation of an earlier book: They often designated their own book as a supplement (*dhayl*), completion (*tatimma*), continuation (*tallaya*), or synopsis (*mukhtaṣar*). They often saw themselves as guardians of identity and continuity, with the aim of depicting a homogeneous story that stretched out over a long period of time, one that allowed them to present themselves as preservationists of a collective identity. To legitimize a Mamluk ruler, they often added extra information.

Mohammad GHARAİBEH’s article presents the case study of *ad-Durar al-Kāmina* by Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, wherein he discusses the sociology of narrative structures in biographical dictionaries. This work is not only one of the most popular biographical dictionaries in the field of Mamluk studies, but also one of the most cited. Gharaibeh notes that, even though *ad-Durar* is such an important source, there is only very little research on its structure, organization, and arrangement. To date, not a single study has dealt analogically with the narrative nature of biographical dictionaries. This paper therefore provides an analysis of the narrative structures and strategies of the biographical dictionary.

In the case of *ad-Durar*, Gharaibeh does not focus on information provided by the author on certain persons or events, but on the way in which Ibn Ḥajar presents his information. Before analyzing the author, Gharaibeh mentions the necessity of distinguishing between *knowledge* and *information*, that is, how to distinguish between interpreted facts and mere dates. The main hypothesis of this paper is that the content of *ad-Durar* in particular, and biographical dictionaries in general, reflect knowledge and not pure information because it is not presented by the author in a neutral manner. The knowledge the author wants to present to his readership has indeed been selected, so that this method of personal arrangement is called *narrative strategy*. Gharaibeh analyzes this strategy in Ibn Ḥajar's work. The study is divided into two parts: The first part of the paper contextualizes *ad-Durar al-kāmina* within the framework of other historical writings; he second part analyzes a specific example in order to demonstrate how Ibn Ḥajar designs an entry on a certain personality. The idea of comparing the different entries derives from redaction criticism. From the perspective of this method, his comparison shows that Ibn Ḥajar designed his entries according to the orientation of the biographical dictionary. The dictionary *ad-Durar* has a very wide scope, including different kinds of individuals: elites (*āyān*), scholars, rulers, emirs, writers (*kuttāb*), viziers, literates, and poets. Gharaibeh compares *ad-Durar* to other writings of Ibn Ḥajar, as well as presenting the narrative strategies used in *ad-Durar*. Although *ad-Durar* focuses on the religious elite and on *ḥadīth*-scholars, it also includes members of the political elite and other non scholars.

In the next article, Li Guo analyzes the literary ambitions of Ibn Iyās, a Mamluk historian who was one of the most significant chroniclers of the Mamluk Sultanate. Ibn Iyās became famous through his hallmark *Badā'i' al-zuhūr fī waqā'i' al-duhūr* ("The Splendid Flowering Stories of History"). The author points out that, even though the text was consulted in studies of the period, its abundant verses have yet to receive much attention. The author studies the circumstances under which Ibn Iyās wrote his poetry and what its content expresses. The chronicler Ibn Iyās gained an elite education and was trained in poetry and rhetoric. Much of his poetry depicts current affairs, even touching on major events of the day, such as the chaotic relationship between Qāyṭbāy and Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī and the Bedouin unrest in 905/1498–1499. Ibn Iyās' poetry reached its peak during the reign of Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī (906–922/1501–1517). More than 50 poems have been passed down to us, many of which demonstrate his connection to men in power. Li Guo describes Ibn Iyās' verses as "significant sights into his world," especially into his career and personal life, about which little is known so far. Furthermore, the author explains the function of the phrase *wa-fīhi aqūl*, which is often used in medieval Arabic chronicles. In the present tense, this phrase means "regarding this, I present the following poem," which

then triggers the narrator's own comment and opinion. Although Ibn Iyās' use of verses follows the model of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn al-Atīr, who quoted poems in order to conclude or to be used as a reflection, Ibn Iyās is often responsible for both the prose *and* the verse. Therefore, the author argues that Ibn Iyās did not only quote flowering verses but took a holistic process in his writing, making Ibn Iyās' use of verses worthy of discussion. Also, many verses were composed *ad hoc*, sometimes by a contemporary or later person. Guo illustrates three cases in which Ibn Iyās used his own poetry in order to "achieve greater narrative power and fluidity."

Amalia LEVANONI's contribution also focuses on a specific kind of narratological technique: lachrymose behavior in Mamluk chronicles, specifically weeping and crying in episodes of Yūsuf Ibn Taghrī Birdī's (813–874/1410–1470) multivolume chronicle *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk Miṣr wal-Qāhira*. Medieval Islamic chronicle literature follows the dominant theoretical perspective that narratives "transmit shared values," so that Muslim traditional history becomes part of the Islamic sciences. The author asserts that emotions have the power to cause emphatic or unsympathetic reactions to a text, a character, or an event; in other words, emotional episodes in Arabic Medieval chronicles fulfill "narratological functions." In his chronicle, Yūsuf Ibn Taghrī Birdī used emotional manifestations because he personally experienced many ups and downs in the Mamluk period during the political reorganization of his time. Levanoni also provides some background on the Sunni models of lachrymose behavior. For example, weeping stood against the "Islamic ideal of *ṣabr*": Patience was regarded as highly important. This concept was mainly influenced by Abū Ḥanīfa (d. 150/767) and Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), who also stated that one part of *ṣabr* is the acceptance of death with patience, whereby the mention of this behavior is gendered: Women are characterized as generally inferior with respect to religion and emotional intelligence, while for men *ṣabr* is especially important for their religious devotion. One example for this distinction between the sexes is the fact that women were (and often still are) excluded from funeral rites because of their emotional expressions. Especially mourning was considered *ḥarām* and thus the opposite of *ṣabr*. According to early Islamic traditions, the Prophet Muḥammad strictly forbade wailing and loud crying because he considered such behavior to be a pagan ritual. In *al-Nujūm al-zāhira*, Yūsuf Ibn Taghrī Birdī chose short dramatic scenes of mourning women, even though their importance to his chronicle is rather marginal. Levanoni thinks that, from a narratological viewpoint, the women's grieving scenes may be viewed as a "repetitive effect technique suggestive of the chronicle's perspective." Levanoni concludes that the lachrymose events of women related to Mamluks fulfill an important narratological function by constructing a plot or leitmotif: It delivers the chronicle's implied message. The scenes in *al-Nujūm al-zāhira* are connected to death, exile, and dismissal of relatives or masters, so that the mourning scenes express grief

over the loss of one's guardian or protector. Writing biographies of those in power serves as a guide for future rulers.

In his article, Amir MAZOR concentrates on the *topos* of predicting the future in early Mamluk historiography. Medical Arab historiographies were not meant to be an “objective science” but were aimed at communicating “didactic, religious, moral, and political messages.” The author explains that *topoi* often promote political or religious causes; here, Mazor introduces a prominent *topos* of the early Mamluk period: the prediction of the future. Many future predictions can be found in the literary sources of the Mamluk period, 50 of which concerning future prediction stemming from various Arabic historical sources are quoted. They all have in common that they refer to the first six decades of the Mamluk period (1250–1310). One indicator for the prominence of future predictions is the large number of anecdotes about it. The question is why the *topos* of predicting the future was so common in Mamluk historiography. Mazor explains that the Ayyubid and Mamluk period marked the first development of a “sufization” of the Muslim society, going back to the support of Sufism by the Zangid and Ayyubid rulers. The Mamluk period marked the climax of the Sufi trends, influencing all classes of society. One of the most prominent Sufi practice was the “cult of the saints, dead or alive,” to which end the tombs of sheikhs were visited, becoming a common activity over time. Following his analysis of the 50 reports about future prediction, the author closes his article with the following thought: The *topos* of predicting the future was used not only for simple entertainment, but also to legitimize the reign of the Mamluk sultans. This led to not only the Mamluk's achievement in the battle field (i. e., while defending the Muslims in Egypt and Syria against the Crusaders and the Mongols) but also the Mamluks' religious and political strategies (i. e., the nomination of an ‘Abbasid' caliph) being discussed. Historiography was thus an important tool for creating legitimacy. It was more accessible for ordinary people, and it was meant to praise the sultan's house. If we are to comprehend this *topos* even better, we must analyze the historiographical, social, religious, and political development of this period.

In the following article, Linda NORTHRUP gives us her perspective on documents as literary texts. Historians tend to think that legal documents present “raw historical data” because they would appear to be the most neutral texts available and provide historical reality. But as the author assures, such documents may provide useful facts but only little historical context. Northrup demonstrates in her study that not all documents are in fact raw material, but sometimes more like literary texts that exhibit “aspects of narrativity.” She also examines how legal or administrative documents fit into a larger historical setting. One of the questions she raises is whether legal documents showing characteristics of a literary text lose their legal authority. In her analysis, the author

presents two studies related to the hospital al-Bīmāristān al-Manṣūrī, which was founded by the Mamluk sultan al-Manṣūr Sayf ad-Dīn Qalāwūn (r. 678–689/1279–1290). This hospital was built as part of the sultan’s monumental complex in Cairo and included as well his tomb, a Qur’an school for children, and a *madrasa*. Therefore, documents relating to this hospital might be helpful to answer further questions. The first document analyzed in this paper is the *taqlīd* for the *riyāsat aṭ-ṭibb* (a letter of appointment for the chief physicianship) of Egypt which is preserved by Ibn al-Furāt (d. 804/1404–1405) in his chronicle *Tārīkh ad-duwal wal-mulūk*. The second document is the *taqlīd* for the *tadrīs aṭ-ṭibb* (a letter of appointment for the professorship of medicine) at the al-Bīmāristān al-Manṣūrī in Cairo. This document was also preserved by Ibn al-Furāt in his chronicle *Tārīkh ad-duwal wal-mulūk* as well as by al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1414) in his scribal manual *Ṣubḥ al-a’shāfi šinā’at al-inshā’*. As Northrup explains, these two documents should be studied together because both positions are attached to the Bīmāristān and “when read together, tell ‘a story.’” Because these two texts exist only in the corpus of sources mentioned above, an analysis thereof could open new perspectives on the historiography of the Mamluk period. The author concludes by emphasizing that both *taqlīds* use a number of literary devices and have a story to tell. She answers the questions that were raised at the beginning – whether legal documents which show some characteristics of a literary text lose their legal authority – in the negative, contending they would still accomplish what they intended to do: to formalize appointments at the Bīmāristān. She suggests that Ibn al-Furāt might have included these texts in his chronicle for esthetic reasons. We certainly know that he also did so because the documents add a completely new dimension to other reports describing the founding of the Bīmāristān.

Irmeli PERHO’s contribution also focuses on Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībirdī and his *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk Miṣr wal-Qāhira*. The author looks at Ibn Taghrībirdī as a “storyteller” and as a “teacher,” raising the question of what Ibn Taghrībirdī wanted his audience and readers to learn. Ibn Taghrībirdī began to write this work for Sultan Jaqmaq’s son Muḥammad, who was his father’s heir to the throne; Ibn Taghrībirdī and Muḥammad were companions. As the author explains, main audience of *al-Nujūm* was the “Mamluk court of Ibn Taghrībirdī’s own time.” The author focuses on the stories told in *al-Nujūm* and its structure. The presentation of reigns within the chronicle all follow the same structure, starting with a summary of the career of the sultan presently sitting on the throne, where after the events of their reign follow in chronological order. Ibn Taghrībirdī concluded by evaluating the sultan and his achievements. Perho’s thesis is that this chronicle might have been read at courtly sessions. The article analyzes three 7th-/13th-century Mamluk rulers: as-Ashraf Khalīl, Kitbughā, and Lājīn. Perho compares Ibn Taghrībirdī’s presentation of both of their reigns and

explains that Ibn Taghrībirdī's account begins, as usual, with a short presentation of the sultan's accession to the throne. Perho's analysis depicts the structure of this work and explains that Ibn Taghrībirdī's descriptions of the reign of as-Ashraf Khalīl, Kitbughā, and Lājīn is evidence of his carefully collecting his material and selecting the facts he wanted to present to his readers. Ibn Taghrībirdī's main audience was the Mamluk court, so that some elements in his stories were possibly meant to be read out loud in court. But Ibn Taghrībirdī's chronicles were not meant only to entertain the audience, but to educate them, too. He also wanted to guide his companion Muḥammad and to teach him "how to be a good ruler."

In his article, Carl PETRY analyzes the gendered nuances in historiographical discourses of the Mamluk period, focusing on the discussion of qualities attributed to women and noting that there is an almost complete lack of "certifiably female voices" in surviving biographical or narrative literature from the Mamluk period. In contrast to later Ottoman sources, where female authors are visible on a regular basis, in Mamluk literature the majority was male. In the first category we find the depiction of women in volume 12 of the biographical dictionary of al-Sakhāwī (*al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi' fī ahl al-qarn al-tāsi'*), and the second category presents their involvement in criminal activities in narrative chronicles of the period. The survey of women in al-Sakhāwī's dictionary lists over 1000 biographies in volume 12 of *al-Ḍaw' al-lāmi' fī ahl al-qarn al-tāsi'*; 20 individuals were chosen for consideration. The author's criteria for choosing them is based on narrations of activities seen to provide notoriety to distinguished women: their prominence in *ḥadīth*, the writing of a lucid script, multiple marriages to men of high status, participation in political procedures, presiding over religious services, and so forth. The author describes the women's behavior, depiction, and social position and reflects on the preceding narratives, their characteristics, and style. A look at al-Sakhāwī's erudition shows there are similarities and differences in his reports about men and women: Though al-Sakhāwī's assessment of the acuity and talent of women may appear less distinctive than that of males, his estimation of ability "did not defer appreciably for either gender." While al-Sakhāwī sometimes referred to scholarly writing by women, this occurs much less often than in his references to men. For example, while reporting on a woman's authorship, he rarely mentioned the title of their scholarly writings, rather noting that the product was simply a "book" (*kitāb*) without further explanation about its subject or purpose. Nevertheless, his treatment of women remained cautious, even comparatively "neutral."

Boaz SHOSHAN's contribution concentrates on Aḥmad b. Abī Ḥasan 'Alī, also known as Ibn Zunbul, who came from al-Maḥalla al-Kubrā in the Egyptian Delta and wrote on the Ottoman Conquest of Syria and Egypt. Ibn Zunbul wrote several conventions on geomancy and astronomy, e. g., the *Kitāb qānūn al-dunyā* ("The

Book on the Order of the World”). Shoshan’s introduces Ibn Zunbul’s historical book dealing with the period between al-Ghawri’s defeat in Syria 1516 and the years following the conquest of Egypt. Different titles have been passed down for Ibn Zunbul’s work; Shoshan uses the Cairo edition from 1998 (*waq’at* [rather *wāqī’at*] *al-Ghawri wal-sultān Salīm wa-mā jarā baynahumā*, shorthand *Akhīrat al-Mamālīk*). But not only do different titles exist, there are also various versions. The book opens with a side note about the inner struggle in the Ottoman court between Selīm and his rival to the throne, whereupon, according to Ibn Zunbul, the departure of the Mamluk army from Cairo to Syria follows in 1515. Ibn Zunbul writes about al-Ghawri’s defeat and execution by “his own emirs on the battlefield of Marj Dābiq,” but the largest part deals with Selīm’s invasion of Egypt in 1517. In his analysis, Shoshan presents the ideological and theological message Ibn Zunbul wished to communicate. The historiographical value of Ibn Zunbul’s book is rather meager, and some authors even consider most of it to be pure fiction. But what was the aim of Ibn Zubul’s narrative if not historiography? Some scholars regard it more as a “romance” or as “folk epic.” In the last part of his article, Shoshan focuses on early Islamic conquest narratives and their influence on Ibn Zunbul, since he wrote his book on the Ottoman Conquest of Syria and Egypt, which began much later. Ibn Zunbul’s sympathy for the Mamluk regime becomes obvious through the speeches of various protagonists. Despite his sympathy for the Mamluks, even Ibn Zunbul could not disregard what had happened. That the Mamluk dynasty had come to an end “presents Ibn Zunbul as torn politically.” Shoshan concludes by arguing that one should not see a major chasm between Ibn Zunbul and earlier works of historiography.

JO VAN STEENBERGEN’s article focuses on al-Maqrīzī’s history of the Ḥajj (*al-Dhahab al-masbūk*) and on Ibn Khaldūn’s narrative strategies. Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī (ca. 1365–1442), a leading historian of medieval Egypt, wrote several essays on the history of the *ḥajj*, calling them *al-Dhahab al-masbūk* (“The Moulded Gold”). In three parts, the author describes the insights gained from a macrostructural analysis of *al-Dhahab al-masbūk*, looking beyond its simple surface of historiographical data. The first part of Van Steenbergen’s analysis deals with the unravelling of *al-Dhahab al-masbūk* and his transition from history to text and back again. On 40 handwritten pages, al-Maqrīzī presents a summary history in Arabic. This autograph manuscript from 1438 describes the annual pilgrimage to Mecca since the days of the prophet Muḥammad. Van Steenbergen points out the very limited historiographical value of *al-Dhahab al-masbūk*. The manuscript was fully preserved in a contemporary autograph along with nine other manuscripts produced between the 16th and 19th centuries. Also, a few critical text editions have been published in the 20th and 21st centuries. The second part of the analysis introduces, besides al-Maqrīzī, Ibn Khaldūn (“Khalidunism”) and his view of the patterns of history. It is well known that al-

Maqrīzī was impressed as well as influenced by the famous scholar ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406). The biography *Durar al-‘uqūd al-farīda fī tar-ājim al-a’yān al-mufīda* confirms a particular relationship between Ibn Khaldūn, the master, and al-Maqrīzī, the student, as well as an intellectual connection between both men. Some articles by al-Maqrīzī have indeed been the object of a recent “re-appraisal from the perspective of Ibn Khaldūn’s legacy.” The author argues that Ibn Khaldūn’s formulation of a comprehensive theory of history was a unique part of its wider intellectual context of late medieval Arabic historiographical thought, a “booming field” since the 12th century. In the third part of his article, the author questions the Khaldūnian narrative construction of *al-Dhahab al-masbūk*. Could structure and signification along a Khaldūnian line further the analysis and understanding of *al-Dhahab al-masbūk*? The author argues that it is highly rewarding to return texts such as *al-Dhahab al-masbūk* from the edge to the “center of historical action.”

In the last contribution, Thorsten WOLLINA analyzes the changing legacy of a Sufi Shaykh named Mubārak al-Qābūnī and narrative constructions in diaries, chronicles, and biographies from the 15th to the 17th century. Shaykh Mubārak al-Qābūnī was imprisoned by the Mamluk authorities in Damascus in Ramaḍān 899. His followers tried to secure his release, and economic life in Damascus came to a standstill for days. Because of the high death toll, this event is reported in local historiographical literature until the early 17th century. This example serves as an illustration of the authors’ agency in shaping diverging narratives. In his article, the author introduces his sources and his narratological approach, and then presents the relationship between them and the chronology of the event. He focuses on four accounts by Ibn Ṭawq (d. 1509), Ibn al-Ḥimṣī (d. 1524), and Ibn Ṭūlūn (twice). Shaykh Mubārak al-Qābūnī’s clash with the Mamluk authorities has been the subject of many accounts, but the author selected these four because the narrative of the clash was “canonized” after these works. The earliest account on Mubārak’s clash was written by Ibn Ṭawq around the time of the events themselves; the latest account was written by Najm al-Dīn al-Ghazzī (d. 1652) in his *Kawābik al-sā’ira* after 1600. As Wollina explains, Ibn Ṭawq mentions Shaykh Mubārak al-Qābūnī in entries throughout his text, whereas the other two, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī and Ibn Ṭūlūn, already “attempt a biographisation.” In a detailed analysis, Wollina presents the structure and references to Shaykh Mubārak al-Qābūnī made by these three different authors. For example, Wollina remarks that, compared to the literary chronicles of Ibn Ṭawq and Ibn al-Ḥimṣī, the focus of Ibn Ṭūlūn’s biographical account shifted “from the events to their central figure.” The author concludes by proving that, even though different chronicles and biographies adopted the same material, they did not just reproduce one another’s narrative or meaning. On the contrary, the interpretation of Shaykh Mubārak al-Qābūnī’s clash with the Mamluk authorities changed from one account to an-

other. Ibn Ṭawq portrays this event as a threat to his patrons, Ibn al-Ḥimṣī calls it a struggle of Damascenes against the Mamluk “oppressors,” and Ibn Ṭūlūn writes a case study about good and evil and then reinvents it as a “personal tragedy.”

So, what is the overall outcome of this volume of edited articles? A tentative answer would be: Debates on Hayden White’s work “Metahistory” have centered on the epistemological foundations of non-European culture studies. Within this complex debate occurring at different levels, one can isolate one theme that is essential when dealing with (Mamluk) historiographical texts: The hermeneutical principle that must be dealt with when approaching our sources remains a prerequisite for all historical-critical work. Ultimately, there are only “mute texts” that we make communicate with us. Our task is to decode the meaning of these texts, and in doing so we have to always be very aware that such a decoding process is always subjectively refracted at least twice: First, a text only says something about the author’s mind within the context of that author’s particular culture; second, our decoding process is caught up in our own subjectivity, even if we purport to work with so-called “objectivity criteria.”

Like any other composition (whether written or oral), a work of history is first and foremost a construct of language. The events recorded, the actors in those events, the circumstances and locations in which the events took place, and the cultural, societal, or political, and religious details that surrounded them are filtered not only through the writer’s sensibility, bias, or agenda, but rather, most importantly, through the medium of language. Thus, Mamluk historical works are not merely records of the past, but literary texts that may (indeed, should) be approached through literary analysis. The Mamluk historian’s implicit contract with his audience is that he is providing a true record of events. Writers of history routinely stress their truthfulness, their use of reliable sources, their rejection of unreliable, unverifiable, or fantastic material. Yet, despite these avowals of truthfulness, history was not, either for those who wrote it or for their audience, a mere record of facts, but always an act of interpretation. Facts were bearers of meaning (in particular moral meaning); and history was, largely, conceived of as exemplary. Its intent, in large part, was ethical and its means rhetorical. Even if a text wants to be true and correct, it cannot escape its immanent subjectivity and look at the object treated in some neutral way. The subjectivity that resonates in all statements reveals that a text is the product of an individual reorganizing material into a story. Thus, we can primarily recognize the position which the author(s) assume(s) about the object they processed. The individual intent is embedded in supra-individual circumstances, in mentalities that can depend on the respective situation of the author(s), as well as on the temporal, political, spatial, material, and social conditions.

This volume has organized a discussion of Mamluk historical texts, with an emphasis on literary/stylistic analysis, and basically ignores issues of “factuality” versus “fictionality.” None of the Mamluk authors set out to write “fiction”; nor would their audience have viewed their accounts as such. The events depicted were a matter of historical record; their outcome was already known to their audiences, but there was a need to gear their meaning both to contemporary and to general concerns. Their telling is part and parcel of the historian’s task; the means of telling them reflects the historian’s choice of style – and style is all important for conveying meaning. Were these accounts not considered “true,” the purpose behind their telling (and the meaning they convey) would arguably be lost. On the other hand, if they were not told in the most effective manner, their meaning might not be clearly grasped.

Immanent to the text are interpretations of the information and knowledge about the past which were available to the author at the time of writing. Any attempt to decode the textual intentionality should first ask which narrative structures and strategies were used in writing the text. Factual tales – such as biographies, autobiographies or, case in point, chronicles – while claiming reality and referentiability, depict an event that is, in principle, considered true by the reader. While factual texts are not concerned with invented figures, objects, and events, they can clearly – and this is the decisive factor – very well be literary and thus possess a poeticity of their own. They are to be understood as *narrative models of reality*, as constructive attempts at understanding, as something created in language. Here, on the one hand, reality provides too little to be processed as literature. The deficiencies of what exists are remedied by interpreting connections and creating interconnections. Of course, this may provide too much: It is impossible to depict the totality of even a single moment, which necessitates selection in order to transfer a complex and meaningless entropy into a meaningful whole.

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