

**From Malik al-Rum to Sahib Qiran:  
The Changing Concepts of Sovereignty and Legitimacy in the  
Ottoman-Arab World of the Sixteenth Century**

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# Abstract

This thesis examines the historiographical productions by three late Mamluk historians (Ibn Zunbul, Ibn Iyās and Ibn Ṭūlūn) and the emergence of a discourse of universalist sovereignty in the Near East in the early sixteenth century. To better understand how Ottoman imperial power was anchored in the core Muslim lands, I study the political terminology that shaped the late Mamluk historians' perceptions of change and political legitimacy. My arguments posit that the Ottoman incorporation of Egypt and *Bilād al-Shām* in 1516-17 was facilitated by the Muslim historiographic tradition and the discourse around the notion of *Sāhib Qirān* (the Master of Auspicious Conjunction). Overall, the thesis attempts to re-contextualize the transition period in light of the recent scholarship on Ottoman imperialism in the early modern period and how its legitimating ideology program was devised by scholars who traversed the region including the Mamluk-ruled lands. On the other hand, by tracing the development and movement of the discourse of universalist sovereignty in the early modern Muslim world, I argue that the Ottoman incorporation of Egypt and *Bilād al-Shām* transpired against a sixteenth-century backdrop in which a new language of sovereignty was in the making. Therefore, I argue that a synchronic study of the larger historiographical productions in the region can reveal how imperialism was legitimated textually and how political transitions were dealt with conceptually.

# Acknowledgment

Without the meticulous reviews and intellectually engaging discussions I had with my supervisor, Prof. Tijana Krstić and Assistant Prof. and friend, Günhan Börekçi, this thesis would not have come to fruition. Prof. Krstić's course on Ottoman-Russian comparative history piqued my interest in early modern imperial history and, hence, shaped the wider parameters of this study. I also ought to admit that my arguments would not have reached a state of coherence, if not for her detailed, and sometimes scathing, comments on my drafts and taking my ideas seriously. To say the least, I benefited a great deal intellectually from her sharp mind and expertise in Ottoman and early modern history. I also owe a debt of gratitude to Prof. Günhan Börekçi whose help throughout the past few years was tremendous. His enthusiasm for and expertise in Ottoman history and manuscript studies were above all inspiring. I hugely benefited from his perceptive ideas and insightful suggestions as to where to look for sources and how to go about reading them. Moreover, his course on the seventeenth-century crisis debate gave me a much-needed insight into the intricacies of current historiographic debates; how they are formulated, evolved, and migrated from one imperial context to another. Lastly, I would also like to thank Prof. Nadia al-Bagdadi for her reviews and suggestions with regards to the organization and arguments of my research chapter.

Needless to say, I would not have made it so far, academically-speaking, if it had not been for the unremitting financial and emotional support I have received from my family every step of the way.

## Note on Transliteration and Dating Systems

As this study deals with individuals' names and key political terms in both Arabic and Ottoman Turkish, it is difficult to apply a single transliteration system that renders them in their original historico-linguistic meaning in a coherent manner. Therefore, for Arabic names and terms, I employ the transliteration system for Arabic and Persian by the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. For Ottoman Turkish, I use the ALA-LC 1997 transliteration system in the comparison table produced by Thomas T. Pedersen, which is available online at the website of the University of Michigan Library Research Guides (<http://guides.lib.umich.edu/c.php?g=282772&p=1884167>).

Major political events are only provided with the Common Era dates. Otherwise, both Common Era and Muslim (Hijri) dates are provided, with the latter written first.

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# Introduction

The history of Ottoman imperialism in the Arab world in the sixteenth century was shaped by concepts and paradigms that highlighted the nature of military hegemony the Ottoman Empire assumed as an occupier and suggestively implied the beginning of an era of intellectual decay.<sup>1</sup> This view is finally on the wane as current comparative studies strive to place the multifarious encounters between the Mamluk Sultanate and the early modern Ottoman state from 1453 to 1517 within a broader, global context that implies familiarity, interconnectedness, and symbiosis.<sup>2</sup> Not only have historians of both empires revitalized the context of transition within which the 1516-17 conquest is situated,<sup>3</sup> but the very narrative of imperial “conquest” has itself been discursively enlarged.<sup>4</sup> The diametric view of this history was long held because

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Michael Winter, *Society and Religion in Early Ottoman Egypt* (New Brunswick and London: Transactions Publishers, 2009), 1; Michael Winter, “The Ottoman Occupation,” in *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Volume 1: Islamic Egypt 640-1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 490-516; Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot, *A History of Egypt: From the Arab Conquest to the Present 2nd Edition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 48-64. For an overview of Syrian and Lebanese Ottoman historiography and the reconstruction of state-society relationships under Ottoman rule, see James A. Reilly, “Past and Present in Local Histories of the Ottoman Period from Syria and Lebanon,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Jan., 1999), 45-65.

<sup>2</sup> A quintessential example of this approach is Andrews Hess’ study that argues that the Ottoman conquest of Egypt helped the Ottomans consolidate their position in the Mediterranean and Central Europe and project a confident image during the global age of exploration. This had also brought Egypt onto a global stage in which its geographic position, inter alia, rendered it indispensable to the Ottoman Empire. See Andrews Hess, “The Ottoman Conquest of Egypt (1517) and the Beginning of the Sixteenth-Century World War,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (Jan., 1973), 55-76. Also Ebru Boyar, “Ottoman Expansion in the East,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey Volume 2*, edited by Suraiya N. Faroqhi and Kate Fleet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 74-140; Benjamin Lellouch and Nicolas Michel (eds.), *Conquête ottomane de l’Égypte (1517): arrière-plan, impact, échos* (Leiden: Brill, 2013); and Aḥmad Fu’ād Mutawallī, *al-Fatḥ al-‘uthmānī li-l-Shām wa-Miṣr wa-muqqadimātuḥu min wāqī’ al-wathāiq wa-l-maṣḍir al-turkiyya wa-l-‘arabiyya al-mu’āsira lahu*, (Cairo: Dār al-Zahrā’ li-l-Nashr, 1st edn., 1995).

<sup>3</sup> Conermann, Stephan, and Şen Gül, *The Mamluk-Ottoman Transition: Continuity and Change in Egypt and Bilād al-Shām in the Sixteenth Century* (Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2017), 13-25.

<sup>4</sup> A recent study of how Ottoman power manifested itself architecturally and in the built environment in Aleppo has pointed out the discursive processes by which the center and the local produced each other throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. Heghnar Zeitlian Watenpaugh, *The Image of an Ottoman City: Imperial Architecture and Urban Experience in Aleppo in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004). Jane Hathaway has also argued that the Ottoman rule in Egypt was premised on an Ottoman-Mamluk hybrid administrative system that consisted of household, and was not an imposition of the classical Ottoman system in Jane Hathaway, *The*

the notion of political legitimacy was closely tied to the military classes that ruled over Egypt and *Bilād al-Shām*.<sup>5</sup> David Ayalon, for example, tried to resolve the apparent paradox of why the Ottoman “annihilated” the Mamluk Sultanate and then reinstated it in Syria after the Sultan had returned to Istanbul by arguing that Ottoman need for manpower against the Safavids was the only impetus to redeploy them in Damascus and tolerate their dissidence.<sup>6</sup> This earlier paradigm is offset by cultural and social historians of the Ottoman period who trace the continuities and challenge the interpretation of ethnic/nationalistic identifiers in early modern literary sources, for instance *Rūmī* and ‘*Arab*.<sup>7</sup> In short, studies of the Arab lands under the Ottoman rule now take advantage of new available sources, both literary and administrative, to rewrite their history in a way that genuinely reflects the early modern context that produced them.<sup>8</sup>

In this respect, my study aims to contribute to this ongoing, inter-imperial discussion about the nature of political legitimacy in the Arab Mamluk lands in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the rise of the Ottoman state as a sovereign empire in the Near East in the sixteenth century. It will be based on a comparative analysis of a selection of Arabic Mamluk historiography in the closing decades of the fifteenth and the early quarter of the sixteenth centuries that reflects the political and ideological jargon of the era. The political and ideological undertones of European medieval historiography have shed light on the political life and intellectual traditions in the Middle Ages that demand a detailed analysis of their

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*Politics of Households in Ottoman Egypt: The Rise of the Qazdağlıs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 5-16.

<sup>5</sup> David Ayalon. “The End of the Mamlūk Sultanate: (Why did the Ottomans Spare the Mamlūks of Egypt and Wipe out the Mamlūks of Syria?)” *Studia Islamica*, No. 65 (1987), 131.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 127, 143.

<sup>7</sup> See for instance Jane Hathaway, “The *Evlād-i ‘Arab* (‘Sons of the Arabs’) in Ottoman Egypt: A Reading,” in *Frontiers of Ottoman Studies Volume I*, edited by Colin Imber and Keiko Kiyotaki, (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2005), 203-216.

<sup>8</sup> Jane Hathaway, Karl Barbir, *The Arab Lands under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1800* (London: Longman, 2008).

techniques and modes of expressions.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, my contextualist approach to Arabic history writing in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries aims to illustrate the dynamism by which local authors engaged with their unfolding political reality. This kind of literary engagement with questions bearing on the political legitimacy of the ruler as well as the criteria for “sovereignty” is discernible in the bibliographical dictionaries, daily chronicles and annals of the period.<sup>10</sup>

Second, this study also broadly tackles the question of imperial formation and how early modern empires, in the most comprehensive sense of the term, such as the Ottomans, legitimized their rule as universal sovereigns at the turn of the sixteenth century. By tracing the development and movement of the discourse of universalist sovereignty in the early modern Muslim world, I argue that the Ottoman incorporation of Egypt and *Bilād al-Shām* transpired against a sixteenth-century backdrop in which a new language of sovereignty was in the making. Therefore, the Ottoman conquest of Egypt and *Bilād al-Shām* in 1516-17 represents a moment of transition, not only in the history of the Arab-speaking region, but in the Ottoman’s history as well. Moreover, I argue that the Mamluk-Ottoman transition was facilitated by the nature of political legitimacy that underpinned contemporary Arabic chronicles and historical writings.

However, though my argument is restricted to the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, it is not intended to imply that a theory of kingship did not exist or was not fully articulated in the core Muslim lands prior to the coming of the Ottomans in the sixteenth

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<sup>9</sup> Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997), 83-98.

<sup>10</sup> Astrid Meir, “Perceptions of a New Era? Historical Writing in Early Ottoman Damascus,” *Arabica*, T. 51, Fasc. 4 (Oct., 2004): 419-434.

century. Ibn Ṭiqṭaqā and Ibn Khaldūn are quintessential examples of Muslim theorists who articulated the contours of *siyāsa* as a form of governance independent from the precepts of *shariʿa*.<sup>11</sup> Not only that Linda Darling has also pointed out that a popular theory of the circle of justice was pervasive in medieval Egyptian society prior to the coming of the Ottomans in 1517, especially during the Mamluk period.<sup>12</sup> Rather, this study, by situating the Mamluk-Ottoman encounter within an early modern Muslim, Eurasian context, aims to argue that the articulation of a discourse of sovereignty depended on the dynastic crises that afflicted Muslim principalities in Central Asia and Western Persia and the syncretization of various elements of legitimacy of both Islamic and Mongol origins.

In the first chapter, I explicate the relationship between historiography and political legitimacy of the pre-modern “state” in medieval Arab sources and how the Mamluk school became more oriented towards question of political authority. At the center of my discussion is the contention that the chroniclers and the *ʿulema* (religious scholars) upheld the textual basis of the Muslim medieval and early modern state. Moreover, I show that the Mamluk conception of political legitimacy did not espouse a discourse of universalist, uncontested rule as the notion of *Saltana* (Sultanate) implied an office of governance. My second chapter dwells on this discussion in detail. It provides a comparative analysis of the political concepts used by three Mamluk chroniclers to describe the Ottoman Sultans pre-1516. Additionally, it shows that the polemical language underpinning the neutral and anti-Ottoman rhetoric did not contain an explicit theory of sovereignty, and remained for the most part in conformity with the structure

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<sup>11</sup> Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), 197-200, 222-231. See also, Aziz al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldun: An Essay in Reinterpretation* (New York and Budapest, Central European University Press, 2003); and Yossef Rapoport, “Royal Justice and Religious Law: *Siyāsa* and *Shariʿa* under the Mamluks,” *Mamluk Studies Review*, 16 (2012): 71-102.

<sup>12</sup> Linda Darling, “Medieval Egyptian Society and the Concept of the Circle of Justice,” *Mamluk Studies Review* 10 (2006): 1-17.

of the genre of annalistic history that was not conducive to a narrative of “occupation” or “subjugation.” The third chapter aims to tie this discussion with the one on the concurrent Ottoman expansion in the East. It first provides an overview of the regional and imperial circumstances that shaped the legitimating ideology of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century. Secondly, it places the Arab campaign of Selim I within its pertinent ideological discourse to demonstrate the impetus and impact of the incorporation of the Mamluk Sultanate on the sixteenth-century Ottoman imperial image and its claim for ‘universalist sovereignty.’<sup>13</sup> This term, I define, as a discourse of power that not only justified imperial claim for rule, but introduced an ideology that systematized structures and hierarchies of rule. The discourse was also premised on a notion of universality that accorded the Sultan and his rule the exclusive right to extend their dominion over the civilized world.

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<sup>13</sup> See Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, “Between Universalistic Claims and Reality: Ottoman Frontiers in the early modern period,” in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 205-219.

## Chapter I: Textual Foundation of Political Legitimacy and the Rise of Imperial Sovereignty in Early Modern Islamic World

The study of pre-modern transition histories present modern historians with an exacting hermeneutic challenge, not least because it entails the study of two different political structures, modes of thinking, and a heterogeneous array of sources. The Mamluk-Ottoman transition is a quintessential example of that. For long, historians of both pre-modern Muslim polities emphasized the elements of political and dynastic rupture that rendered one victorious and the other historically obsolete. Recently, there has been a reinvigorated interest in understanding how such a transition occurred on the micro level, but also in the minds of people who were the witnesses to the coming of a new “order.”<sup>14</sup> In this chapter, I argue that a historiographical analysis approach to the question of Ottoman military conquest in the early sixteenth century is essential to the debate about political legitimacy in the Muslim core lands, broadly Egypt and *Bilād al-Shām*, in the early modern period. The extension of this argumentation framework is, firstly, that the Mamluk Sultanate, in spite of its longevity and robustness, was not posited on a notion of incontestable political power. Second, I argue that the emergence of the Ottoman Empire in the east Mediterranean was concomitant with its adoption of a more assertive discourse of political power that we may call “imperial sovereignty.”

### I.I Muslim Historiography

It is important to state at the outset that history writing in medieval and pre-modern Muslim societies was not an independent practice confined to an autonomous scholastic

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<sup>14</sup> Stephan and Gül, *The Mamluk-Ottoman Transition*.

tradition.<sup>15</sup> The medieval *akhbārī* (historian reporting on past news) and the *mu'arrikh* (chronicler) were members of an intellectual milieu and tradition that did not accord an intrinsic value to history since it was regarded as a narrative practice that complimented the knowledge produced in other related fields such as jurisprudence and theology.<sup>16</sup> That is, the importance of historical knowledge for medieval, and even pre-medieval, Muslim scholarly societies stemmed from its instrumental value as an episteme that illustrated the divine workings. In this connection, Tarif Khalidi makes the argument that the *ḥadīth* tradition provided a foundational basis for the form, genres and sources of authority that underpinned Muslim historiography for centuries.<sup>17</sup> The annalist, whose job required recording the past, was, thus, crucial to any scholarly and polemical activity undertaken in the medieval and pre-modern periods.

Annalistic history was one of the dominant forms of early modern Muslim historiography. This mode of historical presentation enumerated the major political and military events that happened in a single year under separate, consecutive subheadings. Since its inception, the format was observed without any substantial deviations with regards to the chronological structure of the chronicle and the non-overlapping rule; meaning, each year was inaugurated by a new set of events that did not extend from the previous one.<sup>18</sup> The earliest example of an annalistic work of history dates as far back as the eighth century. It was a history of the caliphs (*Tārīkh al-khulāfā'*) composed by Ibn Ishāq (b. 83/703 - d. 149/767).<sup>19</sup> Al-Ṭabarī (b. 223/838 - d. 310/923), however, pioneered that form in his renowned world history *tārīkh aṭ-Ṭabarī*. The

<sup>15</sup> Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 5-6.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 6, 15-16.

<sup>17</sup> Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, 17. See also, Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 44.

<sup>18</sup> Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 71.

<sup>19</sup> Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 47.

form might not have originated in Muslim scholarly societies,<sup>20</sup> yet its development and practice by Muslim Arab historians from the eighth and ninth centuries on is well attested.<sup>21</sup> Cognate literary genres such as the *khavar* (news) historiography had also contributed to bringing the form to fruition.<sup>22</sup> The annalistic form, as Rosenthal contends, was by default conducive to the writing of incontrovertible “facts” either witnessed or acquired through primary sources.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, by genre requirements, renditions of events or their inter-relationships could only figure in the annalistic narrative so long as they represented objective, past happenings, not the author’s purposeful interpretation of it. The factuality requirement made it unnecessary and redundant to compose two contemporary annalistic histories in the same scholarly circle, since by definition a new annal was a continuation of a preceding narrative.<sup>24</sup> These feasible and simple organizing principles allowed the genre to sustain the same form without major changes throughout, which explains its prevalence up until the sixteenth century, and arguably even beyond.<sup>25</sup> Another main feature of Muslim chronicle histories is their contemporaneity.<sup>26</sup> Recording the present was of utmost importance because it was regarded as a constitutive element of history in its cosmological and philosophical sense. This also explains why there were no serious attempts to drastically alter the form nor the subject matter. Given the conservative attitude towards the form and, to a lesser extent, content, I argue that studying

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<sup>20</sup> Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 77. Rosenthal argues that a Graeco-Syriac origin hypothesis is supported by comparative study of the forms and content of Muslim annals.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 73-74; Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 20-30.

<sup>22</sup> Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 77.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 81.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 83.

<sup>25</sup> Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 83-92.

<sup>26</sup> Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 172.

local perceptions of severe political change has to be rooted in the semantic changes of the political concepts employed to describe the political structure.

Although the main content of annalistic chronicles was event- and deed-based, they were not bereft of abstract principles that described the political and religious hierarchies of the Sultanate in power—mentions of the Caliph and his office had gradually become a formality as his power significantly declined. Reigning Sultans and rulers were even used as the organizing principle of different Muslim annals.<sup>27</sup> When such a principle is not explicitly discernible, allusions to the political and administrative structures could be gleaned from the overarching framework that organizes time into caliphal epochs or “national” periods. Moreover, the Muslim variant of dynastic annals was distinguished by its interest in describing or treating ethical and administrative questions.<sup>28</sup> From this, we can infer that annalistic chronicles served a palpable ideological purpose as the history of the *dawla* (dynasty or a ruler’s reign), and, hence, its legitimacy was closely tethered with what Arab historians wrote.

Historical novel, on the other hand, occupied an important niche in the Muslim historiographic tradition as a genre of historical knowledge that valorized medieval codes of honor and heroism. This is why its development was closely associated with the topos of *futūḥāt* (conquests).<sup>29</sup> In fact, the genre reached a level of novelistic and literary sophistication during the period of the Crusades.<sup>30</sup> Ibn Zunbul’s famous account of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt in which he waxes lyrical about the brazen display of chivalry and group solidarity by

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 88.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 188.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

the Mamluk Sultan and his coterie could be representative of that genre.<sup>31</sup> The novel's narrative proceeds chronologically— similar to the annalistic tradition. Reporting factual events is not the thrust of the historical novel, however. The main purpose was to flesh out the annalistic narrative with details that are both entertaining and indicative of the author's background and political predilections. Therefore, they remain an important type of historical sources that engage with questions of legitimacy and loyalty, since the conceptual framework in which they narrate the event of conquest is similar to those of the chroniclers and ulemas.

## I.II Analysis of Circassian Mamluk Chronicles

Major sources for Mamluk history from the mid-fourteenth till the early sixteenth centuries—the Circassian period—are chronicles and biographical dictionaries, a variant of the renowned Islamic *ṭabaqāt* (strata) genre. My analysis of Mamluk chronicles will entirely focus on the conceptual constructs Mamluk historians and chronicles used to explicate the relationship between the events that they either witnessed or reported and the constant structures that accorded such events historical meaning. Though questions related to originality and authentic first-hand reporting are important in their own right to illustrate the place and significance of a certain chronicle within its cultural historiographical corpus, they ought to be studied separately. Therefore, I do not deal with questions of cultural borrowing nor will I attempt to discover the source of the studied chronicles.<sup>32</sup> This is also partly because the three

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<sup>31</sup> Ahmad al-Rammal Ibn Zunbul (d. 1553), *Waqi'at al-Sultan al-Ghawry ma' Salim al-'Uthmany*, edited by Abd al-Mun'am 'Amir (Cairo: Al-Ha'ya al- Misriyya al-'Amma li'l-Kitab, 1997).

<sup>32</sup> Though this aspect of source criticism is essential, its value mainly relies in its importance to verify historical facts against other earlier or contemporary sources. This is, however, not the object of my analysis. For an overview of the importance of that method in studying the historicity of Arab Chronicles, see Claude Cahen,

chronicles I treat extensively in the second chapter were written by authors who were contemporary to the events they recorded and presumably witnessed. My main aim, however, is to study the political terminology that shaped the late Mamluk historians' perceptions of change and political legitimacy. In this regard, a comparative analysis of three chronicles of different provenance, from Cairo and Damascus, is intended to highlight the variety of reactions registered against the Ottoman campaign, and, most importantly, the virtually unanimous lack of a language that legitimates a narrative of historical rupture. Overall, this approach is intended to provide a general study of the relationship between the textual, linguistic and historical aspects of the narrative, and how they answer other questions arising from a different context that may not appear evident in their local context.

As to the geographic scope, the choice to study chronicles from Syria and Egypt, besides the fact that both were incorporated into the Ottoman Empire by 1517, is justified by the long medieval historiographic tradition in the region that recognized that any developments in one region had a bearing on the other.<sup>33</sup> Thanks to the uniform political and cultural outlook that the Mamluk Sultanate constructed and imparted to its intellectuals, Syrian historians were, unlike under the Ayyubids, incorporated into a larger intellectual network that facilitated transmission and borrowing of news between Egypt and Syria.<sup>34</sup> The three main genres of historiography in the Mamluk period were chronicles, biographical dictionaries, and administrative manuals. The first had sustained a tradition of Medieval Arabic literature

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"Editing Arabic Chronicles: A Few Suggestions," *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 1. No. 3 (September, 1962), 1-25. Donald Little also states that "Extensive, unacknowledged borrowing is characteristic of Ayyūbid and Mamluk historiography in general." See Donald P. Little, "Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Epochs," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt, Volume 1: Islamic Egypt 640-1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 430.

<sup>33</sup> Little, "Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk epochs," 412.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 420.

concerned with historical incidents and news about the political elites, diplomatic exchanges and military battles.<sup>35</sup> Biographical dictionaries are an equally wealthy source of information about political life and scholarly networks that embodied the legislative pillar of Islamic society.<sup>36</sup> However, since they are first and foremost indices that serve purposes of references, they are not structured to communicate their authors' understanding of historical structures and key political concepts. Administrative manuals, on the other hand, were produced infrequently.<sup>37</sup> Lastly, due to the lack of archival historical documents, most of what we know about Mamluk history had come down to us from literary sources.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, chronicles, though conservative in content and structure, reflected an eclecticism of ideas and interests as opposed to biographical dictionaries which were composed primarily by the *'ulema* (religious scholars).<sup>39</sup> That is, there was not a strict monopoly on writing chronicles in the same way as there was for biographical dictionaries. In fact, the fifteenth-century Mamluk chronicles were produced by both religious scholars and official bureaucrats who were affiliated with or had access to the court.<sup>40</sup> Military-affiliated historians, for instance, were a Mamluk novelty in Islamic Arabic historiography that represented an increasing association between the ruling elites and the local scholars.<sup>41</sup> Another important feature of Mamluk chronicles that Donald Little emphasizes, is that, despite their conservative historical discourse, Mamluk historiography represented the culmination of a change in Arabic

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 412.

<sup>36</sup> For a detailed study of Arabic biographical writing see, M. J. L. Young, "Arabic Biographical Writing," in *Religion, Learning and Science in the 'Abbasid Period (The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature)*, edited by M. Young, J. Latham, & R. Serjeant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 168-187; and Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, 204-209.

<sup>37</sup> Little, "Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Epochs," 413.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> For an overview of the genre of Muslim biography, see Robinson, *Islamic Historiography*, 68-72.

<sup>40</sup> Little, "Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Epochs," 413.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 421.

historiographic tradition that had become more oriented to questions of political rule and legitimacy as opposed to its previous concern for theological and epistemological issues.<sup>42</sup> In other words, that thematic shift was symptomatic of an increasingly active engagement on the part of religious scholars and intellectuals with the political rule of Muslim principalities. Ibn al-Dawādārī (b. 687/1289 - d. 735/1335) was probably the first Mamluk chronicler who attempted to part ways with the *ḥadīth*-trained scholars and diversify the topics and subjects he included in his annals.<sup>43</sup> As much as political theory was concerned, Muslim historians and scholars in the post-classical period, which concurred with the rule of military Turco-Persian dynasties, did not debate the legitimacy of the ruler.<sup>44</sup> Rather, their political discussions characterized by the increasing use of the notion of *siyāsa*<sup>45</sup> (political conduct) were confined to questions of governance and its efficiency.<sup>46</sup> Khalidi even goes as far as calling Mamluk historians as *siyāsa*-oriented chroniclers.<sup>47</sup> More importantly, Mamluk chronicles were structurally oriented towards setting out a hierarchy of ranks under which different political groups belonged.<sup>48</sup> Sultanic and monarchical titles, thus could be argued, referred to military ranks and political categories, and had a tangential bearing on the issue of legitimacy per se.

### I.III Textual Legitimation of Power

An argument for political transition from one regime or monarchical framework to another requires an elaboration on how those regimes functioned and enshrined their

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 414.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 425.

<sup>44</sup> Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, 183.

<sup>45</sup> For a detailed study of the notion of *siyāsa* and its connection to the Mongol *Yasa* in the Mamluk context, see A. N. Poliakov, "The Influence of Čingiz-Khān's *Yāsa* upon the General Organization of the Mamlūk State," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 10, No. 4 (1942): 862-876.

<sup>46</sup> Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought*, 183.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 184.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 189-190.

legitimacy. To this end, it is essential to first elucidate the inter-dependency between Muslim polities, including the Mamluk, and scholars who preserved the Islamic tradition, and hence provided a basis upon which Mamluk Sultans could establish their rule. Indeed, the textual role of the *'ulema*, in particular, extends beyond passively preserving a tradition of Islamic theology or the genealogy of their networks. Aziz Al-Azmeh argues that if we conceive of chronicle-preserved tradition as a dynamic textual space, the *'ulema* had the unparalleled power to inscribe new elements and sources into it.<sup>49</sup> He ascribes the consolidation of an Islamic discourse on political power to the emergence of *'ulema* as a corporate group in the tenth century.<sup>50</sup> To this, he also adds, that from the outset their emergence as a hierarchy rendered them autonomous vis-à-vis kings and sovereigns. The politico-legal symbiosis between the *'ulema* and the jurists and the rulers remained an unchanged arrangement in Muslim political societies until the Ottoman period.<sup>51</sup>

More importantly, as producers and editors of a corpus of political knowledge, the *'ulema*'s conceptualization of the "state" is of utmost importance to this study. For, their theorization or appropriation of the concept bears relevance to their conception of what constituted kingship. In this regard, Al-Azmeh rightly notes that in Islamic political narratives "the state is not the topic of political study, but is constituted as a topic in historical narrative

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<sup>49</sup> Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship: Power and the Sacred in Muslim, Christian and Pagan Politics* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 1997).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 101. Al-Azmeh's main argument is that the *'Ulema* was the main force behind Islamizing the corpus of political power inherited by Muslim Empires and polities. It is due to the corporatism of the *'ulema*, he argues, that textual traditionalism struck root in Islamic intellectual and political history, and impacted the topical content of the literary genre, *Fürstenspiegel*. However, the bottomline of his thesis, is that their emergence as a corporate group was intricately linked with the crystallization of an Islamic conception of power and legitimacy.

<sup>51</sup> An elaborate exposition of the legal basis of political legitimacy in Muslim societies is given by Colin Imber, *Ebu's-Su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 65-67.

where it acts as an unreflected mode of textual organization.”<sup>52</sup> This demonstrates that the “state” and its Arabic variants did not constitute a “structural pre-given” in Arabic political historiography. Moreover, what follows from this is that Arabic chronicles belonged to a literary genre regulated by tropes of political wisdom and conceptions of power that did not equate the “state” with ultimate political legitimacy. In other words, medieval Arabic political writings, including works on history, did not contain a theory of the state in which notions such as sovereignty were spelled out or alleviated to a higher rank.

Furthermore, as inheritors of a late-antiquity genre of political wisdom, what the *‘ulema* incorporated from the Quran, such as quotations and examples did not structure the discourse on kingship as their insertions had to conform to the conceptual and topical requirements of the genre.<sup>53</sup> With regards to chronicles, we may argue that the *‘ulema*’s incorporation of kings and Sultans of new ethnic origins into their annals did not conceptually alter the fundamental basis of the notion of kingship that they adhered to. This was mainly due to the belief that certain requirements such as obedience and order exist prior to kingship.<sup>54</sup> Justice, on the other hand, was reckoned the perennial guarantee of stable rule. Lastly, the genre of *aḥkāṃ* (laws or writs) developed by the *‘ulema* prescribed that the office of Sultanate was delegated political authority from the caliphate and was to function as the executive arm of the *sharī‘a*.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Al-Azmeh, *Muslim Kingship*, 89.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 106.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 108.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, 111. See also Mustafa Banister, “Naught Remains to the Caliph but his Title”: Revisiting Abbasid Authority in Mamluk Cairo,” *Mamluk Studies Review*, Vol. 18 (2014-2015): 219-245.

## I.IV The Mamluk Sultanate

The legitimating ideology for Mamluk rule was in theory neither incontestable nor based on the principle of hereditary succession.<sup>56</sup> The absence of a politically binding rule as to who had the right to reign was a source of political instability in the Mamluk court. Factionalism, in the sense that the consolidation of political authority was contingent on the support of prominent Mamluk factions, is one of the key explanatory schemes, proposed by Amalia Levanoni, for Mamluk high politics since the fall of the Ayyubids in 1261, and especially in the fifteenth century.<sup>57</sup> This ambiguity regarding the place of political authority in the Mamluk dynasty and whether the reigning Sultan had in theory a free rein begged the question of whether the Mamluks' conception of Sultanate was ultimately shaped by a concern for succession, rather than unchallenged theoretical legitimacy.<sup>58</sup> The partial answer to this is given by Ulrich Haarmaan who argues that the adoption of anti-dynastic rule discourse by the Mamluks was a historically-contingent necessity to avoid the bloodshed that comes with regimes transitions.<sup>59</sup>

In fact, as Amalia Levanoni demonstrates, any Mamluk *amir* had in theory the right to contend for the throne. In a summative statement of Mamluk's political history, Levanoni

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<sup>56</sup> See David Ayalon, "The Circassians in the Mamluk Kingdom," *Journal of the American society* 69, 3 (1949); Idem, "From Ayyubids to Mamluks," *Revue des Etudes Islamique* 49, 1 (1981); Idem "Mamluk Military Aristocracy, a Non-Hereditary Nobility," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic* (1987); P. M. Holt, "Succession in the Early Mamluk Sultanate," *Deutscher Orientalistentag* 16 (1985): 6-20; idem, "The Structure of Government in the Mamluk Sultanate," in *The Eastern Mediterranean Lands in the Period of the Crusades*, ed. P. M. Holt (Worminister: England: Aris & Philiphs, Ltd., 1977), 44-61.

<sup>57</sup> Amalia Levanoni, "The Mamluk Conception of the Sultanate," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Aug., 1994), pp. 373-392

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 376-377. See also, R. Stephen Humphreys, "The Politics of the Mamluk Sultanate: A Review Essay," *Mamluk Studies Review* IX (2005), 221-231.

<sup>59</sup> Ulrich Haarmann, "Regicide and the 'Law of the Turks,'" in *Intellectual Studies on Islam. Essays Written In Honor of Martin B. Dickson*. eds by Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera Basch Moreen. (Salt Lake City: University Of Utah Press, 1990), 130. Haarmaan states that the adopted motto embodying that principle was *al-Mulk 'Aqīm* (Kingship has no progeny).

argues that “legitimacy was naturally a matter of force, as the power to legitimize political decisions was arbitrarily bestowed upon itself by the victorious faction.”<sup>60</sup> Even when the Qala’unids succeeded in establishing intermittently a dynasty, its legitimacy was based on the principle of force, i.e., it did not drastically alter the predominant conceptions of rulership.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, an anti-dynastic rule discourse in the Mamluk political community was justified on the basis of Islamic theology and jurisprudence. Ibn Iyās, for instance, justified Sultan Barqūq’s (r. 783/1382-801/1399) removal of the last son of Sultan Qala’un as a divine reprisal for the latter’s deposition of Baybars’ sons.<sup>62</sup> This could have reflected the theological principle that rulership, at source, originates from the divine authority and then is delegated to an eligible Sultan based on his political conduct. Hence, hereditary rule might have been seen as an infringement of that process.

In contrast to the preceding medieval Ayyubid state that ruled over the same territories in a confederation-like and fragmented manner, the monarchical form of governance that associated rulership with the person of one Mamluk *emir*, and hence promoted the principle of territorial indivisibility, distinguished the Mamluk practices of sovereignty in the thirteenth century. The exclusive use of the *malik* (king) titles by the Sultans was also a new Mamluk practice that represented a departure from the Ayyubids’.<sup>63</sup> Nonetheless, the Mamluk Sultanate, theoretically and ideologically embodied an institution of governance whose function was inseparable from the various competing factions of prominent Mamluk *amirs*. Even if a tradition of dynastic rule had taken root in Mamluk political society, it would still be erroneous

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<sup>60</sup> Amalia Levanoni, “The Mamluk Conception of the Sultanate,” 377.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 380, 382; P. M. Holt, “The Position and Power of the Mamluk Sultan,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (1975), 240-241.

<sup>62</sup> Amalia Levanoni, “The Mamluk Conception of the Sultanate,” 377.

<sup>63</sup> P. M. Holt “The Position and Power of the Mamluk Sultan,” 241.

and anachronistic to define their rulership in terms of sovereignty, since the selection of the sultan was determined by the machinations and interest politics of his supporters.<sup>64</sup>

## **I.V Imperial Sovereignty in the Near East**

The second part of this study will be concerned with the notion of sovereignty as an analytical concept to help us understand how the Ottoman advance in the Islamic Near East was justified and based on a new discourse of power. I will not explore how early modern Empires or Sultanates acted as sovereign states nor the geopolitical factors that presumably could have made them territorial states. Instead, I will explore how the making of discourse of sovereignty in the eastern Mediterranean in the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth-century had a direct bearing on the Ottoman military campaigns in the Arab world. European historiography has emphasized that changes in the late medieval period led to the emergence of three types of state formations: the sovereign state, the city-state, and the city league.<sup>65</sup> The first, however, emerged as the most effective system that outlived and overshadowed the other two because of its economic and political versatility. In contradistinction to the state's sovereignty, Empire's claims to rule were posited on the spiritual and theological authorities they hinged on.<sup>66</sup> In other words, empires were not territorial entities, but theocratic and legal bodies that sprawled over various kingdoms. In a pre-modern context, the notion of sovereignty may then seem anachronistic or misleading, for per definition sovereignty necessities the existence of internal

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<sup>64</sup> Holt, 247, argues that the Sultanate became an unchallenged and stable monarchy from the mid-fourteenth century on. However, his argument does not refer to any ideological or theoretical changes in the conceptual basis of that institution. It mainly contends that by that time the Mamluk Sultans acquired more leverage against their power contenders and could rule and behave as despots if they had wished.

<sup>65</sup> Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors: An Analysis of Systems Change*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 184.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 51.

hierarchy and demarcated borders.<sup>67</sup> This definition, besides obscuring the nature of imperial rule at certain historical junctions, raises a methodological question of how the concept is devised in the first place.

“A concept becomes central to the extent that other concepts are defined in terms of it, or depend on it for their coherent meaning and use within discourse. These linkages - whether inferential or rhetorical - saturate the concept in question with multiple meanings that derive from these linkages, which make it ambiguous; an ambiguity that is open to further logical and rhetorical exploitation. The concept of sovereignty is an emblematic example of this.”<sup>68</sup>

In his deftly formulated critique of the history and philosophical place of the notion of sovereignty in the present political science discourse, Jens Bartelson argues that the conceptual ambiguity and the definitional problem of the notion of sovereignty is connected to the possibility of knowledge. The concept, as such, requires an empirical reference to acquire a reality beyond its essentially philosophical basis. However, the attempt to define or theorize the concept, Bartelson contends, always results in emphasizing the differences between its usage in empirical political science and normative jurisprudence. His solution to this inherent ambiguity is to tackle sovereignty as an essentially contested concept and restrict its analysis to the extent to which it expresses the underlying identity of states at a particular point of time. The conclusion to be arrived at from this, is that sovereignty is ultimately “nothing but a set of rules and resources embedded in a collectively held legal understanding in the state system.”<sup>69</sup> This assertion could also apply to a state-like formation premised on a particular legal culture and codes.

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>68</sup> Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 13.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid, 16.

Notwithstanding the differences that set the Ottoman Empire apart from contemporary European powers, Ottoman rule in the sixteenth century, in tandem with early modern imperial self-fashioning, was increasingly driven by an ideology that premised itself on Islamic and Mongol discourses of power. Therefore, my attempt is to show how the Ottoman Empire in the early sixteenth century invented a new language that justified its existence and right to incorporate the major urban centers of Islamic civilization into its composite imperial dominion. Legal imperialism and pluralism are two analytical terms employed to explain the Ottoman methods of conquest of the Arab provinces in the early sixteenth century.<sup>70</sup> The main thesis of this approach is that legal traditions were not only indispensable to Ottoman judicial systems, but also mainly to its governance of its different constituent polities.<sup>71</sup> Against this background, I define early modern sovereignty as a discourse of power that not only justified imperial claim for rule, but introduced an ideology that systematized structures and hierarchies of rule. The discourse was also premised on a notion of universality that accorded the Sultan and his rule the exclusive right to extend their dominion over the civilized world. In this regard, the Ottoman discourse of sovereignty was articulated at a particular historical moment that happened concurrently with the subsumption of the major contemporaneous Muslim Sultanates. As such the need for extending the Sultan's sovereignty grew out of a sixteenth-century regional struggle in which a notion of a new model of kingship was in the making. This, I argue

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<sup>70</sup> Timothy J. Fitzgerald, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest: Legal Imperialism and the City of Aleppo, 1480-1570" (Phd diss., Harvard University, 2009). See also Karen Barkey, "Aspects of Legal Pluralism in the Ottoman Empire," in *Legal Pluralism and Empires, 1500-1850*, eds. Lauren Benton and Richard J. Ross (New York and London: New York University Press, 2013), 83-107.

<sup>71</sup> For an overview of the conception of the Hanafī *madhab* of rulership why it had become the official *madhab* of the Ottomans by the sixteenth century, refer to Colin Imber, *Ebu's-Su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1997), 67-95.

in the next two chapters, adds more nuance to the question of the decline<sup>72</sup> of the Mamluk Sultanate and challenges the narrative of the Ottoman military prowess that teleologically had handed it an ultimate hegemony.

Timothy Fitzgerald argues that the Ottoman sovereignty-making project was tied with the legal order that it introduced, through collaboration, negotiation and enforcement with local agents such as tax-payers, into its newly-conquered lands.<sup>73</sup> A centralized regime of sorts was seen as the most suitable framework for the Ottoman's legal ideology that sought to bring various lands and legal traditions under the Sultan's reign.<sup>74</sup> By the sixteenth-century, it is compelling to argue that the Ottoman conquerors were *qānūn*-minded, i.e., adopted a clear legal and quasi-bureaucratic mechanism to facilitate their imperial rule and recruiting schemes.<sup>75</sup> Concomitant with this development, as I argue above, was the existence of an opaque conception of political legitimacy or a theory of kingship in Arabic historiographic sources such as chronicles. Therefore, I argue that the conception of an Ottoman discourse of imperial sovereignty in the early sixteenth-century was facilitated by the textual and historiographical

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<sup>72</sup> For critiques of the decline paradigm as a historiographical explanatory scheme, see Cemal Kafadar, "The Question of Ottoman Decline," *Harvard Middle Eastern and Islamic Review* 4/1-2 (1997-98): 30-75; and for a general critique for decline as a historiographical category, see Sonja Brentjes, "The Prison of Categories—'Decline' and Its Company," in *Islamic Philosophy, Science, Culture, and Religion: Studies in Honor of Dimitri Gutas*, ed. Felicitas Opwis and David Reisman (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 131-156.

<sup>73</sup> Fitzgerald, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," 170.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid, 172. This view is also in tandem with the critiques of the assumption that the Ottomans were Islamicized or Sunnitized following their conquest of the Mamluk lands. See Derin Terzioğlu, "How to conceptualize Ottoman Sunnization: a Historiographical Discussion," (paper presented at The Alevi-Bektashi Communities in the Ottoman Realm: Sources, Paradigms and Historiography," Istanbul: Boğaziçi University, December 13-15, 2011), 310.

<sup>75</sup> See, Abdurrahman Atçıl, *Scholars and Sultans in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

landscape in Egypt and *Bilād al-Shām* that did not ideologically contest Selim I's claims for rule.

## Chapter II: Historiography in Transition?

As established in the previous chapter, the modes of history writing practiced and conceived by Arab scholars of *Bilād al-Shām* and Egypt were imbricated with notions of power and legitimacy that defined the parameters of rule, and are, hence, essential to any discussion on the form and content of pre-modern Islamic “states.” The chronicles and historical novel consulted in this chapter all belonged to the Mamluk school of history writing whose characteristics I defined in the previous chapter. On the whole, they maintained the basic features of Muslim chronicles in terms of chronological structures and narrative organization. With respect to topics and actors of interest, the Mamluk school slightly differed from the previous traditions as chroniclers showed a heightened interest in questions of political legitimacy and the executive role of the Sultan.

Besides the vivid and engaging narratives that Ibn Zunbul, Ibn Ṭulūn, and Ibn Iyās produced, they are all the more pertinent to the purpose of this study as their school of historiography survived long into the Ottoman period.<sup>76</sup> Though broadly similar in outlook, each chronicle reflected the distinct social and intellectual milieu of its author. Ibn Zunbul was, by training, an astrologer. Ibn Ṭulūn was a member of the *‘ulema* hierarchy and his scholarship reflects his interest in theological sciences and Quranic exegesis. On the other hand, Ibn Iyās was more steeped in high Mamluk political culture and, in contrast to the other two, was privy to the inner workings of the Mamluk Sultanate. In this chapter, I first provide an overview of

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<sup>76</sup> Mohannad A. Al-Mubaidin, “How the Mamluk Historians Welcomed the Ottomans,” *World Applied Sciences Journal* Vol. 30 (12) (2014), 1925. For a descriptive account of Egyptian historiography under Ottoman rule, see Michael Winter, “Attitudes Towards the Ottomans in Egyptian Historiography During the Ottoman Rule,” in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization 3: Philosophy, Science and Institutions*, ed. Kemal Çiçek (Ankara, Yeni Türkiye, 2000) 290-299.

the theoretical framework in which I analyze the primary sources and base my general argument. I then argue that the chroniclers' writings on the Ottoman campaign reflected the changing status of the *Rūmī* Sultan in Egypt and *Bilād al-Shām* and were rooted in a historiographic-cum-literary tradition that did not equate the person or the dynasty of the Sultan with absolute sovereignty. That is, his reign was not imbued with the sacred ideals of kingship nor was it premised on the law-giving attributes of the universal sovereign. In fact, the questions of historical change as well as the decline and rise of states, as Tarif Khalidi shows, was tied to the question of *siyāsa*, an indicator of the strength or weakness of the state in late medieval Muslim historiography.<sup>77</sup> Central to this contention is the conceptual distinction made between *dawla* (reign or the ruler's fortune) and *al-Nizām* (perennial order) in Ibn Zunbul's account, but is also woven into the narrative of the other two chronicles. *Dawla* and its cognate term *salṭana* (rule) are employed as designations of the political state and court associated with the ruler; hence subject to historical change. *Al-Nizām*, on the other hand, is a general term that implies perennial order which guarantees the continuity of the Muslim community regardless of who possesses the political power.

Moreover, since the genealogy of the notion of sovereignty implies that the 'state' in the Middle Ages was not subject to an autonomous political discourse whence specific statements and theories about a ruler's sovereignty are produced,<sup>78</sup> I argue that the different local narratives informed by each author's background and interests each reflected their concern with practices of sovereignty that did not necessarily have a bearing on the question of whether a new Sultan or his regime was in principle eligible for rule. In the last section of this chapter, I argue that a precedent for the Ottoman threat had existed in 1300 when Ghāzān, the Mongol

<sup>77</sup> Khalidi, *Arabic Political Thought*, 218-219.

<sup>78</sup> Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, 88-91.

ruler posed a threat to the Mamluk rule in Damascus. Similarly, the Mamluk historians' narration of Ghāzān's conquest conformed to the same principles set out above.

## II.I Historiography and Representation

The relationship between historiography and the representation of an object of investigation is neither static nor autonomous. It is essentially subject to the varying modes of textual representation and the changing conceptualization of the object of investigation. This is particularly true for histories and chronicles written prior to the eighteenth century when the relationship between these two variables had become stable and forced into a theoretical mold.<sup>79</sup> By implication, that position posits that prior to the eighteenth century elements of the modern historical discourse were not seen as entirely conducive to the epistemological study of the totally "history" as we know of it today. That is, various modes of historical presentation and form were not appropriated based on a single concept of history. Relevant to this proposition is the issue of temporal structures and historical narration. The first may be, in the most general sense, construed as the layers at which history is created; whereas the latter is merely a description of historical events that tangentially have a bearing on temporal structures. This is why Reinhart Koselleck asserts that "events can only be narrated, while structures can only be described."<sup>80</sup> At the intermediate level, what provides coherence and meaning to these two levels of history is chronology. Chronological frameworks had long been a methodological requirement for not only writing history, but rendering it narratable.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *Future Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 95.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 106.

Hence, constitutive of history, Koselleck argues, are the “structural pre-givens.” These are not narratological devices to indicate time or its sequence. Rather, these pre-givens exist outside of time as “they do not change from one day to the next” and are prerequisite for political action.<sup>82</sup> The temporality of these structures, he contends, transcend the experience of the narrative’s individual subjects. All in all, it is a methodological necessity more than it is a rhetorical device to enhance the meaning of a narrative. In functional terms, structural pre-givens make the happening of an event possible as their description articulates a causality. We, however, can infer from this analysis that such structures are not conceptually or linguistically uniform across all historical times or different political societies. They are in essence the product of indigenous textual and cultural traditions. This overview helps us discern the criteria that determine which incidents were to be recorded, and, hence, constitute past events. It also shows the non-arbitrary recording methods that underlay pre-modern chronicles that do not weave coherent narratives of sorts. What makes them non-arbitrary, in the first place, is the use of “historical concepts” that convey the relationship between events and structures. Semantic changes, thus, reflect historical changes that go beyond language.<sup>83</sup>

## II.II Ibn Zunbul

Ahmed b. ‘Alī al-Shāfi’ī al-Munajjim or al-Rammāl (the astrologer) (b.? - d. 928/1552 or 967-77/1560s) was a Cairene chronicler and contemporary witness to the Ridāniya battle in which the Circassian Mamluk Sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī was killed.<sup>84</sup> In his chronicle as well as

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 113.

<sup>84</sup> Benjamin Lellouch, “Ibn Zunbul,” *Ottoman Historians*, the University of Chicago, 2006, <https://ottomanhistorians.uchicago.edu/en/historian/ibn-zunbul> The death date of Ibn Zunbul is debated. Though there is a consensus that he died in 1552, Doris-Behrens-Abouseif argues that he lived much later.

in other sources he appears under the sobriquet Ibn Zunbul/Zanbal. As a member of the inner circle of the Mamluk Sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī, he had access to the highest echelons of the Mamluk political society, and could be considered a valuable source to gauge the Mamluk chroniclers' response to the Ottoman campaign. However, he was not strictly a court historian nor affiliated with the scholarly or judicial hierarchy. Most of his extant works are about geomancy and mnemonics.<sup>85</sup>

His oft-cited chronicle *'Akhiret al-Mamālīk* (The Fall of the Mamluks) or *Wāki 'at al-Sulṭān al-Ghūrī ma 'Selīm al-'Othmānī* (The Encounter Between the Sultan al-Ghūrī and the Ottoman Selim) is a historiographic account of the military encounters between the Ottoman and Mamluk armies in Egypt.<sup>86</sup> Due to the wealth of details of people, events and “verbatim” conversations pervading the chronicle, the work is treated as a fictitious anecdote intended to emphasize virtues of chivalry and ethnic solidarity. Except for his periodic references to the ‘narrator,’ Ibn Zunbul does not mention the sources that he consulted.

Given his superb familiarity with Ottoman military culture and the constituent divisions of Selim I's army in Egypt, one is led to believe that the work was composed at least a few decades after Selim I had entered Cairo and when Ibn Zunbul visited Constantinople first in 1538 and second in 1554-55.<sup>87</sup> Teeming with diverse literary tropes, the dramatic narrative that Ibn Zunbul wove is organized around several historical events that appear ultimately decisive in the outcome of the Ottoman-Mamluk confrontations. The primary among these are the tension

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<sup>85</sup> Robert Irwin, “Ibn Zunbul and the Romance of History,” in *Writing and Representation in Medieval Islam: Muslim Horizons*, eds. by Julia Bray, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 5.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. The surviving manuscripts of Ibn Zunbul's chronicle bear different titles. However, in another work of his, Ibn Zunbul refers to his history as “Kitāb Infiṣāl Dawlat al-Awān wa Ittiṣāl Dawlat Banī 'Uthmān” (‘The Departure of the Temporal Dynasty and the Coming of the Ottomans’). I use the above title because it is the one used in the printed Critical edition.

<sup>87</sup> Benjamin Lellouch, “Ibn Zunbul,” See also Robert Irwin, “Ibn Zunbul and the Romance of History,” for a general overview of the debate on Ibn Zunbul's biography.

that had been building up between Selim I and Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī, which he solely attributes to the Ottoman military expansion eastward, and the disparity between the Mamluk and Ottoman military cultures. His narration of the latter, in particular, is best interpreted as literary enactments of the countless encounters and chivalry duels that happened, or he wished to have happened, between the *Rūmīs* and the Circassians. In this regard, Ibn Zunbul's history is not to be read as a mine of factual information on the pre- and post-1517 battle's history. Rather, it is the thematic and conceptual frameworks within which the author organizes his narrative that warrants a detailed study.

Jane Hathaway has argued that the trope of single combat heroism and duels that Ibn Zunbul liberally employs was a defining feature of a Mamluk literary tradition that valorizes chivalry (*furūsiyya*) and romanticizes the episodes of defeat.<sup>88</sup> The disproportionately virtuous attributes that Ibn Zunbul ascribes to the Circassian Mamluks, notably a certain Sharbak, led Hathaway to conclude that Ibn Zunbul was “clearly on the side of the Mamluks.”<sup>89</sup> While Ibn Zunbul's pro-Mamluk partisanship is hard to miss, the narrative is underpinned by other considerations that are not necessarily pro-Mamluk as previous readings would suggest. What principally distresses Ibn Zunbul was not the fall of the Mamluk State, a concept he refers to as *dawla*<sup>90</sup> or *Saltana*. As a matter of fact, in a presumably fabricated conversation between a Mamluk prince, Kartbāy, and Selim I, Ibn Zunbul stresses, through the mouth of Kartbāy, the cyclical nature of history and the inevitability of regime change (*dawlatunā qad walat*) in

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<sup>88</sup> Jane Hathaway, *Tale of Two Factions, A: Myth, Memory, and Identity in Ottoman Egypt and Yemen* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2003), 128.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> For a discussion on what the term *dawla* might have connoted in the Mamluk context, see J. Van Steenberg, "The Flux and Reflux of Mamluk State Formation: reconsidering Mamluk notions of elite, state and empire", (Working Paper), (Online, Islamic History Commons, 2014), <https://islamichistorycommons.org/mamluk/>. I am not convinced by Steenberg's equating *dawla* with a Marxist superstructure from which emanated the political and social aspects of the state. In the chronicles consulted in this study, they do not imply such a meaning at all.

response to Selim I's questioning about proofs of the Mamluk prowess.<sup>91</sup> The concocted response is that only *al-Nizām* (order or law) will remain in perpetuity.<sup>92</sup> This view is expressed in one of Kartbāy's exchanges with Selim I as he didactically informs the Ottoman Sultan that :

“Allah has created a beginning and an end for everything. The duration and fortune of each state (*dawla*) is known and predetermined. And this divine arrangement has been ongoing and continually manifests itself in his creations' affairs. Where are the studious scholars? Where are the Kings and Sultans? You, as well, will certainly pass away, and this order (*Nizām*) will remain adhered to.”<sup>93</sup>

Ibn Zunbul's narrative is, therefore, premised on a conceptual distinction between *dawla* (the Arabic contemporary term for state)<sup>94</sup> and *Nizām* (order or law). The former features in the context of dynastic succession or in reference to either Sultan's entourage.<sup>95</sup> *Nizām* on the other hand explicitly conveys order or the laws of history that neither of the dynastic houses could temper with.<sup>96</sup> It might be argued that Ibn Zunbul, reflecting in retrospect on the ultimate outcome, had attempted to confer precedence to the workings of natural law rather than military power as a way of diminishing Selim I's legacy. Whatever the actual intention might have been, that main conceptual distinction does not support an argument for the existence of a political language that directly associates the Mamluk dynasty with the rule of Egypt and *Bilād al-Shām*.

<sup>91</sup> Ibn Zunbul, *Waqi'at al-Sultan*, 141, 146.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. “wa qad ja ‘al Allāh li-kul shay’ bidāya wa nihāya, wa li-kul dawla mudda ma ‘lūma wa qisma maqsūma, wa qad jarat ‘ādat Allāh subhānahu fi khalqih bi-dhalik. ‘Ayīn al-‘ā’ima al-mujjtahidūn? ‘Ayīn al-mulūk wa al-salāfīn? wa ‘ant ‘aydan lābud ‘an tamūt, wa yuhtaram hadhā al-nizām.”

<sup>94</sup> Ahmad Mukhtar ‘Omar, “Al-Maknaz al-Kabīr Mu’jjam Shāmil lil-Majālāt wi al-Mutrādifāt wi al-Mutāddāt,” (Riyadh: Satum, 2000) 1022:431. Wael Hallaq argues that the term *dawla* came to refer to the totality of the modern state since the 19th century. See, Wael B. Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 62-62. Lexically, *dawla* denotes rotation of wealth and fortune during war. It also has the generic connotation of things that are handed down for or exchanged between people. Thus, it implies a temporary state of existence. See, Ibn Manẓūr, “*Lisān al-‘Arab*, XI” (Beirut: Dār Ṣādr, 1882), 252-254.

<sup>95</sup> Ibn Zunbul, *Waqi'at al-Sultan*, 157, 179, 199, 205, 243, 247.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, 141, 255.

Moreover, Ibn Zunbul's antagonistic stance against the *'athāmina*<sup>97</sup> is arguably informed by what he perceived as a breach of chivalry and traditional warfare codes by Selim I, not an outright rejection of the *Rūmī Ṭā'ife*, nor their claim to extend their Sultanate in Egypt. This becomes all the more evident in his comparison of Selim I's aggression and brutality with Timur's.<sup>98</sup> Despite the latter's legacy as the savage conqueror, Selim I is shown as a worse exemplum because of his army's use of firearms and heavy weaponry. Additionally, his remonstrance against Selim's barbarous and indiscriminate carnage of Circassians, but also Ottomans and Arab Bedouins, registers his stance against Selim's method of warfare. In another comparison between the Ottoman and Mamluk practices of dynastic sovereignty, Ibn Zunbul intended to tacitly highlight the Ottoman initial reasons for waging war on the Mamluks in Egypt, not what was politically at stake. In a presumably fictional conversation between Selim I and Tūmānbāy II, Ibn Zunbul contrasts the rules and conventions that accord legitimacy to each ruler. The practice of nominating and electing a Mamluk ruler from amongst his peers is presented by Tūmānbāy II as more lawful than predetermined selection or usurping power by oneself.<sup>99</sup> In turn, Selim I emphasizes the importance of hailing from a dynastic house that extends back for generations, a condition without which, he continues, the *Salṭana* (legitimacy or position of power) cannot be established.<sup>100</sup>

The vantage point from which Ibn Zunbul narrated the Ottoman-Mamluk encounter was that of a local commentator who had firsthand access to the contemporary sources that documented the battle and the subsequent events. His narrative does not bear the undertones of tragic defeat and irreversible loss. This is, I argue, because the structural pre-given of *al-*

<sup>97</sup> An unusual plural form of the noun 'Uthmani (Ottoman).

<sup>98</sup> Ibn Zunbul, *Waqi'at al-Sultan*, 118, 262.

<sup>99</sup> Ibn Zunbul, *Waqi'at al-Sultan*, 243.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 244.

*Nizām* conveying the primacy or natural order or the legal system allowed the transition to appear as a natural outcome of history. His later comparison of Selim's brutal reign with those of his father and son as well as the emphasis he places on the contingency of the conquest itself supports this reading.

The only means, however, to discredit Selim's claim for rule in Egypt was by appealing to the notion of ethnic loyalty and the virtue of chivalry. According to Mamluk culture, practical matters like chivalric virtues and ethnic and factional solidarity had a direct bearing on the ruler's legitimacy among his peers. This is why Ibn Zunbul judged Selim I's *salṭana* (rule) as invalid because of his failure to live up to the Mamluk practices of sovereignty that made each ruler *primus inter pares*.

### II.III Ibn Iyās

Muḥammed Ibn Aḥmad Ibn Iyās al-Ḥanafī (b. 852/9-1448 - d. 930/1524) was a Cairene historian who wrote the last Mamluk contemporary chronicle. He was a scion of a Mamluk family like other prominent Mamluk historians such as Ibn al-Dawādārī and Ibn Taghrī Birdī.<sup>101</sup> The paucity of late Mamluk chronicles, however, makes Ibn Iyās an indispensable authority on the late history of the Mamluk Sultanate.<sup>102</sup> So much so that Circassian chronicles, including Ibn Iyās', have been incorporated in studies on Mamluk economic and monetary history due to the rich and multi-thematic content that these chronicles included.<sup>103</sup> The noted fame of Ibn Iyās' *Badā' i' al-Zuhūr fī Waqā' i' al-Duhūr* (The Wonders of Blossoms in the

<sup>101</sup> Little, "Historiography of the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk Epochs," 440.

<sup>102</sup> Sami G. Massoud, *The Chronicles and Annalistic Sources of the Early Mamluk Circassian Period*, (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), 4.

<sup>103</sup> Jere L. Bacharach, "Mamluk Historians and their Quantitative Economic Data," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, Vol. 12 (1975), 75-87.

Chronicles of History) stems from being virtually the only detailed chronicle that documented the Ottoman Conquest of Egypt in 1517 from a Mamluk perspective by an author who was versed in Mamluk intricate administrative and political affairs. Not only is the chronicle comprehensive in terms of the topics and periods it covers, it also draws on major fifteenth-century Mamluk chronicles.<sup>104</sup>

His eleven-volume chronicle *Badā'i al-Zuhūr fī waqā'i al-Duhūr* is a comprehensive history of Egypt divided into two parts. The first is a generic account of all the kingdoms and dynasties that ruled over that geography till the end of the first reigning house of the Mamluk Sultanate circa 1363 and the second is a more detailed chronicle history from 1363 till 1522. Ibn Iyās hailed from a Mamluk-connected milieu and was politically close to the ruling elite of his time.<sup>105</sup> What sets his history apart from the other surviving chronicles and historical accounts of the period is the lengthy and detailed descriptions of the events that he was a witness to. In contrast to Ibn Zunbul who designated both Selim I and Tūmānbāy II as Sultans in his history,<sup>106</sup> Ibn Iyās took a more hardened stance against the Ottoman Sultan Selim I whom he only refers to as *Selīm Shāh Ibn 'Othman* (the son of Osman).<sup>107</sup> While embedded into the daily events and state affairs that the Mamluk Sultan had to attend to, the Ottoman-Mamluk confrontation narrative unfolded steadily on several stages. The Ottoman Sultan and his forces are consistently portrayed as the savage aggressors throughout.

Yet, despite the anti-Ottoman rhetoric adopted by Ibn Iyās, the conventional themes of administering justice and maintaining a conscientious judicial system as requirements of

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>105</sup> W.M. Brinner, "Ibn Iyās," in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 15 May 2017. <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_3225](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3225)>

<sup>106</sup> Ibn Zunbul, *Waqi'at al-Sultan*, 121.

<sup>107</sup> Ibn Iyas. Part four *Badā'i al-Zuhūr fī waqā'i al-Duhūr*. Edited by P. Kahle, M. Mustafa and M. Sobernheim. Istanbul: Kitabhane, Matbaat el-Dawla, 1913). 445, 448, 449, 450, 458.

sustaining their rule are closely connected to his discussion of Selim I. During the reign of the Circassian Mamluk Sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī, he relays a meeting the Sultan held with his *amir* advisors in which he was briefed on Selim I's military success in capturing Aleppo and told that its people decided to side with him thanks to his justice and the wrong done to them by the Mamluk viceroys.<sup>108</sup> Although elaborate notions like *Nizām* do not figure in his reports, the emphasis on the lack of the constituent principles of just and legitimate rule runs through his narrative. For instance, he ascribes the roots of the animosity between the two rulers to the machinations of one of the fugitive Mamluks who had escaped to the *Son of Osman*'s lands and communicated to the Ottomans the decaying state of affairs of the Mamluk kingdom and the rampant corruption and injustice that had pervaded Egypt's judicial system.<sup>109</sup> Political and moral degeneracy, thus, served as the ultimate impetus for the Ottoman military aggression towards the Mamluks. The fugitive's treasonous role, then, extends to informing Selim I of Egypt's most strategically vulnerable points through which he could feasibly conquer.

## II.IV Ibn Ṭulūn

Shams al-Dīn Muḥammed b. 'Alī b. Aḥmed, al-Sāliḥi al-Dimashkī al-Ḥanafī (b. 877/1473 - d. 952/1546) was a Damascene scholar and historian with a thematically extensive scholarly output.<sup>110</sup> Born into a family of scholars and judges, Ibn Ṭulūn was well established in the late Mamluk scholarly circle of his city. His paternal uncle Jamāl al-Dīn Yūsuf b. Ṭulūn (d. 936/1530 or 937/1531) held the position of the judge of the Hall of Justice (*Dār al-'Adl*), and Burhān al-Dīn b. Qindīl, his paternal grandfather's half-brother, presumingly had created an

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, 463.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, 471-472.

<sup>110</sup> W.M. Brinner, "Ibn Ṭulūn", in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by: P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 07 May 2017  
<[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_COM\\_0344](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0344)>

important endowment in the city.<sup>111</sup> Unlike Ibn Zunbul, whose connection to the Mamluk Sultans was more pronounced, Ibn Ṭūlūn was an *‘ilmiyye* member (i.e. member of the scholarly hierarchy) whose literary knowledge and legal credentials had been nurtured and confirmed by a wider network of scholars in Damascus and Egypt.<sup>112</sup> His principal position as an *‘alim* (scholar) had served his wide ranging intellectual pursuits and made him well-positioned to comment on the changes that affected his city and the Sultanate at large.

As a witness to the change of imperial administration post-1516, Ibn Ṭūlūn penned an annalistic account of political events in Egypt and Syria from 884/1479 till 926/1519. The book is titled *Mufākahat al-Khillān fī Hawādith al-Zamān* (the Boon Companions’ Banter in Events Throughout History). Like most of the medieval *‘ulema* chronicles, each year’s entry conventionally starts with the names of the caliph, the Sultan of Egypt and Damascus, his viceroy in Damascus, the judges, and, sometimes, a whole set of other appointees and personnel in charge of military affairs. At first glance, there seem to be no clear narratological thread connecting the events reported nor an underpinning principle that weaves them into a coherent story.

Unlike Ibn Zunbul’s romanticizing account of the encounters leading to and resulting from Selim I’s military success in 1516 and 1517, Ibn Ṭūlūn’s annalistic history is informed by a different priority. Though the Mamluk Sultans and their representatives in Damascus, Aleppo and other walled cities in *Bilād al-Shām* figure as protagonists, the role of local scholars (*‘ulema*) and savants (*fuqahā*) appear more prominent in the unfolding of the “conquest” episode. For instance, the justification for the end of the Mamluk Sultanate is relayed through a

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<sup>111</sup> Guy Burak, *The Second Formation of Islamic Law: The Hanafi School in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 102-103.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

dream account by a certain al-Muḥyai al-Na‘imī who saw that the homage (*bay‘a*) to the “Turks,” a reference to generic ethnic identity of the Circassian Mamluks, had been brought to an end.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, in addition to the passing mention of the military skirmishes that the Ottoman and Mamluk armies engaged in, and the subsequent retreat of the latter to Egypt, Ibn Ṭūlūn’s narrative is rather fixated on the direct negotiations initiated by the ‘ulema with Selim I’s and their attempts to reconcile Ottoman *de facto* rule with local needs. His mention of the letter written by the four leading jurists representing the different Islamic schools of law to Selim I pledging him to order his soldiers to show restraint and abstain from harassing the Damascene residents is indicative of his narratological and political stakes. Up until this point, the narrative is just descriptive and does not allude to any partisan views held by Ibn Ṭūlūn. However, the consequential conflict, in his view, arose when Alī Zayn ed-Dīn al-‘Abidīn, a Ḥanafī Rumī judge, declined an invitation to be entertained and hosted by the Umayyad Mosque’s imam and single-handedly appointed judges of the Ḥanafī, Shafi’ī, and Mālikī schools of jurisprudence.<sup>114</sup>

In line with the evidently ‘ulema-centered outlook shaping Ibn Ṭūlūn’s experience of the events, his narrative’s treatment of the Ottoman dynasty’s origin and his emphasis on their relationship to the Mamluks strongly suggests that the identity of the reigning dynasty was a secondary, yet not entirely irrelevant, consideration to the scholarly network. In fact, he registers the full name of Sultan Selim I for the first time in his 922/1516 entry in order to make the conjectural argument that Osman, the eponymous founder of the Ottoman dynasty, was one

<sup>113</sup> Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-Khillān fī Ḥawādith al-Zamān*, ed. Khalīl al-Mansūr, 2 vols, (Beirut: Dār el-Kutub el-‘ilmiyye, 1998), 337. For works on the role of visionary imagination in early modern Islamic history see Nile Green, “The Religious and Cultural Roles of Dreams and Visions in Islam,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Nov., 2003), 287-313

<sup>114</sup> Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-Khillān fī Ḥawādith al-Zamān*, 338.

of Ahmed Ibn Ṭūlūn's mamluks (slave-warrior).<sup>115</sup> Whether this was an argument in support of Selim I' legitimate claim to rule over Damascus, and hence the rest of the Mamluk-controlled lands, or a passing remark intended to de-mystify the identity of the new reigning Sultan, it does not have a bearing on the object of his historiographic account. The leading protagonists in Ibn Ṭūlūn's narration who had taken a proactive role in arranging a meeting with the *Hünkār* were the four head jurists of Damascus. The arrest of the Damascene citadel's viceroy figures as a peripheral incident that does not have a dramatic impact on the larger course of events.<sup>116</sup>

The seamless transition from an almost objective description of the conquest episode to a self-narration of Ibn Ṭūlūn's tour inside Selim I's makeshift caravanserai is, however, interrupted by an issue of paramount importance to Ibn Ṭūlūn. His allusions to the sheer number of the Ḥanafī scholars that had come with Sultan Selim and were in his company throughout, as well as the escape of the Damascene Ḥanafī judge to Egypt suggest a preoccupation with a central pillar of rule that had defined the Mamluk dynasty, which is jurisdictional latitudinarianism. One context to these particular observations can be reconstructed from Guy Burak's discussion of Ibn Ṭūlūn's seminal *Ṭabaqāt* (Strata) work titled *al-Ghuraf al-ʿĀliyya fī Tarājim Mutaʾakkhkhirī al-Ḥanafīyya* (The Upper Chambers and the Translations of the Late Ḥanafīyya). Though the work is a continuation of the Mamluk fifteenth-century biographical dictionary genre, Burak argues that the blatant exclusion of Ottoman Ḥanafī scholars, a prominent branch by that point, in the dictionary that included more than nine hundred names is an oddity that raises questions about Ibn Ṭūlūn polemical intentions.<sup>117</sup> This act of textual excision of affiliates to and scholars of the Ottoman dynasty

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid, 339.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Burak, *The Second Formation of Islamic Law*, 106-107

from the Islamic chain of transmission (*silsila*) may reflect a heightened awareness on Ibn Ṭūlūn's part of a new kind of exercise of imperial power that he had not been exposed to beforehand. The Ottoman institutionalization of a hierarchal legal order which destabilized the *madhhab* makeup of Arab societies was indeed a novelty in the sixteenth century.<sup>118</sup> The elevation of the Ḥanafī *madhhab* to the status of a state *madhhab* and relegating all the other schools of law, including non-Ottoman Ḥanafī scholars was the thrust of that Ottoman legal order. This may also explain the partial indifference he paid to the change of deputies and rulers in his *Mufākahat al-Khillān* and his explicit mention of the number of Ḥanafī scholars and *Rumī* madras teachers who were present at the camp site of Selim I.

Though little can be said about the conclusions that Ibn Ṭūlūn had drawn from these encounters, his chronicle shows that the association between the imperial house of the Ottomans and the Ḥanafī *madhhab* (school of Islamic jurisprudence) had underlay his outlook from the outset. In reference to an incident in which the Shafi'īs had stood in front of the Ḥanafīs during prayers and, consequently had been punitively prevented from praying towards their designated prayer niche (*miḥrāb*), Ibn Ṭūlūn describes it as dispute that arose between the 'arwām<sup>119</sup> and the Shafi'īs.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, his explicit mention of the *madhhab* according to which the Ottoman Sultan performed the congregational Friday prayers demonstrates the association must have set a precedent and thus warranted a mentioning.<sup>121</sup> His description of the events does not, however, elicit an image of hostility towards or unease with the Ottoman pro-

<sup>118</sup> A case study demonstrating that legal identities were important during the Mamluk-Ottoman transition is provided by Timothy J. Fitzgerald, "Murder in Aleppo: Ottoman Conquest and the Struggle for Justice in the Early Sixteenth Century," *Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 27:2 (2016): 180-181.

<sup>119</sup> The plural form of *Rumī*, meaning Ottoman.

<sup>120</sup> Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-Khillān fī Ḥawāḍith al-Zamān*, 345.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 344.

Ḥanafī favoritism as his the entries of his biographical dictionary, arguably, show.<sup>122</sup> Nor is it plausible to argue that the Arab-speaking subjects in Damascus could not care that a “foreign” ruler had reigned in lieu of another.<sup>123</sup> As a matter of fact, the keen interest that Ibn Ṭūlūn had shown in the new Sultan’s legal practices and the *madhhab* he adhered to proves that his historiographic account was invested in articulating the new political reality brought about by the change. The demarcation between who were fully indigenous and foreign is also misplaced in this context. Notwithstanding the imbricate relationship between the Constantinople-based Rūmī dynasty and the Ḥanafī school of thought, Ottoman Ḥanafism was opposed by non-Ḥanafī, and possibly Ḥanafī, scholars on the ground of its hierarchy-making legal practices among the local scholars.<sup>124</sup> For Ibn Ṭūlūn, we may argue that the little concern he paid to the political change of rule is because it did not directly impinge on the structural pre-given that sustained the existence of his scholarly community. The structural pre-given in Ibn Ṭūlūn’s narrative around which the transition events center is clearly the legal order that underpinned and legitimated Muslim Sultanates and principalities. Therefore, the Ottoman change of the legal order, and its subsequent consequence of alienating the native *‘ilmiyye* class, presented a thorny challenge to Ibn Ṭūlūn and his contemporaries who faced a new dispensation that did not erode that structural pre-given upon which Muslim Sultanates and its history were based stand, but structurally reconfigured it.

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<sup>122</sup> Burak, *The Second Formation of Islamic Law*, 109.

<sup>123</sup> Abdul-Karim Rafeq, “Relations Between the Syrian “‘Ulemā” and the Ottoman State in the Eighteenth Century,” *Oriente Moderno*, Nuova serie, Anno 18 (79), Nr. 1, *The Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century* (1999), 81-82.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-95. The author argues that as the chief judges representing the Ottoman state in Damascus were by the eighteenth century predominantly Arab Ḥanafī scholars, not Rūmī, and that had promoted *madhhab* conversion. Yet, that change did not alter the view among many non-Ḥanafīs of the hierarchy and did not stop them from reprimanding instances of opportunist conversion.

The question of why the discourse of conquest and disruption of the established political order had not registered a clear textual paradigm nonetheless merits an elaboration. In the year entry for (923/1517), Ibn Ṭūlūn designates both Tūmānbāy II and Selim I as “Sultans” of Egypt and Damascus and al-Shām respectively.<sup>125</sup> Not only that, both rulers are given honorific titles conveying the author’s vision of their future and status. Selim I is called *al-Malik al-Muẓẓafar* (the victorious) and Tūmānbāy II is named *al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ* (the upright). As much as these titles indicate a neutral stance taken towards both dynasties’ heads, they may also be interpreted as a reflection of the status quo that brought the Mamluk rule to an effective end. Thus, the argument implying that the reason why Ottoman Sultan, unlike his Mamluk predecessors, were rarely referred to as *Sulṭānunā* (our king) in Syrian chronicles and dictionary biographies was because they were not locally visible to their subjects is impressionistic.<sup>126</sup> Though the Damascene populace might have recognized the rule of the Mamluk Sultan’s in their everyday life, this contrastive argument puts an overwhelming emphasis on a descriptive term that denotes a mere monarchal position. The term *salṭana* (kingdom) and its verbal variant *tasalṭan* (to become a king) feature prominently in both Ibn Zunbul’s and Ibn Ṭūlūn’s chronicles. Ibn Zunbul uses the term indiscriminately when referring to the de facto ruler of Egypt both before and after 1517.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, Ibn Ṭūlūn employs the term when describing how a ruler either usurped power or was elected from among his peers to rule Egypt.<sup>128</sup> On top of that, Ibn Ṭūlūn refers to Tūmānbāy II and his high ranked warriors as *al-Sharākkisa al-Maṣṣriyyen* (the

<sup>125</sup> Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufaḥahat al-Khillān fī Hawādith al-Zamān*, 347.

<sup>126</sup> Rafeq, “Relations Between the Syrian,” 87.

<sup>127</sup> Ibn Zunbul, *Waqi’at al-Sultan al-Ghawry*, 115, 116, 118.

<sup>128</sup> Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufaḥahat al-Khillān fī Hawādith al-Zamān*, 340, 343.

Egyptian Circassians),<sup>129</sup> while Ibn Zunbul describes them, in the third person, *al-Ṭa'ife al-Sharkasiyya* (the Circassian group).<sup>130</sup>

Part of the reason also lies in the fact that the Mamluk Sultanate had not from the outset established a state structure over the lands it ruled. Besides the civilian bureaucrat and the sons of the military classes (*'Āwlad al-Nās*) that made up the bulk of the dynastic organs of governance, the Sultanate remained merely a legitimate protector and tax-collector of its subjects at best. The Ottoman conquest of Mamluk Damascus was not an unprecedented challenge to the Mamluk's supposed sovereignty in Syria. In 1300, Ghāzān, the ruler of the Mongol Empire's Ilkhanate, had marched into the Syrian plateau with the declared intention of overtaking Damascus. The local chroniclers of the time reported what Ghāzān's firman entailed *in extenso* and did seem equally convinced of Ghāzān's claim to occupy the city.<sup>131</sup> Reuven Amitai argues that even if the city's notables and chief judges had been aware of Ghāzān's deceptive rhetoric, they would not have chosen to remain on the side of the Mamluks who had abandoned them.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, the dissonance between the subjects' understanding of what legitimates rule and their allegiance to the reigning king, who may be recognized as a *sultan*, is evident in Ibn Taymiya's anti-Mongol *fatwa* (legal writ) which merely intended to ward the Mongols off the city and not to uphold the Mamluks' right to reign.<sup>133</sup> Such attitudes, however, Amitai contends, stood in contrast to the Mamluk-minded commander of the Citadel Arjuwāsh who, judging from his statements and activities, behaved heroically against the Mongols and

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<sup>129</sup> Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufaḥḥat al-Khillān fī Ḥawādith al-Zamān*, 350.

<sup>130</sup> Ibn Zunbul, *Waqi'at al-Sultan*, 121.

<sup>131</sup> Reuven Amitai, "The Mongol Occupation of Damascus in 1300: A Study of Mamluk Loyalties," In *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, edited by Michael Winter and Amalia Levanoni (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004), 28-29

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid, 31.

managed to keep their forces at bay.<sup>134</sup> This incident is also broached in Ibn Iyās' account. Relaying it from the Egyptian perspective, he analogized the aforementioned act of treason committed by one of the fugitive Mamluks to the treason committed by Qipchak, the then Mamluk viceroy in al-Shām, in 1300 when he switched sides and pledged his allegiance to Ghāzān.<sup>135</sup> The story, however, does not primarily act as a percept against treason in this context. Rather, the emphasis is put on the comparable looming threat posed by the Ottomans. A brief comparison between the Mamluk-Ilkhanid wars and the Ottoman-Mamluk battles almost two centuries later can thus illustrate the reasons for the Ottomans' success. Reuven Amitai submits that the Ilkhanid imperial project was not more than an abstract ideology based on the political ideals of expanding the Mongol dominion over the civilized world.<sup>136</sup> The Ottomans' sixteenth-century ideology-driven expansion southward, however, was based on a more nuanced notion of sovereignty couched in an Islamic discourse that addressed the needs of the time, as I will show in the next chapter.

Since very little is known about the late Mamluk scholarly networks and the nature of their multi-layered affiliation, an attempt to explain the disparity in local and regional perspectives with regards to the question of where political and judicial authority laid is in order. The welcoming, nonchalant undertone running through Ibn Ṭūlūn's narrative, in contrast to the other two by the Egyptian historians, may make a perfect case for the thesis that sets up a clear juxtaposition between foreign rule and different forms of local subjectivity. Ibn Ṭūlūn's biography might thus lend itself conveniently to this reading of the sources. After all, his

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid, 35-36.

<sup>135</sup> Ibn Iyas. Part four *Badā'i al-Zuhūr fī waqā'i al-Duhūr*, 472.

<sup>136</sup> Reuven Amitai-Priess, *Mongols and Mamluks: The Mamluk-Īlkhānīd War, 1260-1281*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 230-235.

mother he reports was of Greek Anatolian extraction and was fluent in her ancestors' tongue.<sup>137</sup> His allegiance to and identification with the ruling Mamluk dynasty could thus be challenged on the basis of his family background and his strong sense of pride in his hometown, Damascus.

However, as I have tried to argue above, the conceptual framework whereby all three narratives were informed did not accommodate a discourse that emphasized a drastic rupture in the political foundation of the late medieval Muslim state. Though both Egyptian historians clearly stood in opposition to the Ottoman conquest and the Ottoman Sultan, they did not formulate their arguments in a language that bespoke an encroachment on a sovereign dynasty's right to rule nor a challenge to his uncontested authority in the Muslim core lands. Nevertheless, these chronicles are invaluable sources since they documented a transition period of sorts in the early modern history of the Arabo-Turkic world when the theoretical and polemical components of an elaborate discourse of sovereignty were beginning to take shape.

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<sup>137</sup> Henri Laoust, *Les gouverneurs de Damas sous les Mamlouks et les premiers Ottomans* (658–1156/1260–1744) (Institute Français de Damas: Damascus, 1952), X.

### Chapter III:

## Sovereignty in the Making: Ottoman Ideological Expansion in the Sixteenth Century

The effective abolishment of the Mamluk Sultanate in 1517 and the subsequent rise of the Ottoman Empire as a regional power had long constituted two separate, autonomous narratives that emphasize two different modes of historical development—one late medieval and the other early modern. Inroads made in studies of pre-modern empires and the nature of their imperialisms have, however, made it opportune to situate these two overlapping events within a single dynamic early modern context. In what follows, I propose to incorporate the historiography-based study of the Mamluk-Ottoman transition in a broader framework that ties the development of a discourse of sovereignty with the contemporaneous dynastic crises that happened in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. That is, I contextualize the major fifteenth-century diplomatic and military developments that had acquainted the Mamluk chroniclers with the Ottoman State in the broader political and intellectual discussions on the location of political authority that extended across the late medieval Islamic lands, from North Africa to Central Asia. I reckon that pursuing an argument in this direction may help us revisit the legally-based view about the basis of Ottoman practice of rulership which posits that it “culminated in Ebū s-Su‘ūd’s formulation of a claim universal sovereignty in the sixteenth century.”<sup>138</sup> I then conclude by contending that since the sovereignty discourse was germinated against a historical background of dynastic crises that rendered the late medieval model of kingship obsolete,<sup>139</sup> while giving rise to a new type of political imagination and ideological

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<sup>138</sup> Colin Imber, *Ebu’s-Su’ud*, 73.

<sup>139</sup> This problem was most acute in the Western territories of the Mongol Empire in the fourteenth century when ideological ambiguity about which ruler dynastic lineage had the authority to rule contributed to “fluid and

frontiers, it is pertinent to note that at the time of conquest the political landscape of the Near East was already in a state of flux which had facilitated the Ottoman incorporation of the Mamluk urban centers. Lastly, in light of this argument, I propose that the discourse of “conquest” has become hegemonic and definitive, rather than explanatory.

### III.I The Marches’ Lords from 1299 to 1453

Traditionally, the successful emergence of the Ottoman Sultanate in the late fourteenth century is ascribed to its abandonment of the Anatolian marches ethos and adoption of a “highly developed classical Turkish-Islamic system of governance and administration.”<sup>140</sup> The internal features and parameters of a system of governance in which a centralized capital held sway over its fiscal and economic resources was inherited from the Seljuks. This view is supported by the assumption that the development of a robust military and administrative apparatus was essential to establish absolute authority in the conquered regions pre-1453. Such a feudal military-administrative infrastructure was imperative for the conquest enterprises of the Ottoman Sultans, and hence their legitimacy among the March lords.<sup>141</sup> Ottoman medieval sovereignty was thus conditional on socio-economic feudal forces that placed a tremendous pressure on the rulers to prove their leadership potential as overlords. This situation was also compounded by the existence of contemporary power contenders in the region. Conquering Constantinople had indeed a transformative impact on the political and legitimating ideology

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changing notions of what legitimate political authority meant.” See Patrick Wing, *The Jalayirids: Dynastic State Formation in the Mongol Middle East* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 84.

<sup>140</sup> Halil Inalcik, “The Emergence of the Ottomans,” in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, ed. P. M. Holt, Ann K. S., and Bernard Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1977), 280.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 283. For a detailed refutation of the monocausal explanation for the rise of the Ottoman frontier Beğlik (principality), see Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds: The Construction of the Ottoman State* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2015), 118-150. And for the Sultan-lords legitimacy struggle, see Bakı Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 81-89.

underpinning the now imperial Sultanate.<sup>142</sup> This was most evident in the embassies that the Ottoman and Mamluk courts exchanged with each other. In the fourteenth century, Beyazid I had recognized his vassal *Mamluk* (enslaved) status to the Mamluk Sultan Barquq when he received an embassy from Cairo.<sup>143</sup> A century or so later, the Ottomans were not any longer at a disadvantage vis-à-vis the Circassian Mamluks.<sup>144</sup> In fact, the regional prominence of the Ottoman Empire is tacitly recognized as news about Sultan Beyzaid II is mentioned in Ibn Ṭūlūn's account as early as (885/1480).<sup>145</sup> The origin of this change of heart is arguably due to the Ottomans' ever-increasing dominion in the western part of the Byzantine Empire and their role in bringing the Orthodox populations in southeast Europe under Islamic rule.<sup>146</sup> The perception of Ottoman power and legitimacy to rule hinged on their military success in Byzantium-ruled territories. However, the perception of a looming crisis that late Mamluk historians conveyed when the Ottoman campaign in 1516-17 was underway must not be located against a background of diplomatic exchanges and image-making ceremonies that defined the relationship between Ottoman and Mamluk "sovereigns" from the mid-fifteenth century to circa 1500.<sup>147</sup> I argue that this is because what they had narrated was not a "crisis of sovereignty." Rather, I contend that the conceptual and ideological constituent of Islamic sovereignty has to

<sup>142</sup> Halil Inalcik, "The rise of the Ottoman Empire," in *The Cambridge History of Islam*, ed. P. M. Holt, Ann K. S., and Bernard Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1977), 296. Inalcik makes the nebulous contention that "the Ottomans believed strongly in the teaching of Islam on the sources of sovereignty." This haziness and slightly anachronistic appropriation of the term is more evident on p. 303 when he argues that the *raison d'être* of Mehmed II's *Qānūn-nāme* was "to make no concessions from the principle of the indivisibility of the state and of sovereignty. I am, however, in favor of the argument that sovereignty as an imperial discourse emerged only in the sixteenth century."

<sup>143</sup> Ibn al-Furat, *Tarikh al-Duwal wa-l-Muluk*, ed. K. Zurayk and N. Izzedine (Beirut, 1936-42), 9:339.

<sup>144</sup> Cihan Yüksel Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks: Imperial Diplomacy and Warfare in the Islamic World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 2.

<sup>145</sup> Ibn Ṭūlūn, *Mufākahat al-Khillān fī Hawādhith al-Zamān*, 10.

<sup>146</sup> Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks*, 11.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, 19. For a synthetic overview of the diplomatic and material gift exchange between the Ottomans and Mamluks pre-1517, see Elias I. Muhanna, "The Sultan's New Clothes: Ottoman-Mamluk Gift Exchange in the Fifteenth-century," *Muqarnas*, Vol. 27 (2010), 189-207.

be sought in a global sixteenth-century Islamic context in order to go beyond the self-referential, restrictive terminology of political legitimacy.

### III.II What Did an Early Modern Ottoman State Look Like in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries?

As I tried to delineate in my previous chapter, the conceptual framework through which the transition historical chronicles framed the questions of legitimacy and eligibility for rule lacked all semblance of modern notions of visceral loyalty or impersonal allegiance. Neither does the view that remaining indifferent to the change of foreign rule of different ethnic origins genuinely characterize the complex nature of early modern state-subject relationship. Therefore, to better understand the significance of those scholars' polemics in the history of the Ottoman Empire, I will summarize some of the revisionist views and arguments made regarding the nature and structural development of the early modern Ottoman state. The socio-political concept of "state" is semantically imbued with connotations about experiences and structures that define late early modern and modern European history.

For instance, Abou El-Haj articulates what the notion of *devlet* semantically connoted in the pre-seventeenth century Ottoman context. In reference to a definition provided to him through a private communication by Andreas Tietze, *devlet* was essentially "the decision-making power of the legitimate head of state as well as of those to whom he has delegated this power."<sup>148</sup> As a matter of fact, as Marinos Sariyannis argues, the development of the term in the Ottoman context took on a semantic trajectory from power to state.<sup>149</sup> The latter acquired an

<sup>148</sup> Rifaat Ali Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State. The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 19-20.

<sup>149</sup> Marinos Sariyannis, "Ruler and State, State and Society in Ottoman Political Thought," *Turkish Historical Review* 4 (2013), 96-98.

acute territorial consciousness only by the late seventeenth century.<sup>150</sup> What it had meant in fifteenth-century Ottoman texts, however, was peculiarly related to the personal power of the ruler as it appears in relation to similar terms such as *salṭanat*.<sup>151</sup>

Cemal Kafadar argued that state formation of an institutional character had been an ongoing process in the Ottoman Empire since the inception of a distinct Ottoman ideology for rule and expansion.<sup>152</sup> The implication of Kafadar's argument is that the Ottoman budding imperialist projects had been driven by a power centralization impetus, which allowed it to adapt to and adopt the imperialist administrative traditions in its environs. Therefore, the theoretical framework into which Kafadar placed the role of *gazi* activities in Ottoman imperial formation is strongly underpinned by a sociological type of state. Centralized absolutism hinging on a state-run hierarchy of scholars and *kul* administrators as well as bureaucrats (privileged sultanic slaves), that is to say institutional developments, "consolidated the Ottoman empire as state."<sup>153</sup> That historiographic position over-emphasizes the role of the impersonal state in running the Empire and shaping its ideology of rule.

Rifa'at Abou El-Haj took a different position with regards to the questions of imperial formation and centralization in his study of Ottoman early modernity.<sup>154</sup> His main contention is that early modern centralization implied the need for separation of state powers and the division of its functions, and class-based social formation; both were the constitutive pillars of the

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<sup>150</sup> Nikos Sigalas, "Devlet et Etat: du glissement sémantique d'un ancien concept du pouvoir au début du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle ottoman," in *Byzantina et Moderna: Mélanges en l'honneur d'Hélène Antoniadis-Bibicou*, ed. Gilles Grivaud and Sokratis Petmezas (Athens: Alexandria, n.d. 2007), 385-415.

<sup>151</sup> Marinos Sariyannis, *Ruler and State*, 97. For an example of how historiography was central to the Ottoman empire-building project, see Dimitris Kastritsis, "The Historical Epic Aḥvāl-i Sultān Meḥammed (The Tales of Sultan Mehmed) in the Context of Early Ottoman Historiography," in *Writing History at the Ottoman Court: Editing the Past, Fashioning the Future*, edited by H. Erdem Çıpa and Emine Fetvacı (Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 2013), 1-22.

<sup>152</sup> Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 138-150.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, 151-155.

<sup>154</sup> Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*.

Ottoman Empire's rule as elsewhere in Europe.<sup>155</sup> At the center of el-Haj's theoretical scheme is the idea that the Ottoman imperial project, from its inception, had been established on a system of power sharing between the Sultan and his ruling elites who through their works articulated the boundaries of political conduct and transgression that defined an understanding of practical sovereignty.<sup>156</sup> It also emphasizes that centralization of *state and society*, bound by notions of legal sovereignty and class-specific meritocracy, undergirded the system of rule in the Empire.<sup>157</sup>

In the sixteenth-century's global context, Kaya Şahin argues that Ottoman imperial formation was at once driven by pragmatic measures due to contemporaneous empire-building projects and an ideological language of legitimacy that necessitated conquests of major cultural and political hubs that could potentially set out on the same path.<sup>158</sup> Selim I's territorial gains, therefore, were essential to the success of the Ottoman imperial enterprise. The success of the project not only depended on geographic expansion of unprecedented proportion, but the incorporation of and recruitment of state secretaries who articulated an Ottoman identity and an imperial message that resonated with the conquered populations.<sup>159</sup> Moreover, state secretaries, like Celâl Zâde Mustafa, were an Ottoman corpus of intellectuals and bureaucrats who were the lynchpin of sixteenth-century Eurasian empires.<sup>160</sup> The importance of the former to the latter lied in their role in constructing a discourse of sovereignty that extended beyond the geographic

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 1-11.

<sup>156</sup> El-Haj's theoretical framework, supported by Atçıl's recent book, is more persuasive than what Reem Meshal's structural downgrading narrative implies. She asserts that "the Jurists of sixteenth century were public servants, appointed, dismissed, and financially reimbursed for their services by the state." Reem A. Meshal, *Sharia and the Making of the Modern Egyptian: Islamic Law and Custom in the Courts of Ottoman Cairo* (Cairo and New York, The American University in Cairo Press, 2014), 4.

<sup>157</sup> Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, 29-32.

<sup>158</sup> Kaya Şahin, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Süleyman* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013), 3.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, 4-5.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid, 214-220.

and ideological confines of the imperial court and, in the Ottoman case, merged Timurid concepts of universal rule with European ideals of universal, sacred monarchy and Muslim identity.<sup>161</sup> The importance of Şahin's Eurasian-centered model is that it posits that this type of global interconnectedness had started taking shape from the late fifteenth century.<sup>162</sup> What this framework of sixteenth-century imperial formation implies is that centralization of state power hinged first and foremost on syncretizing a set of universalist notions including the caliphate, messianism, and universal monarchy.<sup>163</sup>

### III.III Ottoman Expansion in the Early Sixteenth Century

The sixteenth-century expansion of the Constantinople-based Ottoman Sultanate into the east Mediterranean and northern Mesopotamia was a surmountable challenge insofar as the Ottomans could successfully communicate a legitimating ideology of rule to the conquered populations. Unlike the initial phase of its patchy expansion into Southeastern Europe and the rest of Anatolia, the Ottomans had neither the ideological nor legal means to establish a suzerain-vassal relationships with the subjects and constituent ruling elites of its contemporaneous Sultanates.<sup>164</sup> The military superiority argument, thus, remains insufficient to explain the emerging of the Ottomans as the sixteenth-century sole victor in the Islamic lands. The precarious political base of the Mamluk Sultanate in Egypt and Syria as well as the Aqqayunulu Turkmen confederation in Western Iran and Eastern Anatolia could not deter the

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>162</sup> For works conceptualizing the notion of early modern Eurasia, see Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 3, Special Issue: The Eurasian Context of the Early Modern History of Mainland South East Asia, 1400-1800 (Jul., 1997), 735-762; John Darwin, *After Tamerlane: The Global History of Empire since 1405* (London: Allen Lane, 2007), 47-100.

<sup>163</sup> Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 27.

<sup>164</sup> Halil İnalcık, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," *Studia Islamica*, No. 2 (1954): 103-129.

Ottomans from their empire-building project.<sup>165</sup> This could be explained by the argument that the medieval principles of political rule in the core Islamic lands came to end with the Ottoman's conquest. Hence, the Ottomans incorporation of these lands, could be argued, had introduced a modality of early modernity into the Arab-Turkic Islamic world that was defined by the rule of multi-ethnic, multi-legal and multi-linguistic empires.

As such the incorporation ought to be investigated against a global context that illustrates the intellectual and diplomatic ties that brought the Ottomans into close contact with the other Muslim Sultanates. The study of the diplomatic history of the Ottoman-Mamluk relationships is essential to the historiographic discussions on how sovereignty was perceived, imitated and constructed by Muslim rulers. Cihan Yüksel, in a long-awaited study of the subject, makes the general argument that the teleological reading of the 1517 military conquest overlooks the ideological superiority that the Mamluks had enjoyed vis-a-vis the Ottomans.<sup>166</sup> Moreover, she argues that the diplomatic relationship between the Mamluks and the Ottomans, and hence the perceptions of who deserved the sovereign-like appellations, transformed following the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople.<sup>167</sup> By that point, the Ottoman Sultan was recognized as a legitimate, victorious ruler and supporter of the faith. Similarly, the incorporation of the Anatolian principalities required an origin myth-making strategy shown in Ottoman chronicles to legitimize the Sultan's dynastic lineage to Oguz Khan and its legal legitimacy as an heir to the Seljuk Sultanate.<sup>168</sup> To that extent, it has been suggested that the Ottomans' legitimating ideology, a variant of early modern sovereignty, was predicated on the scholarly activities and

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<sup>165</sup> Christopher Andrew Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule in Late Medieval Islam: A study of Idrīs Bidlīsī (861-926/1457-1520) and Kingship at the Turn of the Sixteenth Century," (unpublished Phd dissertation, University of Chicago, 2015), 1.

<sup>166</sup> Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks*, 4-22.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, 110-115.

<sup>168</sup> Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 6

writings of its learned men who, like Idrīs Bidlīsī drew on the current intellectual strands that resonated with the wider Islamic networks to formulate an Ottoman legitimating ideology.<sup>169</sup>

As far back as the mid-fifteenth-century, the Ottomans had exhibited in their diplomatic missives to the Mamluks a self-awareness of the role of *gazw*<sup>170</sup> and advancing the cause of Islam in their bid to regional sovereignty;<sup>171</sup> the consecrated status of his new Capital had imparted its own legacy on the conqueror's self-perception of rule.<sup>172</sup> Nonetheless, the Mamluks failed to find a compelling reason to call Mehmed II a *Sultan*.<sup>173</sup> This stands in stark contrast to how the early sixteenth-century historians, though averse to the Ottoman campaign, acknowledged Selim I as a worthy *Sultan*. Moreover, it is worth noting that the Ottoman encroachment on the Mamluk sphere of influence in Anatolia and their role against the Iranian confederations, both posing a direct threat to the Mamluk claim of regional superiority, had buttressed the image of the Ottomans as a significant legitimate power in the Islamic core lands. On the diplomatic level, the Ottomans were the first, as Cihan Muslu argues, to remove the pedestal that other Muslim rulers had put the Mamluk Sultan on and decided to address him as *al-Maqarr* (trope connoting ordinary residence) not *al-Maqām* (trope connoting an elevated

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>170</sup> *Gazw*, more than any other term, had been central to the debate on the origins of the early Ottoman state. In historiography, it denotes expansionist war driven by religious ideals and medieval ideologies for rule. The narrative around *Gazw* and the *Gazi* state is discussed by Linda Darling, "Reformulating the *Gazi* Question: When Was the Ottoman State a *Gazi* State?" *Turcica* 43 (2011): 13-53; Gábor Ágoston, "Ghaza (gaza)," in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, eds by Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (New York: An Imprint of Infobase Publishing, 2009), 231-232; Heath W. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003) 45-94. Furthermore, Kafadar contends that *Gazw* in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries must not be construed as an ethos or code of honor as the term had denoted in the initial phase of Ottoman expansion, see Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 62-89.

<sup>171</sup> Ali Anooshahr, "The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam," (Phd dissertation: University of California Los Angeles, 2004), 112. Anooshahr argues that the neo-ghazi discourse in Ottoman historiography in the fifteenth-century lost its generic meaning of unrestrained war, and had become an ideological tool to justify the Sultan's right and assert his position in his fight against the Timurids and then the Christians.

<sup>172</sup> Muslu, *The Ottomans and the Mamluks*, 113, 118.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid, 114.

station).<sup>174</sup> Mamluk ceremonial diplomacy towards the Ottomans between 1491 and 1512 attests to the palpable change in balance of power.<sup>175</sup>

In this regard, the deprecating language in which Ibn Zunbul and Ibn Iyās had couched their description of the Ottoman intrusion and harassment has to be read against this late fifteenth-century diplomatic war of sovereignty claimants. The Mamluk's claim to suzerainty over other Muslim principalities and legitimacy in the Islamic world, based on its protection of the two Holy Cities, had long been disputed by the Ottomans since Beyazid I (791/1389-804/1402).<sup>176</sup> From this perspective, it may be argued that the Ottoman-Mamluk military encounters and diplomatic squabbles in the late fifteenth century, which by that point had become inevitable, foreshadowed the subsequent sixteenth-century discourse on either who deserved to become the Sultan (*yatasalṭan*) or why a Sultanic change of a new ethnic origin did not drastically alter the political foundation of statehood.<sup>177</sup>

### III.IV Idrīs Bidlīsī(861/1457-926/1520)

The efflorescence of a new discourse on sovereignty in the sixteenth century was an outgrowth of the dynastic crises and ideological war in the core Muslim lands. Imperial rule that had defined sixteenth-century Eurasia was premised on the scholarly and historical works of itinerant scholars like Idrīs Bidlīsī who helped spread, articulate, and adapt a Timurid conception of sovereignty to an Ottoman context following the Arab campaign in 1516-17.<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid. 127.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid, 156-175.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid, 135.

<sup>177</sup> Şahin argues that Celal Zade's *Selīm-nāme* justifies the the conquest of the Mamluk-ruled lands on the ground that the Mamlūk, unlike the Ottomans, did not possess anymore the attributes of justice and Caliphate. Şahin, *Empire and Power*, 200-203.

<sup>178</sup> Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 294-195.

Idrīs Bidlīsī was an Ottoman-minded scholar, steeped in the scholastic tradition of political philosophy and theory of kingship during his stint as a state secretary to the Aqquyunlus.<sup>179</sup> Following the dissolution of the dynasty, he migrated to the Ottoman court where he won the patronage of Beyazid II and later became an advisor to Selim I. Before he became an advisor to Selim I, he had traveled to the Eastern Muslim polities, including the Mamluk-ruled lands, in 1511,<sup>180</sup> and again in 1516 with Selim I.<sup>181</sup> In Cairo, it did not take him long to cultivate relationships with prominent figures in the Mamluk court and to meet with Sultan Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī who patronized him in keeping with the Mamluk tradition of accommodating Ottoman political refugees and itinerant scholars.<sup>182</sup>

Markiewicz’s comparative study of the legitimating ideologies that underpinned the four Muslim polities (Ottomans, Mamluks, Aqquyunlus, and Central Asian Timurids) corroborates the argument made in the previous chapter. His textual study of Idrīs Bidlīsī’s *Hasht Bihisht* (Eight Heavens) reveals that the “crisis of rule” was a defining feature of late medieval Islamic polities whose claims to political sovereignty were confined to genealogical and legal discourses.<sup>183</sup> *Hasht Bihisht*, a Persianised Ottoman dynastic history written against a backdrop of scholarly migration from a fallen dynasty, represents an Ottoman—if we assume that Idrīs Bidlīsī by that time had been established in the patronage system as an Ottoman-minded historian—version of what afforded sovereignty to the ruler.

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<sup>179</sup> For an overview of the political history and the rise of the Aqquyunlu dynasty, see John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire (Revised and Expanded Edition)* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 1999).

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, 169.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, 230.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid. 170-173. Barbara Flemming debunked the historiographical bias against the Mamluk court’s patronage activities. Barbara Flemming, “Literary Activities in Mamluk Halls and Barracks,” in *Studies In Memory of Gaston Wiet*, ed. by Myriam Rosen-Avalon (Jerusalem: The Ahva Cooperative Press, 1977), 249-260. See also Doris Behrens-Abouseif, “Sultan al-Ghawrī and the Arts,” *Mamlūk Studies Review* 6 (2002): 71–94.

<sup>183</sup> Markiewicz, “The Crisis of Rule,” 13.

Moreover, in the core Islamic lands, following the Mongol invasion in the mid-thirteenth century, the *‘ulema* had realized that the notion of universal sovereignty, exemplified in the person of the Caliph, became obsolete.<sup>184</sup> Not only that, the practicality of just rule achieved by setting out stringent criteria for choosing the Sultan and valorizing obedience to him had become the basis of the legal discourse on political legitimacy.<sup>185</sup> The notion of universal sovereignty, though used and appropriated by the offshoot dynasties of the Mongols, had remained ineffectual as much as the justification for world rule was concerned.<sup>186</sup> But that was eventually bound to change as the Ottoman Empire had begun subsuming the conterminous Islamic sultanates and principalities and developing a distinct discourse on early modern sovereignty that synthesized its intellectuals’ diverse literary languages and political conceptions of kingship. It is in this framework that I aim to place the historiographic accounts of Ibn Ṭūlūn and his Cairene counterparts.

### **III.V Messianic Sovereignty in the Sixteenth Century: Master of the Auspicious Conjunction (Sāhib-i Qirān)**

The early career life of Idrīs Bidlīsī in the Aqqyunlu court and his intellectual output points out a pressing necessity to relate the question of Ottoman intellectual incorporation of Egypt and *Bilād al-Shām* with the dilemma arising of dynastic rule crises that engaged scholars in Western Persia in the early modern period. As shown above, the reconfiguration of power balance in the Turco-Arabic Muslim lands in the fifteenth century heralded a problem of sovereignty in the early decades of the sixteenth century. This was further complicated by the

<sup>184</sup> Ann K. S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2006) 138-151.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Markiewicz, “The Crisis of Rule,” 13.

messianic movements and beliefs in Muslim lands that accorded spiritual and sacred authority to the ruler to restore order and justice to a purportedly global state of chaos.<sup>187</sup> Consequently, it has been argued that sixteenth-century battles, not only among the Muslim principalities, but between the Ottomans and European powers were in essence impelled by the necessity to articulate a legitimating ideology that embraced an array of eschatological, spiritual, confessional, and Timurid elements.<sup>188</sup> Selim I, as Fleischer contends, was aware of the implications and prevalence of this discourse in 1517 after he had successfully defeated the Mamluks.<sup>189</sup> Sovereignty, in this discourse, figured in the titular designation *Sāhib-i Qirān* (Master of the Auspicious conjunction) which by the early sixteenth century had assumed an accrued ideological meaning implying not just the singular right to world dominion, but the responsibility to dispense justice and order.

The Conspicuous Lord of the Conjunction (*Sāhib-i Qirān*) was an extension of Timurid legacy that had captured the political and ideological imagination of Central Asia and Persian dynasties as well as the Ottoman Empire.<sup>190</sup> Semantically, the term was rooted in pre-Islamic astrological sciences as far back as in the Pahlavi literature which associated the conjunctions of planets, Saturn and Jupiter, with the charisma of the world-conquering ruler.<sup>191</sup> Before the sixteenth century, it was sporadically appropriated to boost the image of the designated ruler. Bayburs, following his victory over the Mongols, was called *iskander al-zamān šāhib al-qirān*

<sup>187</sup> Fleischer, Cornell, "The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymān," in *Soliman le magnifique et son temps*, edited by Gilles Veinstein (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1992).

<sup>188</sup> Ibid, 162.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid, 162-163.

<sup>190</sup> Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University press, 2012), 23-55. See also Beatrice Forbes Manz, "Tamerlane and the Symbolism of Sovereignty," *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1/2, Soviet and North American Studies on Central Asia (1988), 105-122.

<sup>191</sup> For a detailed overview of the pre-Timurid history of the term, see Naindeep Singh Chann, "Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction: Origins of the Šāhib-Qirān," *Iran & the Caucasus*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2009), 93-110.

(Alexander of the Age, the *ṣāhib al-qirān*).<sup>192</sup> What is important to reiterate at this point is that the term was by no means semantically homogenous, despite the familiar image of the sovereign ruler it invoked. As Markiewicz points out in his dissertation, Idrīs Bidlisi's appropriation of the term in his Ottoman dynastic history indicates the image of Timurid and his appellation as the Lord of the Conjunction constituted a cultural lore of political ideals of sovereignty and uncontested authority. Central to this point as well is the fact that the legacy of Chinggis Khan as the source of imperial sovereignty in Central Asia was not adopted unchangeable by the sixteenth-century Empires as it was mediated and given a new content through the image of the Muslim Timur.<sup>193</sup> This development was rooted in a post-Ilkhanid world in which an increasing emphasis on the Muslim identity of the ruler and his just conduct, besides his general Chinggisid identity, as in the case of the Jalairid Sultan Shaykh Uvays (757/1356-776/1374), indicates a change in the ideological legitimating program that had been underway from the fourteenth century.<sup>194</sup>

Markiewicz contends that during the Aqqyunlu period the term had undergone a slight semantic change. Abū Bakr Ṭīhrānī, a court historian of the dynasty in the fifteenth century, is notable for associating the term *Sāhib-i Qirān* with his patron Uzun Hassan,<sup>195</sup> though this connotation was reserved for Timur and his descendants. Thus, the non-Timurid association with world rule represents a fifteenth-century departure in Mongol-Islamic historiography. For instance, the qualities of the warlord (*Ghāzī*) and the renewer of the faith's foundations

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid, 95. Chann also argues that in medieval Persian literature the Islamized character of *ṣāhib-i qirān* battled to propagate Islam.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid, 37. This claim is further substituted by the argument that from 1340s on, after the fall of the Ilkhanid dynasty, the Chinggisid sovereignty alone lost its overarching legitimating ideology and that the subsequent dynastic regimes attempted to concoct alternative ideological narratives that highlighted ideals of justice and a general notion of Mongol heritage. See Wing, *The Jalayirids*, 74, 142.

<sup>194</sup> Wing, *The Jalayirids*, 135-136.

<sup>195</sup> Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 58-59.

(*Mujaddid 'asās al-Islām*) which Bidlīsī lauded Beyazid II with represented a renewal and appropriation of Timurid ideological language in the late fifteenth century.<sup>196</sup> This appellation, conjuring up the image of uncontested sovereignty, had already been in vogue in the Mamluk court. One Ḥusayn Ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī, arguably a Persian émigré at Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī's court, described the Sultan as *Sāhib al-Qirān* in a versed eulogy.<sup>197</sup> Sharīf Ḥusayn ibn Ḥasan, another émigré, had also designated Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī as *Sāhib al-Qirān* in his preface to his translation of Firdawsī's *Shāhnama*.<sup>198</sup> Additionally, in an anonymously-authored book *al-'uqūd al-Jawhariyya* (the jeweled beads) and presented to Qānṣūh al-Ghūrī in 921/1515, the Sultan is designated as al-Mujaddid.<sup>199</sup> The work, as Markiewicz submits, can be read as a historiographical appropriation of Mamluk history by using ideological principles derived from Timurid historiography.<sup>200</sup> It also provides us a unique insight into the scholarly gathering that had become a cultural staple and widespread phenomenon in the early modern Muslim worlds.<sup>201</sup>

In the Ottoman early sixteenth-century's context, the term *Sāhib al-Qirān* in conjunction with others such as *Dhill Allāh* (God's shadow) and *mū'ayyed min Allāh* (succored by God)

<sup>196</sup> Ibid, 65-66.

<sup>197</sup> (*ayyūha al-rīḥ al-ṣabā ruḥ bukra-bi-karra / 'ind bāb khusraw sāhib qirān*) "O Youthful Wind, go tomorrow or again / to the gate of khusraw the Lord of Conjunction," Abdel-Wahab 'Azam, *Majālis al-Sulṭān al-Ghūrī* (Cairo: Mu'assasat Hindī li-l-Ta'līm wa al-Thaqāfa, 2012), 142.

<sup>198</sup> Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 175. For an overview of Qānūsh's court's Persianate culture and patronage of Persian literati, see Robert Irwin, "The Political Thinking of the 'Virtuous Ruler,' Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī," *Mamlūk Studies Review*, 12, 1 (2008): 37-49.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid, 176. For a brief overview of the importance of *al-'uqūd al-Jawhariyya* in late Mamluk political history and the original language in which it couched the Sultan's political legitimacy see, Christian Mauder and Christopher Markiewicz, "A New Source on the Social Gatherings (*majālis*) of the Mamluk Sultan Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī," *Al-'Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* Vol. 24 (2016), 145-148.

<sup>200</sup> Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 179.

<sup>201</sup> See Helen Pfeifer, "Encounter After The Conquest: Scholarly Gatherings in 16th-century Ottoman Damascus," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47(2), 219-239. Doris Behrens-Abouseif has also argued that the late Mamluk period witnessed a Sufi cultural efflorescence of sorts as new patterns of patronage of cultural and religious foundations opened up new opportunities for upstarts and sufis. Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Craftsmen, upstarts and Sufis in the Late Mamluk Period," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London, Vol. 74, No. 3 (2011), 375-395.

had been used to describe Selim I since the beginning of his reign.<sup>202</sup> Even before this titular designation had become imbued with strong apocalyptic and sacred undertones during Süleyman's reign to the extent that it explicitly denoted messianic sovereignty, its usage during Selim I's rule indicates an awareness of his authority over the Muslim dominion and responsibility to bring forth order and justice. In other words, what Selim I accomplished was the springboard for an articulated notion of a universal, messianic sovereignty that Süleyman later cultivated. Not only that, Süleymanic sovereignty would later take on an assertive legal character that sought to reconcile the Holy Law with the Qanun and regulate the machinery of the state in accordance with well-articulated laws.<sup>203</sup> This later sixteenth-century development created surrogates of the ruler's sovereignty in the form of codified laws.<sup>204</sup>

How was sovereignty, however, articulated in an early modern intellectual environment beset with political turmoil and instability in the core Islamic lands? During Selim I's reign, it appears that the struggle to assume an image of a messianic sovereign was tied to the ruler's ability to militarily subsume as much of the Muslim dominion under his rule while administering justice to the conquered populations. Defeating the Mamluks, whose military repute stemmed from their success in thwarting the Mongol threat in the thirteenth century, was a proof that Selim I was the *Sāhib al-Qirān*.<sup>205</sup> Despite his legitimate status as a world-conqueror, Idrīs Bidlīsī questioned the basis of Selim I's legitimacy in Egypt and Syria in a poem after he had observed the mistreatment of the Mamluks and the sale of religious

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<sup>202</sup> Cornell Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah," 162; Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 242.

<sup>203</sup> Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah," 167.

<sup>204</sup> Ibid, 168. For a detailed study of the legal component of Ottoman universal sovereignty in the sixteenth century, see Snjezana Buzov, "The Lawgiver and His Lawmakers: The Role of Legal Discourse in the Change of Ottoman Imperial Culture" (Phd diss., University of Chicago, 2005).

<sup>205</sup> Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 242.

appointments.<sup>206</sup> The sixteenth-century appropriation of the *ghazā* ventures as an essential means of bringing the Islamic worlds in order at a time when chaos was rampant and expanding the domain of the Ottoman dynasty was a constitutive component of a sovereignty-establishing ideology that defined Ottoman rule and self-image from the fifteenth-century.<sup>207</sup> The conquest of Constantinople might have trivialized the *gaza* ethos, as Kafadar argues, which initially served as an instrumental ideology that solidified Ottoman internal political structure.<sup>208</sup> However, the idea remained and found new ideological resonance in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century as claims for sovereignty had become part and parcel of a larger inter-regional struggle. The Ottoman support of the dynastic bid of the Aqqyunlu Sultan Ahmad (r.1497/1501) demonstrates the extent to which the role the Ottoman Empire had assumed as a protector and legitimizer of another ruler's right to rule.<sup>209</sup>

There are still more compelling reasons to review the Ottoman imperial expansion and the consequences of the Mamluk-Ottoman transition in connection with a global trend that imbued sovereignty in sixteenth-century Muslim empires with new messianic meanings. Azfar Moin argues that the ideological bedrock upon which the Mughal dynasty in India and the Safavid Empire in Western Asia enshrined their rule was expressed through a notion of sacred kingship.<sup>210</sup> The saintly and messianic image of the ruler came to redefine practices of sovereignty and imperial rule. In other words, this enunciation of temporal power had assumed the principle that the ruler's sovereignty was not subject to comparison. Notwithstanding the

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid, 248.

<sup>207</sup> Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 130-131. For a detailed overview of the *Selīm-nāme* literature, see Hakki Erdem Çipa, "The Centrality of the Periphery: The Rise to Power of Selīm I, 1487-1512" (Phd diss., Harvard University, 2007) 73-127.

<sup>208</sup> Cemal Kafadar, *Between Two Worlds*, 146.

<sup>209</sup> Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 78-91.

<sup>210</sup> Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 1-22.

claims for unique and unrivaled rule, Moin contends that the similarities between the two projects combining kingship with sacredness was the result of a shared historical and cultural context. The geographic provenance of the shared tradition he traces to Central Asia where the Mongols had set the first precedent in the thirteenth century.<sup>211</sup> All in all, what is particularly perceptive about this analytical approach to the question of political authority in Islamic societies is that it categorically challenges the modern paradox that sets up a juxtaposition between doctrinal notions of rulership based on texts and the purported heterodox conceptions of sacred authority. This paradox dissolves once we start taking seriously the role of Sufi circles and intellectual networks in participating in the making of that larger discourse of sacred sovereignty. Moin's approach raises an important theoretical but also methodological point, pertinent to the study of Ottoman imperial sovereignty in the sixteenth century, about the social background and roots of these discourses. In other words, scriptural analysis and abstract conceptions of rulership in Islamic societies need not be the a priori approach to our comparative study of sixteenth-century notion of sovereignty in Muslim Empires.

Lastly, it is important to note that the Ottoman discourse of universal sovereignty once formed, did not cease to change in response to the Empire's conquests and incorporation of complex legal and political traditions. Though it lies beyond the scope of this study, I need to mention that the *Siyāsat-i ilahi*, defined by Reem Meshal as "an innovative synthetic of juristic, philosophical, and Sufi thought, devised by state bureaucrats and jurists, redefined the Ottoman Caliphate in the sixteenth century,"<sup>212</sup> was a major component of Ottoman sovereignty that

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<sup>211</sup> For an overview of the impact of the Turco-Mongolian notion of kingship on Ottoman dynastic rule, see Joseph Fletcher, "Turco-Mongolian Monarchic Tradition in the Ottoman Empire," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 3/4, Part 1. Eucharisterion: Essays presented to Omeljan Pritsak on his Sixtieth Birthday by his Colleagues and Students (1979-1980), 236-251.

<sup>212</sup> Reem A. Meshal, *Sharia and the Making*, 55-57.

hinged on its incorporation of Egypt and *Bilād al-Shām*. That new discourse expressed itself in the Islamic political jargon that elevated the role of the Caliph and his responsibilities.

The singularity of the Ottomans, besides the distinct worthy qualities attributed to their Sultans, like justice, was reasoned on the basis of their possession of Roman imperial inheritance.<sup>213</sup> It was, therefore, logically justifiable to argue for the necessity of conquering the Muslim polities lying to the east and south of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>214</sup> This coincided with the revival of the *Ghazi* King image in Ottoman historiography from the fifteenth century.<sup>215</sup> Therefore, as the notion of imperial sovereignty emerged within a peculiar political context informed by the dynastic crises inflicted on the Muslim polities and the threat of non-Muslim powers in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, I submit that the Ottoman-Mamluk encounter ought to be placed within this discursive framework to better apprehend the roots and ramifications of the conquest in an early modern Islamic framework. The synthetic approach and historiographic basis of *Hasht Bihisht* was indeed a springboard for a nascent Ottoman historiographical tradition upon which Ottoman self-image and ideology for rule in the sixteenth century stood. Not only that, the work through its inclusions of contemporaneous histories of Iran was the first to situate the Ottomans historiographically, and thus ideologically, within the larger Perso-Islamic historical narrative tradition.<sup>216</sup> On the other hand, the fact that the late Mamluk court patronized Persian literati and organized cultural salons in which questions about the ruler's universal legitimacy were raised and moral stories about Central Asian rulers shared illustrates the pervasiveness of an inter-connected Mongol-Persian sphere

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<sup>213</sup> Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 133.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid, 134-135.

<sup>215</sup> Ali Anooshahr, "*The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam*," 111.

<sup>216</sup> Markiewicz, "The Crisis of Rule," 145-146.

that was a conduit for ideological and political ideas.<sup>217</sup> Moreover, by bringing forth the universality and contemporaneity of the discourse around *Sāhib Qirān* in the Near East in the early sixteenth century and how the incorporation of the Mamluk Sultanate into the Ottoman structure was entangled into that larger discourse, I aimed to show that the core of the Ottoman claim to sovereignty in the early sixteenth century was at once philosophical and experiential.

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<sup>217</sup> Robert Irwin, "The Political Thinking," 47-48.

## Conclusion

This study of imperial sovereignty in the sixteenth century aimed to place both the Mamluks and the Ottomans within a larger framework of early modern imperial formation in order to highlight the symbiotic ideological relationship between the two Sultanates and the role of scholars and historians in fashioning legitimating ideologies for rule. The burgeoning interest in tracing the implications of the notion of sovereignty in the early modern period in contexts other than those of the political or territorial has spurred research into intellectual and performative arenas such as historical writings and history plays where ancient political traditions and the populist understanding of rule were negotiated and reenacted.<sup>218</sup> In monarchical England, the sixteenth-century was a period in which discussions around the system of rule, limited versus absolute monarchy, were entangled with cultural and populist traditions and historical productions.<sup>219</sup>

The Ottoman and Mamluk historians were no exception. Both were cognizant of the ideological discourses that undergirded rule in their respective contexts. Therefore, my first chapter intended to shed light on the indispensable role that Mamluk historians, an approximate category of an early modern heterogeneous group of learned men, played in shaping the contours and content of the Sultanate's political basis and legitimacy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Annalistic historical narratives, a genre practiced by the *'ulema* and military historians alike, did not only describe past events, but organized the structure of the Muslim political state. In this connection, the Mamluk Sultante project was not only described in the annals, but fashioned and structured in accordance with the genre requirements that were not

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<sup>218</sup> Kristin M.S. Bezio, *"Staging Power in tudor and Stuart English history Plays: History, Political thought, and the Redefinition of Sovereignty"* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015).

<sup>219</sup> Ibid, 1-18.

conducive to the articulation of an uncontested legitimating ideology. In fact, the notion of *Sultanate* in the Mamluk context implied an office of governance since hereditary rule could not be established, and politics remained confined to the sphere of *siyāsa* which was the art of governance. However despite the existence of an indigenous tradition of political theory, abstract articulation of the notion of kingship and regime change did not assume an overarching character in the contemporary chronicles in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in the Mamluk Sultanate. Therefore, I argued that narratives of conquest and occupation ought to be revised as they do not fit the theoretical framework of chronicles that in principle dealt with the strength and weakness of a certain *dawla* (reign). The Mamluk-Ottoman transition, nonetheless, represented a rupture. That I trace in the location of universal political authority that captured the political imagination of sixteenth-century Muslim and European rulers. It is this framework that I propose that any analysis of late medieval Arab chronicles need to be situated in.

The second chapter provided a comparative conceptual analysis of two key Mamluk chronicles and a historical novel; the first had been extensively consulted for previous studies on the Ottoman conquest of Egypt and *Bilād al-Shām*. Ibn Zunbul (b.? /d. 1552) and Ibn Iyās (b. 851/1448 - d. 930/1524) both took on a hardened stance against Selim I, whereas Ibn Ṭūlūn's (b. 877/1473 - d. 952/1546) tone and narrative appears neutral and slightly indifferent to the question of regime change. Despite the different outlook that each historical work presented, which sets them apart from each other, I argue in this chapter that conceptually all three were underpinned by the theoretical structural “pre-givens,” to use Koselleck’s terms, that set up a distinction between *Nizām* (perennial order) and *dawla* (reign or the ruler’s fortune). Furthermore, the second chapter shows that the Mongol precedent for the Ottoman invasion in the fourteenth century by Ghāzān, the Ilkhanid ruler, implicitly elicited the same conceptual

distinction in Mamluk historiography between the right of the Mamluk to reign and their purported ultimate right as sovereigns in the Near East.

The third chapter wove this Mamluk-centered discussion into a framework of Ottoman early modern ideological expansion. It first showed how Selim I's Arab campaign was entangled in a regional crisis that heralded the emergence of a new imperial order in the Near East and a sixteenth-century discourse on the *Ghazī* Sultan which imbued military expansionist enterprises with a new ideological program. Since the late fifteenth century, the formulation of a discourse or universalist sovereignty rooted in the Timurid monarchical traditions had been underway. The chapter also aimed to tie the argument that the struggle over who was the *Sāhib-i Qirān* ideologically defined the military encounters between the Ottomans and the Mamluks with the above arguments that Arab Mamluk historiography facilitated the transition and the spread of the discourse. Therefore, the chapter suggested that the Ottoman sixteenth-century ideological program, devised by the works of authors like Idrīs Bidlīsī, was facilitated by the historiographic tradition in Egypt and *Bilād al-Shām* that did not develop a political discourse of sovereignty that was tied to either the reigning ruler or his *dawla* (rule).

All in all, it is important to reiterate that since the transition was primarily an event to be recorded, described, and finally inscribed into a narrative, it hinged on a multitude of processes that I tried to delineate in this thesis. First and foremost, they demonstrate that early modern imperialism was a process of adaptive transformation. In this regard, I tried to argue that the localization of Ottoman political authority in the sixteenth century was far from being a hegemonic undertaking. In fact, early modern imperialism in the core Muslim lands, I submit, grew out of historically-contingent developments that brought itinerant scholars, local chronicles, and Sultans into a single, wide network. This additionally demonstrates how the paradigm of center vs. periphery—so predominant in studies of imperial structures—does not

fit into the analysis of Ottoman ideological expansion in the sixteenth century since the development and articulation of its discourse of imperial sovereignty was contingent and sustained by the Empire's so-called 'peripheries.'

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