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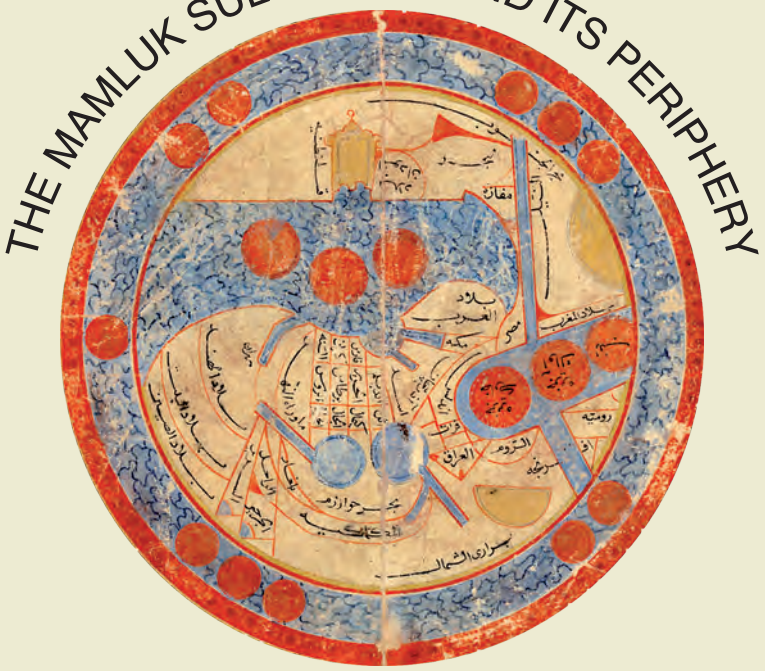
Association pour la Promotion de l'Histoire et de l'Archéologie Orientales
Université de Liège

mémoires n° 14

THE MAMLUK SULTANATE AND ITS PERIPHERY



Edited by

Frédéric BAUDEN

PEETERS

The Mamluk Sultanate and Its Periphery

Cover image: Representation of the world in a copy of Ibn al-Wardī's (d. after 822/1419) *Kharīdat al-ʿajāʾib* (copy of the tenth/sixteenth c., private collection).

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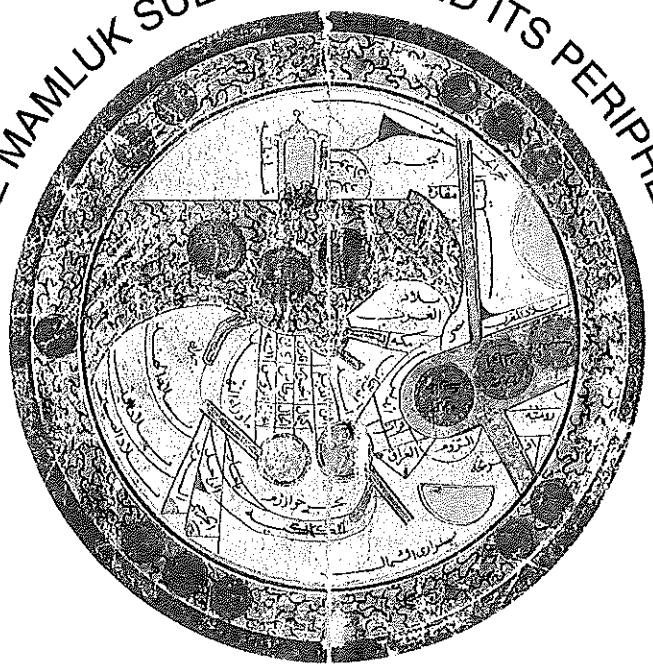

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In loving memory of

Riccardo (1997–2022)

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This volume gathers a selection of papers presented during the first day of the second conference of the School of Mamlūk Studies that was held at Liège Université (June 25–8, 2015). Over the years, the School has proven to be successful at enabling all those interested in Mamluk studies to share and challenge ideas as well as new methods. From its inception, the annual conference has included an intensive course dedicated to a field or discipline rarely taught at universities, a day of panels based on themes, followed by two days[1] devoted to preorganized panels. The theme chosen for the second conference was "The Mamluk Sultanate and Its Periphery." It attracted eleven papers; of these, seven were submitted for publication in this volume. In addition, an article by the editor of this volume was included, as it fits well into the theme, though it was written later and read on another occasion.[2]

The organization of the conference was made possible thanks to the generous financial support of various institutions. It is not only a duty, but above all a pleasure to express my deepest gratitude to them: first and foremost the Fonds de la recherche scientifique (F.R.S.-FNRS, Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles), then the Patrimoine and the Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres of Liège Université. Over the years, the collaboration with Marlis Saleh (University of Chicago) and Antonella Ghersetti (Ca' Foscari University, Venice), co-founders and co-organizers of the School, has proven fruitful, effective, and, more than anything else, friendly. Their help and moral support on this occasion, and others, were essential. For practical matters, I also greatly benefited from the assistance of two of my former students: Élise Franssen, who was at the time a postdoctoral researcher at the F.R.S-FNRS, and Alessandro Rizzo, who held a research fellowship from the same institution to complete his doctoral dissertation. During the conference, several colleagues kindly agreed to chair and participate as discussants in the sessions. I give them my warmest thanks for their time and efforts: Doris Behrens-Abouseif, Mounira Chapoutot, Antonella Ghersetti, Carole Hillenbrand, Yaacov Lev, Tetsuya Ohtoshi, Dwight Reynolds, and Marlis Saleh. Several colleagues also accepted the task of assessing the articles published here. Their work was generally under-appreciated,

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1 In the case of the second conference, the School was a victim of its own success: given the number of submissions and, in the absence of fair criteria to decline some of them, we had to make an exception and allow for a third day of panels.

2 It was part of the panel "The Versatile Approach to the Diplomatic Dialogue" organized by Alessandro Rizzo for the Sixth Conference of the School of Mamlūk Studies (Waseda University, Tokyo, June 15–7, 2019).

as the blind peer review process is anonymous, preventing me from naming them here. I hope that these few words will suffice to express to them how much this volume owes to them. Last but not least, this volume would not exist without the trust the authors put in this endeavor. Their (almost) endless patience allowed me to overcome, with serenity and relief, many of the unexpected issues generated by the challenges the world faced over the last three years. Without their continuous support and understanding, this volume would not lie in the reader's hands.

The editor

ABBREVIATIONS

BASOR	*Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
EI²	*The Encyclopaedia of Islam. New Edition*, ed. C.E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: Brill, 1960–2007), 11 vols.
EQ	*Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. J. Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2001–2006), 6 vols.
IJMES	*International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*
ILS	*Islamic Law and Society*
JA	*Journal asiatique*
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JESHO	*Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JSAI	*Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*
MSR	*Mamluk Studies Review*
REI	*Revue des études islamiques*
SI	*Studia islamica*
SIr	*Studia iranica*
WI	*Die Welt des Islams*

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LIST OF FIGURES, TABLES, AND CHARTS

THE MAMLUK SULTANATE AND ITS PERIPHERY
AN INTRODUCTION

Frédéric BAUDEN

The word 'periphery' (from Greek περιφέρω, "to carry around") is used to designate a circumference or an external boundary. By definition, the word is intrinsically linked to the existence of something, usually called the 'center,' around which something else revolves. Taken together but in opposition, the two terms have often been associated in modern times with the core-periphery model, a conception of the world that has generated multiple biased perceptions of geographical spaces. In terms of global geography and according to the core-periphery concept, the world is divided into two parts: the core or the center is represented by developed countries (broadly speaking, those in Europe, North America, and Japan) while the rest of the world is identified as the periphery.[1] In the field of Islamic studies, Ralph W. Brauer's 1995 study on boundaries and frontiers as they were perceived in the works of medieval Islamic geographers concluded that the concept of frontier was absent from these works while legal texts remained silent on the issue of political boundaries.[2] On the basis of this assessment, he claimed that the core-periphery model was significant to characterize the frontier. In this view, those living on the periphery were linked to those living in the center(s) in a hierarchical and structural relationship, a highly imbalanced relationship in which the inhabitants of core areas took advantage of those on the periphery. During the last few decades, this model has rightly been challenged by scholars of all disciplines as a top-down or colonialist perspective. As A. Asa Eger has put it in a recent edited volume dedicated to the archeology of medieval Islamic frontiers,[3] "the frontier as peripheral is created by the central state, and is accordingly a matter of perspective."[4]

The selection of the concept of periphery as the theme of the second conference of the School of Mamlūk Studies was not motivated by the above-mentioned biased view, rather by a desire to concentrate our attention on areas that are usually perceived as "peripheral" and thus less studied for a number of reasons.

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1 Mabogunje, The dynamics.

2 Brauer, Boundaries and frontiers. Since then, see Antrim, *Routes and realms*; Antrim, *Mapping.*

3 Asa Eger, *The archaeology.*

4 Asa Eger, The archaeology 6.

The most obvious of these reasons concerns the availability of sources, be they narrative, documentary, or material. It is widely known that most historians lived in urban centers, particularly the two main centers of power, i.e., Cairo and Damascus, and that their interests and/or their access to information about peripheral areas were inferior to those places where they lived and worked. Despite this caveat, the conference showed that it is still possible to scrutinize some aspects of what we understand now as the periphery. The most unequivocal definition is geographic.[5] As for contemporary appraisals, we are left with a few descriptions of the limits of the Mamluk realm found in some administrative manuals, like Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī's (d. 749/1349) *al-Taʿrīf bi-l-muṣṭalaḥ al-sharīf*, in which the author describes the geographical boundaries (*ḥadd*, pl. *ḥudūd*) of the various administrative districts (*mamlaka*, pl. *mamālik*) that the sultanate was comprised of.[6] This administrative representation of the realm reflected the political view. The Mamluk sultans overtly referred to the extension of their territories according to the circumstances, notably in documents in which the description of the territories was required and had legal implications. In the text of the truce negotiated in 692/1293 between the Mamluk sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl (r. 689–93/1290–3) and the king of Aragon James II (r. 1291–1327), the applicable territories of each party were listed. In the case of al-Ashraf Khalīl, they were described as follows:

> Provided that the territory of our lord the Sultan al-Malik al-Ashraf Ṣalāḥ al-Dunyā wa-l-Dīn, his citadels, castles, ports, provinces, harbors, territory with its coastlands, its mainland, its regions, its towns, and everything in his realm as reckoned a part thereof and annexed thereto of all the regions pertaining to Anatolia, al-ʿIrāq, the East, the North, Aleppo, the Euphrates, the Yemen, the Hijaz, Egypt, and the West;
>
> The boundary of these regions and territory, their harbors and coastlands are on the northern mainland from Constantinople and the coastal territory of Anatolia, Tripoli in Syria, and the coastland of Barqa, Alexandria, Damietta, Ṭīna, Qaṭyā, Gaza, Ascalon, Jaffa, Arsūf [Arsur], Caesarea, Atlit [Pierre-Encise or Château Pèlerin], Haifa, Acre, Tyre, Sidon, Beirut, Jubayl [Gibelet], al-Batrūn [Boutron], Anfa [Nephin] of Tripoli in Syria, Tartus [Tortosa], Marqiyā [Maracle], al-Marqab [Margat], the coastland of al-Marqab [including] Bāniyās [Valenia] and others, Jabla [Gibel], Latakia, al-Suwaydiyya [St. Simeon], and all the harbors and the mainland up to the port of Damietta and the lake of Tinnīs; their boundary on the western mainland, from Tunis and the region of Ifrīqiya with its territory and harbors, Tripoli of the West with its ports, territory and harbors, Barqa with its

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5 Recently, several studies have been devoted to the issue of periphery. See Abulafia and Berend, *Medieval frontiers*; Amitai and Conermann, *The Mamluk sultanate*; Asa Eger, *The archaeology*; Boussac et al. (eds.), *Frontières et marges*; *Frontières spatiales*; Fuess and Heyberger (eds.), *La Frontière méditerranéenne*; Powers and Standen, *Frontiers in question*.

6 Ibn Faḍl Allāh al-ʿUmarī, *al-Taʿrīf* ii, 246–63.

> ports, territory, and harbors to the port of Alexandria and Rosetta, the lake of Tinnīs with its coastlands, territory, and harbors and what is encompassed in the territories and provinces mentioned, including the cities, ports, coastlands, harbors and roads [...].[7]

This list of the territories where the truce would be applied with all its implications reflected only part of the reality of Mamluk authority. The text emphasizes the numerous fortresses conquered by al-Ashraf Khalīl and his predecessors in Palestine, thus bolstering the impact of the takeover of the last stronghold, Acre, a couple of years earlier. At the same time, it included territories where the Mamluk sultan exerted little control, like Ifrīqiya, for instance. The official proclamation here was more idealistic than realistic. Similar overstatements were also made by al-Ashraf Khalīl's brother and successor, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, whose titles included 'sultan of Nubia' and 'sultan of Yemen and the Hijaz.'[8] Mamluk historians sometimes passed on in their chronicles and annals some of these proclamations.[9] The impression is that of a seamlessly unitary polity in which the peripheral regions appeared to be fully subordinate, while in fact the latter's subordination was neither stable nor continuous.[10]

In this volume, several papers address issues linked to this most obvious geographical interpretation of the term 'periphery' while others approach it from other perspectives. A short summary of each paper is thus appropriate.

With the conquest of Acre in 690/1291 and the defeat of the Mongols in 702/1303, the threat of an invasion faded away but fear still prevailed. To come to grips with this fear, it is well-known that the Mamluks embraced a multifaceted strategy. In Palestine, they razed to the ground most of the coastal fortresses built by the crusaders, in order to thwart any new disembarkations and attempts by the latter to reconquer them. At the same time, they displaced the centers of the coastal cities, like Tripoli, Tyre, or Acre, further inland. To compensate for the absence of a regular fleet, they posted garrisons and built watch towers along the coast.[11] They also reorganized the territory administratively by creating new districts.[12] The northern marches of Syria were subjected to a different policy. There, the Mamluks created a buffer zone where power was shared by various princely

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7 Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aʿshā* xiv, 64–5; trans. by the present author adapting Holt, *Early Mamluk diplomacy* 133.

8 The titulature is found in a letter dated 705/1306 and addressed to James II of Aragon. See Alarcón y Santón and García de Linares, *Los documentos árabes* 355.

9 See, for instance, al-Maqrīzī, *al-Sulūk* iv/1, 547 when speaking of al-Muʾayyad Shaykh: "the sultan of the territories of Egypt, and the lands of Syria and the Hijaz and Anatolia."

10 Meloy, Mamluk rule. I thank John Meloy for sharing with me the text of his unpublished paper presented at the second conference of the School of Mamluk Studies held in Liège.

11 See Fuess, Rotting ships, and more recently, Piana, The Mamluk defense.

12 Drory, Founding a new *mamlaka*.

Turkmen dynasties, like the Qaramanids and the Dulkadirids in southern Anatolia. In Syria, in areas where it was more difficult to exert control, the Mamluks preferred to rely on local elites. They did this in the Gharb, the region located southeast of Beirut, where a local family, the Buḥturids, ruled as governors in the name of the Mamluk sultan.[13]

In this volume, Anne Troadec investigates the case of the Ayyubid principality of Hama. Located between Aleppo and Damascus, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn had given Hama to one of his nephews whose descendants ruled over the city and the region until Baybars' conquest of the *Bilād al-Shām.* As a buffer state between the two main Syrian cities—Aleppo in the north and Damascus in the south—, Hama profited by its understanding of politics. Unlike the other Ayyubid principalities, the Ayyubids of Hama successfully negotiated the transfer of power from the Ayyubids to the Mamluks with a strategy that allowed them to stay in power until 742/1341. In her analysis of the nature of the relationships established by the Ayyubids of Hama with their Mamluk overlords, Troadec focuses on three key elements. The first one is the issue of hierarchy: from the very beginning of Mamluk intervention in the *Bilād al-Shām*, the sultan of Cairo built a relation based on hierarchy, clearly indicating to the Ayyubid princes of Hama what their ranks and status were. He did so symbolically and through his actions. Aware that their position depended on accepting their new status of dependency, the Ayyubids of Hama embraced the conditions. The second key element identified by Troadec is exclusivity. In order to maintain their status with the Mamluks, the Ayyubids of Hama had to accept the political program of the Cairene sultans and its consequences. Alliances with the Mamluks' enemies—the crusaders and the Mongols—would have been fatal to their power. Furthermore, the Mamluks expected military cooperation against their enemies. In several circumstances, the unfailing loyalty of the Ayyubids of Hama was clear. Troadec concludes by discussing the concept of formalization. Highly dependent on the two former elements, formalization was a corroboration of these. The symbolic representation of the hierarchical dependence could be seen in various settings, including parades and court visits. The two rulers regularly exchanged a variety of gifts. Furthermore, the Mamluk sultans bestowed symbols of power like robes of honor, horses, and arms to the Ayyubids of Hama to confirm their status and rank. To conclude, the Mamluks kept the Ayyubids of Hama in power first and foremost because they did not represent a threat to Mamluk authority in general, but also because the Mamluks preferred to rely on the Ayyubids as intermediaries to control the region—at the very least as long as they needed them.

In Egypt, the Mamluks adopted a different approach for their defensive strategy. On the littoral, they maintained and strengthened existing fortresses, and took advantage of the natural deterrent the web of canals offered against any milit-

[13] See Salibi, The Buḥturids.

ary endeavor.[14] In case of invasion, the gateway to Egypt since antiquity remained the northern Sinai. In this volume, Hani Hamza precisely addresses the issue of the defense strategy implemented by the Mamluks in this area. This 'periphery in the middle,' as he coins it, was indeed situated at the crossroads between Egypt, Syria, and the Hijaz.[15] As Hamza shows, the Mamluks developed settlements along the route that led from Egypt to Syria in northwest Sinai. Two of these settlements, Qaṭiyya and al-Ṭīna, are the object of his analysis. Qaṭiyya was a station that became an obligatory stop for anyone traveling between Egypt and Syria in the Mamluk period. As such, this small settlement came to play a significant role on various occasions, as detailed by the textual sources that allow Hamza to retrace the history of Qaṭiyya from the beginning of Mamluk rule up to the Ottoman conquest. He demonstrates that it was administered by a governor of the lowest rank (*wālī*) according to the Mamluk hierarchical system of power and that the person holding this position gained in importance by the mid-eighth/fourteenth century, a fact that corroborates Qaṭiyya's rise in standing at that time. The status of Qaṭiyya continued to grow until the threat of an Ottoman conquest became more concrete. Due to its location, merchants traveling by land between Egypt and Syria had to pass by this small city where taxes were collected by various office-holders on behalf of the Mamluk sultan. The second location Hamza studied is al-Ṭīna, a small secondary port that served in cases of necessity when other, more central harbors like Alexandria and Damietta were not accessible for meteorological reasons. The port suffered from successive attacks by European pirates. As a consequence, at the beginning of the ninth/fifteenth century, the Mamluk sultans began to build a fort whose function was to fend off potential attacks from the sea and, further inland, against Qaṭiyya. Despite their significance as warning posts against any potential invasion or incursion into Egypt by land or sea and the presence of remains, neither site was ever systematically excavated. It is hoped that this gap will be filled in the future.

In order to strengthen their legitimacy, the Mamluks turned to the Hijaz for its political and religious significance in the eyes of the greater Muslim world. After the brutal demise of the Abbasid caliphate of Baghdad in 656/1258 and its re-establishment in Cairo three years later, Baybars was quick to claim the title of Servant of the Two Noble Sanctuaries (*khādim al-ḥaramayn al-sharīfayn*), a title that had been part of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's titulature.[16] Thanks to John Meloy, we now know that the Mamluks exerted true control over the Hijaz, albeit over a very lim-

[14] See Pradines, The Mamluk fortifications.

[15] On the strategic position of the Sinai, see Mouton, *Le Sinaï médiéval.*

[16] See *Thesaurus d'épigraphie islamique*, record no. 2102; Aigle, Les Inscriptions de Baybars 66. The title appears in an inscription dated 659/1261 on the walls of the Citadel of Damascus to celebrate the restoration works ordered by Baybars after the Mongol occupation of the city.

ited period of time, i.e., during the pilgrimage.[17] Nevertheless, the sultans continually boasted of being the rulers who exercised dominion over the whole region. Even though they made this claim first and foremost to gain the respect of their subjects, they also intended to convey it to foreign rulers; this method was successful with some rulers, but less so with others.

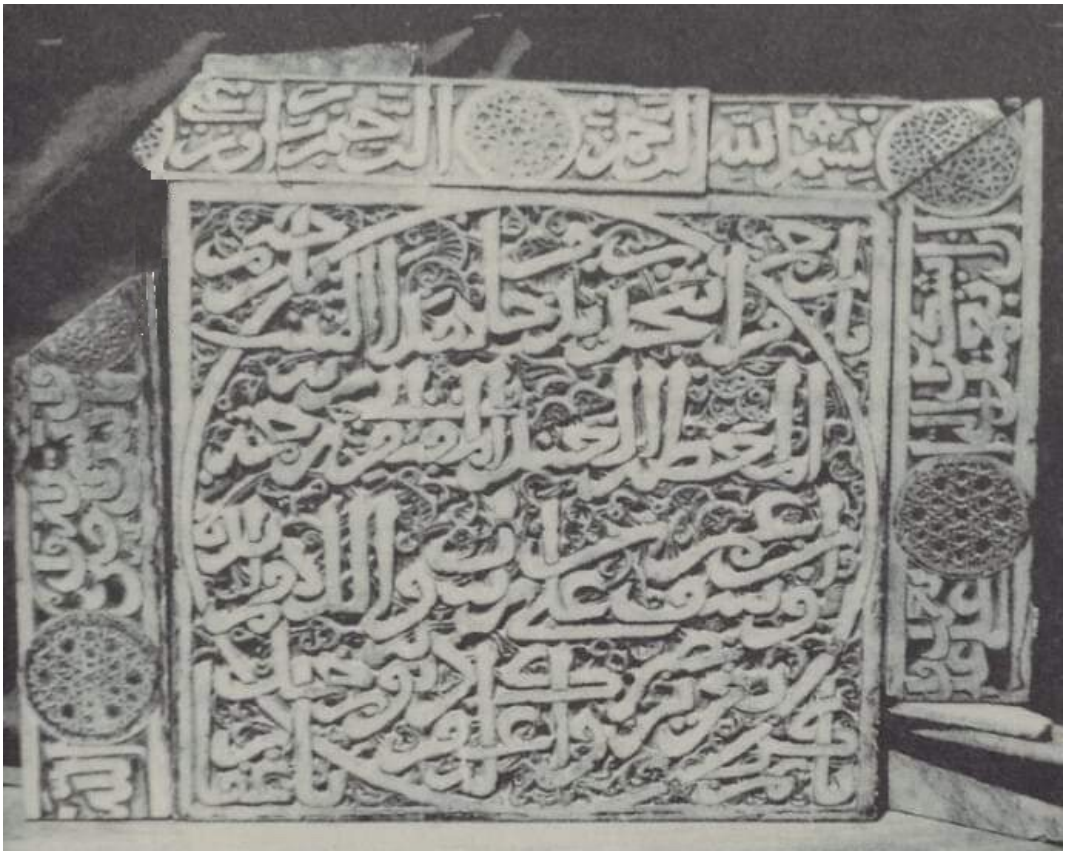

Figure 1.1: al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf's inscription placed inside the Kaʿba
(COURTESY *Thesaurus d'épigraphie islamique*)

From the beginning of the Mamluk sultanate, the Rasulid sultans were the first in the peripheral realms to contend with their Mamluk counterparts' hegemony over the holy cities. They did so by pouring a part of the huge revenues the maritime trade was generating in their ports into the construction or restoration of buildings in the holy cities.[18] A witness to this policy can be seen in an inscription dated to Shawwāl 680/January-February 1282 celebrating the restoration of the marble slabs inside the Kaʿba by al-Muẓaffar Yūsuf (see fig. 1.1).[19] Another inscription, dated three years later, states that the same sultan paid for the repair of

17 Meloy, *Imperial power*.

18 Sadek, *Custodians*.

19 See *Thesaurus d'épigraphie islamique*, record no. 2444.

a signpost (*ʿalam*) at ʿArafāt, confirms this sultan's desire to leave his imprint in the area.[20] His successors continued to build *madrasa*s and other structures in Mecca, and distributed alms and grain on various occasions.[21] However, from the beginning of the eighth/fourteenth c., the military interventionism of the Mamluk sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad signaled to his Yemeni counterpart his intentions with regard to his role in the Hijaz. The Mamluk sultans made it clear that the symbols of power connected with the holy cities, like sending the veil (*kiswa*) for the Kaʿba, were and would remain their prerogatives. When, in the mid-eighth/fourteenth c., the Rasulid al-Mujāhid ʿAlī attempted to reassert his influence on Mecca during his pilgrimage by covering the Kaʿba with the veil he had carried with him, the Mamluk amir in charge of the Egyptian caravan kidnapped him and brought him to Cairo. He was imprisoned for more than a year before being allowed to return to Yemen.[22] The Rasulid sultans then limited their involvement in the Hijaz to other forms of influence, like supporting the scholarly elite. In the early ninth/fifteenth c., a significant and dramatic change modified the way the Rasulids interacted with the Hijaz, and to some extent with the Mamluks.

In this volume, Frédéric Bauden directs his attention to the early ninth/fifteenth c., taking as a starting point a letter addressed by the Rasulid sultan to his Mamluk peer. The document, unique in many ways, more particularly because it is the first original Rasulid document to surface, tackles various issues. These include the diplomatic rules prevailing in letters exchanged by the two powers, the kind of dialogue the chancery secretaries of each side established through the medium of official correspondence by having recourse to poetry, among other media. The study of the diplomatic contacts between the Rasulid and Mamluk sultans, without neglecting the Meccan Sharīf and the Timurid ruler, reconstructs the details of a combination of events that led to a shift in the relations of the various powers with regard to the Hijaz. The factor that triggered this shift was Ḥasan b. ʿAjlān's rise to the Sharifate at the end of the eighth/fourteenth c. Unlike most of his predecessors, this Sharīf wanted to exert more control over the whole region and, by doing so, accrue more revenues. The opening of a customs house in Jedda contributed to his wealth. The Mamluks and the Rasulids took a dim view of his desire to expand his autonomy. The letter studied in this article demonstrates that the Rasulid sultan was the first to perceive the danger of the Sharīf's new policies and what these represented for his economy. The Rasulid sultan took serious measures to thwart the Sharīf's ambitions, most notably by supporting one of his challengers. At the same time, he could not take this step without informing the Egyptian authorities. The letter conveyed this message but also requested that the Mamluk sultan exert his authority over the Sharīf. Thus, the Rasulids recognized,

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[20] See *Thesaurus d'épigraphie islamique*, record no. 15029.

[21] See Vallet, Les Sultans du Yémen; Mortel, Madrasas.

[22] See Varisco, The trials and tribulations.

de facto, that the Sharīf depended on the Mamluk sultan. When the Rasulid letter reached Cairo, more than a year after it had been redacted, the situation in the Hijaz had evolved. The Mamluk sultan had come to the same conclusion as his Yemeni peer and had replaced Ḥasan b. ʿAjlān with one of his relatives. Shortly after, Ḥasan b. ʿAjlān was reappointed, a clear indication that the Mamluk authorities were unable to really control the situation in the Hijaz. Eventually, this series of events worked in favor of the Mamluks. Direct contacts were established between the merchants working for their respective sultans. In the meantime, from Barsbāy on, the Mamluk sultans tightened their grip over the Hijaz. Together with the redirection of trade from Asia to the ports now under Mamluk control, these factors led to the disappearance of the Rasulid dynasty.

The Rasulids were not the only rulers with a desire to encroach upon the Mamluks' prerogatives over the Hijaz and the holy cities. Other contenders came forward in the ninth/fifteenth c.; first and foremost among these was the Timurids. As early as 819/1416–7, Shāh Rukh started to claim the title of caliph and his immediate successors followed suit.[23] Some twenty years later, he also tentatively challenged the Mamluks by asking permission to dispatch the veil for the Kaʿba. Malika Dekkiche has shown that the veil in question was not the *kiswa* that covers the external faces of the square building, rather another one that hung inside it; thus, the uproar that the Timurid request caused in Cairo proves that its symbolic impact was deep.[24]

Other challengers came to the fore in the late ninth/fifteenth c. when the Mamluks started to lose their position as the central epicenter in Islam. The Ottoman conquest of Constantinople and the rise of the Aq Qoyunlu Turkmen confederation contributed to this downgrade. In this volume, Shivan Mahendrarajah devotes his article to the policy of the Aq Qoyunlu Uzūn Ḥasan (d. 882/1478). Pursuing a policy reinstated by the Qara Qoyunlu Jahān-Shāh (d. 872/1467), between 873/1469 and 881/1477 Uzūn Ḥasan regularly sent the Iraqi pilgrimage caravan and the accompanying palanquin (*maḥmal*) to the Hijaz. His intent was to deprive the Mamluk sultan of his title of the Servant of the Two Noble Sanctuaries and, by doing so, to appropriate his standing as a central political figure in Islam. If Uzūn Ḥasan's attempts proved successful in some respects (his name was pronounced during the sermon in Medina in 877/1473), his defeat by the Ottomans in 878/1473 foiled his designs. Once again, the support of the local elite and of the Sharīfs of the two holy cities were critical, a detail the Aq Qoyunlu ruler seems to have underestimated. The Sharīfs agreed to be courted by the Mamluks' opponents, but always with the hope of receiving an increased fair share in terms of political and economic power. Uzūn Ḥasan failed to provide enough money along

[23] See Binbaş, *Intellectual networks* 260.

[24] See Dekkiche, New source, new debate.

with his policy toward the Hijaz, a failure that other competitors, like the Ottomans, quickly grasped.

Over the last decade or so, archeologists have become increasingly interested in excavating areas at the periphery of the Islamic world. This shift can partially be explained by the prevailing political situation in the central Middle East.[25] Among the archeologists who have focused their attention on sites far from the center are Bethany J. Walker, whose work in Jordan, for instance, has shown that such sites can reveal as much about the provincial perspective as they do about the Mamluk sultanate itself.[26] Among the artifacts unearthed during excavations, one regularly finds coins.

The study of Mamluk numismatics experienced a noteworthy boom after the 1960s. Multiple factors can explain this renewed interest in Mamluk coins, the most prominent being the following. In 1964, one of the few specialists in this discipline, Paul Balog, published the first corpus of Mamluk coins, offering for the first time a comprehensive presentation of the material and a useful tool for identifying types.[27] Balog's organization of the coins was based on his deep knowledge of and experience with institutional and private collections around the world. Nevertheless, he could not grasp all the material that was available at that time because many collections were still uncatalogued while others remained difficult to access. Balog was fully aware that his corpus was far from complete, and six years later, he published an addendum.[28] Numismatists continue to regard Balog's work as 'the reference' but also recognize that there is a need for an updated corpus that takes into account all the new types that have surfaced over the last fifty years and the readings of the legends must be improved. Ideally, the classification of the material should be reconsidered in order to allow and facilitate the inclusion of new types; a work like this has started under the direction of Warren Schultz.[29]

Over the years, numismatists have also concluded that an essential preliminary step in establishing a corpus involves publishing catalogs of coin collections according to a given mint or region and covering the whole period of Islamic coinage.[30] Indeed, such catalogs would give numismatists the ability to follow numis-

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25 See Asa Eger, *The archaeology.*

26 Walker, *Jordan*.

27 Balog, *The coinage*.

28 Balog, The coinage.

29 The Mamluk Mint Series Web Resource was inaugurated in 2003 and should be made available online in the future. See http://mamluk.uchicago.edu/medoc-and-mamluk-studies-resources.html (last consulted in October 2022).

30 Such catalogs are called *sylloge*. The first who introduced the *sylloge* in Islamic numismatics was Lutz Ilisch. He applied this model to the collection of the Forschungstelle für islamische Nümismatik (University of Tübingen) which is renowned as one of the richest in terms of chronological and geographical coverage. Several volumes have appeared, including those

matic production over the centuries at a micro level and take into account overstriking. While Balog's corpus and the various *sylloge* that have been published or are announced are useful to our understanding of the minting history of a dynasty or of a local authority, they shed little light on the circulation of these coins. The reason is simple: most of the coins found in institutional and private collections lack any historical detail of their place of finding if they are not clearly identified as belonging to a recorded (ideally published) hoard.

Coins unearthed in the context of excavations led by an archaelogical team are thus all the more significant. The numismatic material brought to light during excavations must be described accurately in archeological reports. Unfortunately, this task is not always fulfilled and when it is, it is not always entrusted to a numismatist. Such issues complicate the analysis of the findings. In his article in this volume, Warren Schultz examines the coins from the southern *Bilād al-Shām*, particularly those found at Jordanian sites. Though several mints were active in the region from the Umayyad to the Ayyubid period, it appears that this minting activity ceased under the Mamluks. This would indicate that the unearthed coins can enlighten us about their use in a remote region. Based on his perusal of dozens of local reports and publications and his personal knowledge of several sites where he was called in as a specialist, Schultz is in an excellent position to analyze the findings. From the thirteen excavated sites, mostly located along trade or pilgrimage routes, some 3,500 coins were exhumed. The number of coins for each site is rather limited, but in some cases hoards have been discovered. The sites where these hoards were dug up correspond to locations that were known as administrative centers. The chronological distribution is also significant: the overwhelming majority of the coins date from the Turkish era, a period when the Mamluks invested in the region. The finding of copper coins was less impressive (roughly 5 percent of the total). This petty coinage, whose intrinsic value was inferior to that of the precious metals, was used for small purchases and the issuing authority fixed the exchange rate relative to coins with higher intrinsic values. Given that the places these coins were found were not where they had been minted, several questions arise with no definitive answer because the quantity of information that the coins convey is limited. Unfortunately, textual sources also prove unhelpful considering the region we are dealing with.

The publication, in 1976, of Jean-Claude Garcin's seminal study of Qūṣ represented a milestone from various points of view.[31] He managed to write a

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regarding the Mamluk period covering Aleppo, Damascus, Hama, Palestine, and Egypt. See *Sylloge*. Other significant collections followed suit: the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (for the Mamluk period, see Nicol, *Sylloge*) and the Israel Museum, the latter holding Paul Balog's collection (see Baidoun, *Sylloge*, covering Egypt, and the forthcoming volume by the same author comprising al-Shām, the Jazīra, and Anatolia).

[31] Garcin, *Un centre musulman*. Over time, this book became a reference for many historians, as

detailed history of this rather remote city from Upper Egypt, a region scantly and unevenly mentioned in the sources authored by historians based in Cairo because of the preservation of a biographical dictionary devoted to the people from Upper Egypt, and particularly those from Qūṣ: al-Udfuwī's (d. 748/1347) *al-Ṭāliʿ al-saʿīd*. Containing a little less than six hundred biographies, the work starts with a geographical description of the whole region and its main cities. Combined with other textual and documentary sources, including epigraphical ones, al-Udfuwī's text offers a unique insight into the history of a city and its surroundings located far from Cairo, the center of power. Despite the focus on major urban centers like Cairo and Damascus, in Mamluk historiography, local histories and biographical dictionaries do exist for the Mamluk period.

In this volume, Or Amir delves into a little-known history of Ṣafad by a rather obscure local scholar whose name was Shams al-Dīn al-ʿUthmānī (d. aft. 780/1379). Although information about the work was widespread as early as 1953, it remained unpublished until 2009, when a manuscript with a full copy of the text was finally edited. As Amir stresses, Ṣafad rose to prominence on the local level after Baybars conquered it from the Templars and devised his policy for Mamluk rule over Syria. Ṣafad became the capital of a new regional military and administrative center (*mamlaka*) with a Muslim settlement replacing the Frankish one. The foundation of this new center involved establishing new administrative structures. It supposed that highly educated administrative personnel would settle in the city and form a new civilian elite. The ʿUthmānī family contributed to the founding of this new elite by managing to hold several administrative posts in the city over several generations; it even played a role in the education of the most renowned of all Ṣafadīs: Ṣalāh al-Dīn Khalīl b. Aybak (d. 764/1363). After detailing the most prominent members of the ʿUthmānī family, Amir focuses his attention on the hidden agenda behind Shams al-Dīn's work. The authors of such local histories and biographical dictionaries intended, first and foremost, to establish their authority and standing by providing readers with numerous examples of the family members' credentials, and Shams al-Dīn al-ʿUthmānī was no exception to the rule. His history of the town where his family had become part of the local elite was written at a time when the position of Shāfiʿī judges in the Mamluk realms was challenged by the establishment of three additional judgeships of other juridical schools. Being the last member of his family to be mentioned in the sources, it seems that his efforts were not really successful. Be that as it may, his work is a mine of information for those interested in writing the history of provincial towns like Ṣafad.[32] Such a work, which still needs to be undertaken, can take its inspiration from Garcin's masterpiece.

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is confirmed by its reprint almost thirty years later.

[32] See, for instance, for Gaza: Amitai, The development.

Information on the periphery of the Mamluk realms, particularly the borderlands, appears frequently in the historiographical tradition of the sultanate. Military expeditions, incursions by an enemy, and diplomatic missions crossing the border figure among the topics that historians factored in when narrating the reigns of the sultans. Works specifically dedicated to the events of one of the peripheral areas are almost non-existent. In this light, the manuscript studied by Takao Ito in this volume will certainly draw the attention of scholars concerned by Mamluk historiography. The manuscript in question, a *unicum* held in the collections of the Topkapı Palace, was briefly described for the first time in 1936 by the French historian Claude Cahen who perused it in the Istanbul collections while undertaking his research on northern Syria during the crusades.[33] It consists of three textual units copied by a former student of Ibn Ḥajar (d. 852/1449) named Ibn Bahādur (d. 877/1473), who dedicated the whole manuscript to a certain Yaʿqūb Shāh who served as an interpreter at the sultan's court. Ibn Bahādur also authored the first text as well as, most probably, the third. These two texts consist of a compilation of reports regarding, respectively, the events mostly linked to the Dulkadirids, and those dealing with Tīmūr. The second text contains Ibn Ajā's report of Yashbak min Mahdī's expedition against the Dulkadirid ruler between 875/1471 and 877/1472 as well as Ibn Ajā's account of his mission to the Aq Qoyunlu ruler during the same period. This text, available in two editions published almost contemporarily, has since attracted the attention of several scholars. In his study, Ito shares the result of his close analysis of the contents and their collation with the sources used by the compiler: Ibn Ḥajar and al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1451). This places Ito in a good position to argue that the compiler, Ibn Bahādur, also relied on other—undeclared—sources. Ito also asserts that the edited version of the two sources used by the compiler present some discrepancies; thus he adds to the value of Ibn Bahādur's compilation. Last but not least, the manuscript is also evidence of the growing interest in the history of the Syrian borderlands; this was probably prompted by Yashbak min Mahdī's expedition and Ibn Ajā's diplomatic mission, both included in the manuscript.

The concept of periphery is not uniquely understood in its geographical or spatial sense. For instance, it can also be applied to social structures. From the point of view of social history, several studies were recently devoted to categories of Mamluk society that can be regarded as marginal in the sense of deviating from the norm (the core) as it was set by the religious elite and, with episodic success, implemented by the judiciary.[34] Yet, those considered socially marginal individuals and groups by a significant swath of popular opinion were probably closer to quotidian life as it was experienced in Mamluk cities. The picture that emerges from these studies is one of a less static and more dynamic society. Among the lasting

[33] Cahen, *La Syrie du nord.*

[34] See Cook, *Commanding right*; Stilt, *Islamic law*.

contributions made to the field we should note Carl Petry's 2012 book, in which he concentrated on what he called 'the criminal underworld,' a rather restrictive and misleading characterization given that his concern is not exclusively limited to crime, rather he includes transgressive behavior in general terms.[35] Kristina Richardson's study of people affected by a wide variety of disabilities throws light on a category of society that is seldom mentioned in the sources.[36] Her analysis of several treatises allows us to better understand how people suffering from such physical defects were perceived. Richardson's more recent study addresses another marginal group: the 'strangers' (*ghurabā*ʾ), which she identifies as Afro-Eurasian Roma and Roma-adjacent groups.[37]

In this volume, Ignacio Sánchez deals with an issue linked to social history: the mosques of repentance (*jawāmiʿ al-tawba*), as attested in sources of the Mamluk period both in Egypt and Syria. Thanks to his perusal of these sources, he identified seven mosques erected between the early seventh/thirteenth and the end of the ninth/fifteenth century. Sánchez first lists each of these buildings, highlighting their foundational history as it is reported in the sources to better pinpoint the process at play. In the majority of cases, the sources stress the link between the establishment of the mosque and a location of ill repute: the places that were used for the consumption of wine and/or engagement in illicit sex.[38] Such places were regularly closed or destroyed during the Mamluk period, a practice recommended by the contemporary normative works, but they reappeared soon thereafter. Private houses were also used for such practices but these were harder to identify. Sánchez addresses why these mosques, whose foundations were linked to locations of ill repute, were called 'mosques of repentance.' In his attempt to answer this question, Sánchez investigates religious and literary works and concludes that the issue should be read through the prism of literary *topoi*: the idealization of the just ruler, in this case, the Ayyubid sultan, who sought to better decry the immorality of the Mamluk rulers.

This brief survey of the volume's contents shows the wide variety of angles taken by contributors in their approaches to the core-periphery paradigm. These contributions, far from covering all the issues related to the concept of periphery, certainly do not close the debate over the nature of the periphery in the Mamluk sultanate, rather they open diverse new avenues of research.

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35 Petry, *The criminal underworld.* The same year Bernadette Martel-Thoumian published a book on a similar subject: Martel-Thoumian, *Délinquance et ordre social*.

36 Richardson, *Difference and disability*.

37 Richardson, *Roma*.

38 On prostitution, see now Leiser, *Prostitution*.

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This volume is the result of a selection of papers presented at the second conference of the School of Mamluk Studies (Liège, 2015) whose theme was The Mamluk Sultanate and Its Periphery. It is well known that Mamluk studies suffer from a deficit of interest for the peripheral areas because of the centripetal effect played by the main cities of the sultanate, i.e. the political centers (Cairo and Damascus), where most of the historians whose works constitute the lion's share of modern studies lived. Nevertheless, it is still possible to study aspects related to regions, cities, villages by resorting to these classical sources but also and above all to other types of sources (documents, archaeological excavations). Obviously, the concept of periphery can be interpreted in various ways. Above all, it is understood in geographic, political, or economic terms: the periphery is defined in relation to the center of power, whether central or local. It can also be interpreted in sociological and religious terms. In this case, the concept can be applied to practices or parts of the society considered borderline. The eight essays collected in this volume seek to explore this question of the periphery from these various angles.