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CONGRESS

Middle East and Muslim Worlds
Studies

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Panel 34 b)

New Perspectives on Mamluk Historiography

This panel wishes to engage with recent trends in the study of Arabo-Islamic historiography of the later medieval period (13th-16th centuries). This period witnessed an unprecedented boom in the volume and variety of historiographical texts being produced, with substantial qualitative changes affecting both the nature of the texts as well as the identities of their producers. As a result of the quantity of these historiographical texts, and the relative scarcity of other sources, they remain central to study the so-called Mamluk history. Recent decades have witnessed increasing movement away from these texts as central witnesses to local and regional, urban and rural, power elites, trying to find ways to circumvent the narrative frames of this historiography.

This panel seeks to highlight, however, that such attempts at circumvention have resulted in narrative engagements remaining poorly understood. It seeks to demonstrate how ethnic and social interrelations were paramount to defining various historiographical projects and shaping cultural identities and memories, and how to explore the nature, impact, and value of this substantial historiographical corpus, itself part of a highly integrated social and cultural practice.

The papers herein demonstrate the value of approaching such historiographical texts as active participants in cultural production, social communication, and strategies of elite formation, underlying various processes of identity constructions.

Person in charge : Zacharie Mochtari de Pierrepont (University of Gand)

Discussant : Jo Van Steenberghe (University of Gand)

Program

Boris James (University Paul-Valéry, Montpellier 3)

What was al-'Umarî crafting with the Kurds? Between mamluk encyclopedism, taxation usages and ethnic engineering

Shihâb al-dîn Ibn Fadlallah al-'Umarî (d. 749/1349) was one of the most prolific authors of his time. The geographic encyclopedia, *Masalik al-absâr*, fed with his experience within the mamluk *dîwan al-insha'* (chancellery) is made of thirty volumes. Inspired by administrative geographies from the Abbasid period, this work overtly claims the will to assess a taxation potential and to accelerate administrative and political integration of the mamluk imperium regions. The excerpt concerning the Kurds in the third « travel » of the book is extremely original. The profusion of details on a territory submitted to Mongol domination as well as the positive picture given of the Kurdish "princely and royal houses" are unheard in Arab historiography. We shall put into perspective the content of the text with the author's explicit editorial project as well as his path and the general context of Sultan al-Nasir Muhammad's reign.

Mathieu Eychenne (University of Paris –Identities, Cultures, Territories Laboratory (EA337))

Damascus historiographical production in 14th and 15th centuries: changing scale and thematic renewal

For three decades, from al-Birzālī and al-Ġazarī (d. 738/1339), through Ibn Ḥiğġī (d. 816/1413) and Ibn Qāḍī Šuhba (d. 848/1444), to Ibn Ṭawq (d. 915/1509), the historiographical writings produced in the Bilad al-Sham in the 14th and 15th centuries, and more precisely in Damascus, have both broadened and renewed our knowledge of the history of the Mamluk sultanate through offering ways to look beyond the writings of contemporary Egyptian authors. On the one hand, this paper will discuss the specificities and limits of the Damascene historiographical production, at the crossroads between official history, local chronicle, and autobiographical narrative. On the other hand, it will also question the identity, social affiliation and influences of the Damascus authors.

Zacharie Mochtari de Pierrepont (University of Gand/UMR Orient & Méditerranée)

The 15th-century historiography of the Cairo sultanate: Strategies of social differentiation, political representations and cultural production

The Cairo sultanate's 15th-century historiography has been the subject of intensive use by Modern historiography, due to the massive amount of historical information found in its historiographical narratives. Yet, to date, there is a poor understanding of these narrative engagements and their relationship with the social, cultural and political environment following the fall of sultan al-Nāṣir Faraġ (r. 1399-1412). In the framework of the research carried out at Ghent University, the present paper will discuss the particular practices of 15th-century historiographers and how they engaged with competitive and personal ideas of social and political order, taking part in the cultural production, reproduction and transformation of that order. Doing so, these authors participated and actively shaped the very memory and history of the state, through the structural effect of practices of social differentiation and representation.

Clément Onimus (University Paris 8)

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani as a historian of the judicature

How Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī considered the writing of the *Inbā' al-Ghumr*, and how this perspective evolved, might be unveiled while reading this chronicle. The structure of the *Annals* –chronological or thematic– as well as the selection of the topics mentioned in the events is quite different than in other contemporary chronicles. As his career was progressing, he seems to have gradually given greater importance to the judiciary issues, so that his text becomes sometimes a sort of chronicle of the judicature, just as the *Raf' al-'Iṣr* is a biographical dictionary of the judicature. This hypothesis will be the basis of a comparative study of Ibn Ḥajar's chronicle and those written by his contemporaries, particularly the *'Iqd al-Jumān*, written by his rival, Badr al-Dīn al-'Aynī.