

Does a Mamluk Sultan Hold Religious Authority? Quranic Exegesis and *ḥadīṭ* Scholarship in Late Mamluk Courtly *mağālis*

Christian Mauder, University of Bergen¹

Abstract: The article critically reexamines the notion of Mamluk rulers being uninterested in religious affairs and the authority a supreme religious status could bestow. It shows that, with the late Mamluk ruler Qāniṣawh al-Ġawrī (r. 906/1501–922/1516), at least one Mamluk Sultan laid claim to religious authority through his participation in courtly processes of knowledge production and transmission in his learned *mağālis*. These efforts culminated in the attempt to portray al-Ġawrī as “the Sultan of scholars and verifiers (*suṭṭān al-‘ulamā’ wa-l-muḥaqqiqīn*)” and “the Sultan of the truly insightful (*suṭṭān al-‘ārifīn*).” Al-Ġawrī used the scholarly status conveyed through these titles to re-affirm a decidedly Sunni interpretation of prophetic traditions and the Quran, thus setting himself apart from many of the so-called “millennial sovereigns” of his time whose claims for spiritual leadership often marked a break with traditional Sunni concepts of political rule and religious authority.

Keywords: Mamluk Sultanate, religious authority, Quran, exegesis, *ḥadīṭ*, court culture, *mağālis*, patronage, millennial sovereignty

¹ I would like to thank the participants of the workshop “‘And the Sultan Needs to Know ...’ The Production and Transmission of Scholarly Knowledge at Islamic Courts of the Postformative Period,” held at NYU Abu Dhabi, April 2018, Mohammad Gharaibeh (Berlin), and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful input and feedback. This study was written with the support of a Humanities Research Fellowship of NYU Abu Dhabi and a Gerda Henkel Membership in the School of Historical Studies of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, which is gratefully acknowledged. The present article builds on, quotes from, and uses material also discussed in my forthcoming monograph *In the Sultan’s Salon: Learning, Religion and Rulership at the Mamluk Court of Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī (r. 1501–1516)* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

Introduction

The famed historian Ibn Ḥaldūn (d. 808/1406) counts among the most prominent inhabitants of the Mamluk Sultanate (648/1250–923/1517), a polity that was governed by a military elite of foreign-born former slave soldiers (sg. *mamlūk*), who were often of Turkic background. About this military elite, Ibn Ḥaldūn writes:

When the [‘Abbasid] state was drowned in decadence and luxury and donned the garments of calamity and impotence and was overthrown by the heathen Tatars, who [...] made unbelief prevail in place of faith [...], it was God’s benevolence that He rescued the faith by reviving its dying breath and restoring the unity of the Muslims in the Egyptian realms, preserving the order and defending the walls of Islam. He did this by sending the Muslims, from the Turkish nation and from its great and numerous tribes, rulers to defend them and utterly loyal helpers, who were brought from the House of War to the House of Islam under the rule of slavery, which hides in itself a divine blessing.²

This section was among the favorite passages of the late David Ayalon, one of the founding fathers of Mamluk Studies. Ayalon and his early colleagues used these and similar source statements to construct an image of the Mamluks and their rulers which continues to inform scholarship to the present day.³ According to this image, the main historical role of the slave soldiers lay in their military successes against non-Muslims such as the Mongols and the Crusaders, through which they secured the survival of Islam. Their victories in battle and their prowess as soldiers were mainstays of their claims to legitimate rule, even during the last decades of the history of the Mamluk Sultanate when the times of decisive Mamluk military victories were long past. Furthermore, according to this traditional view, secondary measures to assure the Mamluk rulers’ legitimacy included the allocation of material resources

² Ibn Ḥaldūn, *Kitāb al-‘ibar*, vol. 5, p. 371. Translation quoted from Lewis, *Islam*, vol. 1, pp. 97–98.

³ See esp. Ayalon, “Mamlūkiyyāt.” The passage is also quoted e.g. in Northrup, “Mamlūk Sultanate,” pp. 242–243; Little, “Religion,” pp. 165–166; Haarmann, “Ideology and History,” p. 182.

to religious scholars through the establishment of endowments, the distribution of alms to the poor, the upkeep of law and order, and the investiture of the Mamluk rulers on the part of the 'Abbasid caliphs of Cairo. Other than maintaining these time-honored techniques of legitimation, the Mamluks were perceived as caring primarily about their internal factional feuds. Robert Irwin summarizes this traditional view as follows:

Apart from a commitment to Islam and the jihad, the Mamluks seem curiously bereft of any form of idealism, role models, or political programs. Modern historians often portray the political strategies and goals of the Mamluk sultans as being almost invariably driven by hunger for power, greed, arrogance, and, in some cases, fear. They have been encouraged in such cynical readings of Mamluk politics by the way in which the medieval ulama, who were effectively the custodians of Mamluk historiography, wrote about the sultans and amirs.⁴

An aspect closely connected to this alleged lack of "idealism, role models, or political programs" among Mamluk ruling circles was their assumed lack of interest in the finer points of the religious and scholarly culture of the populations they governed which otherwise may have offered reference points for more sophisticated ideologies of rule. To quote Annemarie Schimmel, another prominent representative of early scholarship about the Mamluks:

The impression that we get [...] is that neither the Mamlūk *amīrs* themselves nor the Sultans who rose from among them had any interest in spiritual things. [...] We often read in the obituaries of these Mamlūks "I never saw a book in his hand" or "he was completely devoid of any knowledge of any science or art." The few exceptional cases when [...] [an *amīr's*] Arabic was not too bad are carefully mentioned by our historians.⁵

⁴ Irwin, "Political Thinking," p. 37. See also Berkey, "Policy," p. 9.

⁵ Schimmel, "Some Glimpses," p. 356. For further references see Mauder, *Gelehrte Krieger*, pp. 14–17.

More recent research by Ulrich Haarmann, Jonathan Berkey, the present author, and others has largely deconstructed this image of the Mamluks as unlettered soldiers caring little for learning and religious matters, and showed that members of the military elite of the Sultanate were actively engaged in religious scholarship in fields such as Islamic law, Quranic studies, and the transmission of prophetic traditions.⁶ Yet even scholarship representative of this revisionist approach continues to assume that Mamluk rulers in particular were typically uninterested in questions of religious authority and became involved in religious debates mainly – and then often reluctantly – when the internal peace of the Sultanate was threatened. Jonathan Berkey, for example, writes: “But over other [i.e. non-legal] religious matters, the Mamluks’ authority was limited at best. [...] Consequently, the Mamluks were generally reluctant to intervene in disputes over questions of a spiritual or doctrinal nature. [...] Not infrequently [...] one senses a tired, almost exasperated reluctance on the part of the ruling authorities to involve themselves in complicated doctrinal issues.”⁷ Concomitantly, Mamluk rulers are seen as having usually claimed no extraordinary religious authority that went beyond that of leaders of *ḡihād*, executors of the revealed law, and protectors of Sunni Islam including its sanctuaries, scholars, and caliphs.⁸ This set them apart not only from early Muslim rulers, but also from some of their immediate transregional rivals, such as the Āq Qoyunlu, the Timurids, the Ottomans, or the Safavids. In addition to their military successes, members of these dynasties often laid claim to various types of religious authority, including the statuses of centennial renewer (*muḡaddid*), eschatological savior (*mahdī*), and supreme politico-religious authority (*imām*), thus turning especially the 9th/15th and 10th/16th centuries into a period of eschatological expectations and millennial

⁶ E.g. Mauder, *Krieger*; Mauder, “Development;” Haarmann, “Arabic in Speech;” Berkey, *Transmission*, pp. 146–160; Berkey, “Silver Threads;” Flemming, “Literary Activities;” Franssen “Amīr’s Library.”

⁷ Berkey, “Policy,” p. 17.

⁸ See for this traditional view e.g. Little, “Religion.” It is also echoed in Berkey, “Policy,” esp. pp. 8–10, 17.

anxiety.⁹ Amy Newhall's work offers a typical example of this widespread view of Mamluk rulers as unwilling or unable to make similar far-reaching claims about their religious status. She writes about the millennial aspirations of the Āq Qoyunlu leader Uzun Ḥasan (r. 883/1478–896/1490) to be the God-sent renewer of his time: "It was impossible for a Mamluk ruler to claim such a position of religious authority, but he could [only] interpret his role in more traditional terms as the muscular arm of the faith."¹⁰

In what follows, I critically reexamine this view of Mamluk rulers as typically being uninterested in religious affairs and in the authority a supreme religious status could bestow. In particular, I show that, with the penultimate Mamluk ruler Qāniṣawh al-Ġawrī (r. 906/1501–922/1516), at least one Mamluk Sultan laid claim to religious authority through his participation in courtly processes of knowledge production and transmission. These efforts culminated in the attempt to portray al-Ġawrī as "the Sultan of scholars and verifiers (*sulṭān al-‘ulamā’ wa-l-muḥaqqiqīn*)" and as "the Sultan of the truly insightful (*sulṭān al-‘ārifīn*)."¹¹ Yet, in obtaining and performing the cultural and social capital connected to these titles indicating religious authority, even al-Ġawrī as a notoriously innovative ruler¹² did not break as radically with earlier traditions as did some of the other leaders of his time whom scholarship refers to as

⁹ The standard study of this subject is Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*. See moreover e.g. Fleischer, "Mahdi;" idem "Learning;" Glassen, "Mahdi;" Melvin-Koushki, "Islamic Empire."

¹⁰ Newhall, "Patronage," p. 70.

¹¹ E.g. (including slight variants) Anonymous, *al-‘Uqūd*, vol. 1, fol. 4r; al-Šarīf, *Naḥā’is* (MS), p. 4; (ed. ‘Azzām), p. 2; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS), p. 4; (ed. ‘Azzām), p. 3. Note also the Ottomanized form in the poem written for the Sultan edited and translated in Flemming, "Nachtgesprächen," pp. 27–28.

¹² See on al-Ġawrī as an innovative ruler, e.g. Petry, *Twilight, passim*; Petry, *Protectors, passim*; Holt, "Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī," p. 552; Alhamzah, *Patronage*, pp. 131–132; Behrens-Abouseif, "Sultan al-Ghawrī," pp. 73–75, 78, 80–82, 86; Mauder, *Salon*, esp. ch. 6.4.

“millennial sovereigns.”¹³ Rather, al-Ġawrī affirmed and enacted his religious authority within a decidedly traditional Sunni framework.¹⁴

My findings highlight the need for a more nuanced understanding of the religious and political culture of the Mamluk Sultanate as one of the most important politics of the premodern Middle East. They moreover underline the prominent role that princely courts of the late middle period could play in Islamicate intellectual history, and lay the groundwork for a new evaluation of the nexus between intellectual pursuits, religious authority, and political power in Islamicate societies at the turn from the late middle to the early modern period.

The material for my analysis stems from the accounts of discussions about Quranic exegesis and prophetic traditions (sg. *ḥadīṭ*) in the courtly *mağālis* or salons al-Ġawrī convened throughout most of his reign. The following section provides a brief introduction to the accounts of these events. Thereafter, I shed light on the *mağālis* as courtly events characterized by patronage relations and the transmission of knowledge, before focusing in the two subsequent parts on debates about *ḥadīṭ* scholarship and Quranic exegesis in particular. The last part summarizes my main findings and offers answers to the guiding questions of the present volume.

It should be emphasized here that the present article does not seek to elucidate or assess the scholarly activities of all Mamluk rulers throughout the more than 250 years of history of the Mamluk Sultanate, but sheds light on the specific case of Qāniṣawh al-Ġawrī as portrayed in the accounts of his learned *mağālis*. A more general study of Mamluk sultanic participation in scholarship would have to take a much broader basis of sources into account – most notably the rich biographical and historiographical literature of the Mamluk period which has provided the foundations for the previously mentioned inquiries into the learned activities of former military

¹³ Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*.

¹⁴ Even the attempts to cast al-Ġawrī in the role of a *muğaddid* (centennial renewer) as the arguably most “millennial” aspect of his reign operated within a traditional Sunni framework; cf. Mauder, *Salon*, ch. 5.2.4.

slaves by Ulrich Haarmann, Jonathan Berkey, and the present author.¹⁵ Moreover, it has to be acknowledged that the availability of extraordinarily rich source material on al-Ġawrī's *maġālis* should not mislead us to the conclusion that this Sultan was alone in convening learned gatherings. Indeed, we know that other members of the Mamluk military elite staged similar events, although the little information we have about them suggests that they were of a significantly more limited scope than those of al-Ġawrī.¹⁶

Sources on al-Ġawrī's *maġālis*

Most of what we know about al-Ġawrī's *maġālis* comes from three literary texts that claim to constitute eyewitness accounts of the events and have survived in a single manuscript each.¹⁷ Two of these texts, *al-Kawkab al-durrī fī masā'il al-Ġawrī* (The Brilliant Star on al-Ġawrī's Questions) of unknown authorship and *Nafā'is maġālis al-sulṭāniyya fī ḥaqā'iq asrār al-Qur'āniyya* (Sic, The Gems of the Sultanic Salons on the Truths of Quranic Mysteries) by one Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Šarīf al-Ḥusaynī, have been known to Western-language scholarship since at least 1940¹⁸ and were partially edited in 1941 by 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Azzām.¹⁹ While the few authors who have since

¹⁵ See footnote 6 above for references.

¹⁶ For what is known about such other learned gatherings, see, e.g. al-Sayrafī, *Inba'*, p. 178; Mazor, *Rise*, p. 183; Flemming, "Activities," p. 250; 'Aṭā, *Majālis*, pp. 236-238; Larkin, "Poetry," p. 221; Irwin, "Literature," pp. 27-28; idem, "Thinking," p. 40.

¹⁷ On these sources and the details of the following argumentation, see at length Mauder, *Salon*, ch. 3.1. For a detailed comparison of the image of al-Ġawrī in these sources and other texts from his time, see *ibid.*, esp. chs. 2.1, 3.2, 4.1.2.1.

¹⁸ Awad, "Sultan al-Ghawri."

¹⁹ The edition 'Azzām (ed.), *Maġālis al-Sulṭān al-Ġawrī*, has been reprinted several times. Throughout this study, references to the manuscripts of the two works are preceded by "(MS)" and use the pagination in the manuscripts. Page numbers in the edition are indicated by "(ed. 'Azzām)." All quotations for which references to both the edition and the manuscripts are given are based on the manuscripts.

paid attention to al-Ġawrī's *mağālis* relied mostly on 'Azzām's publication,²⁰ a recent reevaluation of the *unicum* manuscripts of both texts revealed that the editor included only about half of *Nafā'is mağālis al-sulṭāniyya* and about a quarter of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* in his edition. Moreover, he did not properly indicate his omissions. In the absence of a complete edition, any scholarly analysis of al-Ġawrī's *mağālis* therefore has to rely on the original manuscripts of the two texts housed in Istanbul.²¹ Moreover, a few years ago, Christopher Markiewicz and the present writer discovered a third, previously unknown account of the *mağālis* by the title of *al-'Uqūd al-ğawhariyya fī l-nawādir al-Ġawriyya* (The Jewel Necklaces on al-Ġawrī's Anecdotes) preserved in a two-volume *unicum* likewise presently in Istanbul that had previously almost completely escaped scholarly attention.²²

All three sources are literary texts about the proceedings of al-Ġawrī's *mağālis* and in terms of genre take up the earlier tradition of courtly *mağālis* works.²³ While texts of this genre are often labeled "*adab* works," the ill-defined character of this category,²⁴ and the fact that the sources themselves consider explicitly only some of the aphorisms and entertaining anecdotes that make up a small portion of their

²⁰ E.g. Berkey, "Mamluks as Muslims;" Behrens-Abouseif, "Sultan al-Ghawrī;" Conermann and Haarmann, "Herrscherwechsel;" Kristof D'hulster, "'Sitting with Ottomans;" Frenkel, "Nations;" Irwin, "Thinking." Based on microfilms of the original manuscripts were Flemming, "Šerīf;" Flemming, "Nachtgesprächen."

²¹ MSS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1377 (*al-Kawkab al-durrī*) and Ahmet III 2680 (*Nafā'is mağālis al-sulṭāniyya*).

²² MSS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 3312 and 3313. On this text, see Mauder and Markiewicz, "Source."

²³ See on this genre in detail Behzadi, "Art of Entertainment;" Hämeen-Anttila, *Maqama*, p. 151; Sadan, "Death of a Princess," p. 131; van Gelder, "Brave Attempts," p. 28; Kollatz, *Inspiration und Tradition*, pp. 59–61.

²⁴ Bonebakker, "Adab," pp. 27–30.

contents as related to *adab*, caution against too general a use of this label.²⁵ *Nafā'is mağālis al-sultāniyya* as the oldest of the three sources provides a detailed account of close to 100 sessions that took place between Ramaḍān 910 and Ša'bān 911/March and December 1505. It focuses particularly on the scholarly questions discussed during these events, but also provides ample circumstantial information on their participants, location, and duration. The manuscript of the work bears no colophon, but based on internal evidence, it is possible to infer that it was completed in or soon after December 1505. The information we have about its author, Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Šarīf Ḥusaynī, and his motivation for writing the work is discussed in the following section.

We do not know who wrote *al-Kawkab al-durrī* and *al-'Uqūd al-ğawhariyya*. The contents of *al-Kawkab al-durrī* offer a kind of "best of" selection of scholarly questions debated in al-Ğawrī's *mağālis* over a 10-year period. This period must have ended at the latest in Rabī' II 919/June 1513, the month in which the manuscript of the work was finished, according to its colophon.²⁶ *Al-'Uqūd al-ğawhariyya* likewise includes only a select account of the meetings convened by the Sultan. Unlike *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, however, it exhibits a clear thematic focus and features primarily historiographical and – to a lesser extent – belletristic material from the *mağālis*. According to their colophons, the first volume of the work was completed in mid-šafar 921/March-April 1515 and the second, one month later.²⁷ Codicological evidence indicates that the manuscripts of *al-'Uqūd al-ğawhariyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* were written by the same scribe. Further common characteristics including substantial literal overlap between the introductory passages of the two works suggest that they share a common context of origin and indeed might have been

²⁵ See e.g. Anonymous, *al-'Uqūd*, vol. 2, fol. 3v; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS), p. 231; al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS), pp. 6, 157, 199, 258; (ed. 'Azzām), pp. 4, 59, 84, 134. See also al-Sharīf, *Nafā'is* (MS), p. 6; (ed. 'Azzām), p. 4. Cf. in more detail Mauder, *Salon*, ch. 3.1.4; Mauder, "Read."

²⁶ Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS), pp. 3, 5–6; (ed. 'Azzām), pp. 2–4, 96. The date is confirmed in *ibid.* (MS), pp. 269–270; (ed. 'Azzām), pp. 84–85.

²⁷ Anonymous, *al-'Uqūd*, vol. 1, fol. 111r; vol. 2, fol. 113r.

authored by the same person, who was most likely a minor local scholar learned in Ḥanafī jurisprudence.²⁸

While *al-‘Uqūd al-ğawhariyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* do not constitute independent sources about al-Ġawrī’s *mağālis*, there is nothing to suggest that the author(s) of the two works were aware of the existence of *Nafā’is mağālis al-suḷḷāniyya*, which exhibits clearly distinct structural, stylistic, and linguistic features. Nevertheless, at least 67 passages in *Nafā’is mağālis al-suḷḷāniyya* provide accounts of conversations in the *mağālis* that are also covered in *al-‘Uqūd al-ğawhariyya* and/or *al-Kawkab al-durrī*. The phrasing of these accounts in *Nafā’is mağālis al-suḷḷāniyya* is usually clearly distinct from that in *al-‘Uqūd al-ğawhariyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī*, and in several instances the former work disagrees with the latter on details, such as who posed a given question or who replied to it. In cases where there is a limited literal overlap between parallel passages in *Nafā’is mağālis al-suḷḷāniyya* and the other two sources, the works quote a common source apparently read or discussed in the *mağālis*, or they employ technical vocabulary that could not be easily substituted.²⁹ Taken together, these observations suggest that *Nafā’is mağālis al-suḷḷāniyya* on the one hand and *al-‘Uqūd al-ğawhariyya* and *al-Kawkab al-durrī* on the other hand represent two independent traditions of producing textual representations of Sultan al-Ġawrī’s *mağālis*. The fact that, in more than five dozen instances, the sources nevertheless provide largely agreeing descriptions of the proceedings of the Sultan’s meetings underscores their source value and indicates that we can use them to arrive at a better understanding of al-Ġawrī’s *mağālis* as historical events. Since these three are the only detailed accounts of Mamluk sultanic *mağālis* that we know of, their contents are of utmost significance for the study of the role of courts in Mamluk intellectual and religious history.

²⁸ See esp. *ibid.* vol. 1, fol. 3r, 88r-89v, 102r-103v, 105v-106r; Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS), pp. 5, 10-11, 46-47; (ed. ‘Azzām), pp. 3-4, 9-10, 91-95.

²⁹ See in detail Mauder, *Salon*, Appendix III.

The fact that all three works use titles highly unusual for a Mamluk context, *sulṭān al-‘ulamā’ wa-l-muḥaqqiqīn* and *sulṭān al-‘ārifīn*, indicates the special attention they accord to the Sultan’s significance for the scholarly life of his court. The former of these titles appears to constitute a new creation, at least in precisely this form. It was coined at a time when the term *muḥaqqiq* (verifier) and the related verbal noun *taḥqīq* (verification) had become catchwords of an intellectual culture of “new textual-philological methodologies and modes of argumentation”³⁰ that entailed the critical assessment and reexamination of inherited teachings with the goal of rationally elucidating, ascertaining, and demonstrating their foundations. A scholar who had reached the rank of *muḥaqqiq* was not merely a transmitter and explicator of received information, but rather an expert able to independently verify knowledge.³¹ Hence the novel title of *sulṭān al-‘ulamā’ wa-l-muḥaqqiqīn* can be taken to imply that al-Ġawrī was both the leader of the learned establishment and the supreme authority of those who strived for critical reexamination of inherited teachings. As we shall see shortly, in al-Ġawrī’s case the activity of *taḥqīq* seems to have been focused on, among other things, freeing the received body of religious knowledge from apparent internal contradictions through the independent advancement of new, harmonizing interpretations.

Unlike *sulṭān al-‘ulamā’ wa-l-muḥaqqiqīn*, the title of *sulṭān al-‘ārifīn* is well attested in earlier sources from the Mamluk lands and beyond. In these other texts, however, it almost always has strong connotations of Sufism and is typically applied to highly respected spiritual masters.³² In contrast, the accounts of al-Ġawrī’s *maġālis* accord only rather limited attention to Islamic mysticism in general³³ and there is no indication that they ascribe a specifically Sufi significance to this title beyond its literal

³⁰ Melvin-Koushki, “*Taḥqīq* vs. *Taqīd*,” p. 216.

³¹ On these terms, see *ibid.*, pp. 194–195, 216–217; Aaron Spevack, “Egypt,” p. 543; al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ al-aṣṣā*, vol. 6, p. 26; El-Rouayheb, *Intellectual History*, pp. 28, 32–33, 60, 108; Brentjes, *Teaching and Learning*, pp. 174–177; Wisnovsky, “Avicennism,” pp. 351, 354–357, 371–376.

³² See e.g. Chamberlain, *Knowledge*, p. 153; Hernandez, *Legal Thought*, p. 45; Yilmaz, *Caliphate*, p. 116.

³³ For what is known about Sufism at al-Ġawrī’s court, see Mauder, *Salon*, ch. 5.1.2.

meaning of “the Sultan of the truly insightful,” which can of course encompass learned Sufis.

Al-Ġawrī’s *mağālis* as Courtly Events

If we understand courts as social groups constituted by persons who have regular access to rulers and whose interactions are characterized by practices of patronage and the exchange of economic, cultural, and social capital, one can hardly think of events that could more rightly be referred to as “courtly” than al-Ġawrī’s *mağālis*. The five dozen *mağālis* participants that could so far be identified by name represent a significant segment of al-Ġawrī’s permanent court, plus a few high-ranking guests who were integrated into his court society on a more temporary basis. In addition to the Sultan as host, the circle of *mağālis* attendees identified by name included high-ranking local judges and *madrassa* teachers, religious functionaries, administrators, itinerant scholars, poets, musicians, diplomatic envoys, and with Abū l-Ḥayr Muḥammad Qurqud al-‘Uṭmānī (d. 918/1513), son of Bāyezīd II (r. 886/1481–918/1512) and brother of Selīm Yavuz (r. 918/1512–926/1520), at least one member of a neighboring dynasty.³⁴

According to *Nafā’is mağālis al-sulṭāniyya*, the Sultan brought his fellow *mağālis* attendees together on two to three evenings per week, usually Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. They met in one of the halls of the Cairo Citadel or in open-air locations within this fortified complex. There they shared food, enjoyed musical and poetic performances in Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish, listened to anecdotes and stories, performed their ritual prayers, and, most importantly, participated in scholarly discussions.³⁵ Questions about issues of law were the most common topic during these debates, followed by Quranic exegesis, rational theology, stories of the prophets before Muḥammad, literature, traditions about the deeds and sayings of the Prophet, history, philosophy, and other fields of knowledge including

³⁴ See in detail *ibid.*, ch. 4.1.2 and Appendix II.

³⁵ See in detail *ibid.*, ch. 4.1.1.

natural sciences. Typically, exchanges about these scholarly and religious topics were closely integrated into the broader framework of late Mamluk knowledge production and transmission. Participants quoted works that served as textbooks in late Mamluk *madrasas* and debated issues that were also being discussed among Mamluk scholars not directly connected to the Sultan's court.³⁶

What made al-Ġawrī's *mağālis* stand out from their broader cultural context was thus less their content than their courtly character, best visible in the Sultan's role as the patron of the attendees. The case of Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Šarīf al-Ḥusaynī, the above-mentioned author of *Nafā'is mağālis al-sulṭāniyya*, one of our main sources on the *mağālis*, is an especially instructive example here, as it allows us to examine the dynamic intersections between economic patronage, knowledge exchange, religious status, and literary production at al-Ġawrī's court in particular detail.³⁷ However, we must acknowledge that all that we know about al-Šarīf al-Ḥusaynī comes from his own work, as it has so far not been possible to find references to him in any other source.

Al-Ḥusaynī was a Ḥanafī and native speaker of either Persian or, less likely, a Turkic language who hailed from the Islamicate East, most probably from territories once ruled by the Qarā Qoyunlu.³⁸ Known as al-Šarīf, al-Ḥusaynī claimed to be a descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad. It seems that he relocated to Cairo in the first years of the 10th/16th century, and it stands to reason that his migration was linked to the political crises in Greater Iran at the end of the 9th/15th century and the rise of the Shi'i Safavids from 906/1501 onward, which are known to have caused numerous Sunni scholars to leave the region.³⁹

In Cairo, al-Šarīf al-Ḥusaynī managed to attract Sultan al-Ġawrī's attention, who in addition to al-Ḥusaynī's expertise in Ḥanafī law especially appreciated the

³⁶ See in detail *ibid.*, ch. 4.2.

³⁷ See on what is known about this case in detail *ibid.*, ch. 3.1.1.3.

³⁸ Al-Šarīf, *Nafā'is* (MS), p. 221; (ed. 'Azzām), p. 101.

³⁹ See e.g. Flemming, "Turks;" Glassen, "Krisenbewusstsein," p. 175; Berger, *Gesellschaft*, pp. 161–163; Markiewicz, *Crisis*, pp. 67–74.

Easterner's familiarity with Persianate court culture, which al-Ġawrī sought to emulate. Al-Ḥusaynī had, as he claimed, participated in the *mağālis* of Persianate rulers including apparently the Timurid Ḥusayn Bāyqarā (r. 875/1470–912/1506) and was willing to share with the Mamluk Sultan his experiences and the cultural capital they represented.⁴⁰ The latter reciprocated in the form of social and economic capital by appointing al-Ḥusaynī as a salaried Sufi at his endowed funeral complex, although – at least as far as is apparent from his work – al-Ḥusaynī had no mystical leanings whatsoever.⁴¹

Two further observations about al-Šarīf al-Ḥusaynī's career as a member of al-Ġawrī's court highlight the close connection between the *mağālis* and practices of patronage: First, al-Ḥusaynī used one of the *mağālis* sessions rather shamelessly to negotiate with the Sultan about a pay raise, threatening that if his material wishes were not met, he would leave Cairo to go on the pilgrimage. Al-Ġawrī, evidently not willing to lose his client, thereupon doubled al-Ḥusaynī's salary at the endowed funeral complex.⁴² This is a strong indication that al-Ḥusaynī was not only dependent on the Sultan's support, but that he also rendered valuable services to him that the ruler did not want to lose. Their relationship thus constituted an aspect of what earlier scholarship has referred to as the "symbiosis" between Mamluk rulers and scholars.⁴³

The second manifestation of the connection between the *mağālis* and practices of courtly patronage is a particularly fortunate one for us today, as his status as the Sultan's client appears to have been the main reason why al-Ḥusaynī penned *Nafā'is mağālis al-sulṭāniyya* and thus provided us with a detailed description of the sessions he attended. The final sections of this work include accounts of a series of *mağālis* in which al-Šarīf al-Ḥusaynī defended his position in a scholarly debate of Quranic exegesis so stubbornly that he incurred the wrath of the Sultan, who banished him

⁴⁰ Al-Šarīf, *Nafā'is* (MS), p. 224; (ed. 'Azzām), p. 105.

⁴¹ Ibid. (MS), p. 115; (ed. 'Azzām), p. 36.

⁴² Ibid. (MS), pp. 205–206; (ed. 'Azzām), pp. 90–91.

⁴³ Lev, "Relations," p. 1; Berkey, "Policy," 19–20. See also Hassan, *Longing*, p. 67; Muhanna, *World*, pp. 85–87; Mauder, *Salon*, ch. 4.1.2.2.

from his presence.⁴⁴ According to the concluding section of the work, al-Ḥusaynī, in an effort to ask for the Sultan's forgiveness, wrote *Nafā'is mağālis al-sulṭāniyya*, evidently hoping to regain the ruler's favor.⁴⁵ By writing this text, al-Ḥusaynī demonstrated not only that he possessed the considerable cultural capital necessary for the production of a literary text in a language that was not his mother tongue, but also that he was interested in continuing to put this capital at the Sultan's disposal. Whether al-Ḥusaynī's strategic decision to use a literary work to repair his patronage relationship with the Mamluk ruler was successful is beyond our knowledge. However, the origin of *Nafā'is mağālis al-sulṭāniyya* shows how closely al-Ġawrī's *mağālis* were interconnected with the mechanics of patronage relations, processes of capital exchange, appointments to religious positions, and the dynamics of the late Mamluk literary landscape.

The above observations also suggest that we can understand al-Ġawrī's title of *sulṭān al-‘ulamā’ wa-l-muḥaqqiqīn* as referring to his support of and care for scholars seeking his patronage. As the case of al-Ḥusaynī shows, the reputation of al-Ġawrī's court had a decidedly transregional component and encouraged people from far-away parts of the Islamicate ecumene to become clients of the Mamluk Sultan. In addition to al-Ḥusaynī, another case in point is Ḥawāğa Ġiyāt al-Dīn Dehdār, whom *Nafā'is mağālis al-sulṭāniyya* mentions in passing among the attendees of a *mağlis* held in Šawwāl 910/March 1505.⁴⁶ The clearly Persian name Dehdār, meaning "village headman,"⁴⁷ in combination with the *laqab* Ġiyāt al-Dīn, rather unusual in Mamluk Egypt, immediately mark this person as a foreigner. *Nafā'is mağālis al-sulṭāniyya* does not provide further information about his origins, yet the array of Persianate biographical works that circulates under the name of Mīr ‘Alī Šīr Nawā’ī (d. 906/1501) refer to a person of exactly the same name whom we can most likely identify with the

⁴⁴ See on this debate Mauder, *Salon*, chs. 3.1.1.3 and 4.2.2 as well as the section "Quranic Exegesis in al-Ġawrī's *mağālis*" below.

⁴⁵ Al-Šarīf, *Nafā'is* (MS), pp. 268–272; (ed. ‘Azzām), pp. 145–149.

⁴⁶ Ibid. (MS), p. 24. See on him also Mauder, *Salon*, ch. 4.1.2.3.

⁴⁷ Junker and Alavi, *Wörterbuch*, p. 335.

attendee of al-Ġawrī's *maǧālis*.⁴⁸ This Ġiyāṭ al-Dīn Dehdār was born in Azerbaijan and served the aforementioned Timurid ruler Ḥusayn Bayqarā as boon companion. Skilled in both Quranic studies and Persian poetry, Ġiyāṭ al-Dīn Dehdār seems to have reacted to the political upheavals in Greater Iran at the turn of the 9th/15th to the 10th/16th century just as al-Ḥusaynī did: He relocated to Cairo and sought to gain access to the *maǧālis* – and thus also most likely the circle of clients – of Qāniṣawh al-Ġawrī. While we do not know exactly how Ġiyāṭ al-Dīn Dehdār benefitted from the Sultan's patronage, his example, together with that of al-Ḥusaynī, shows that al-Ġawrī and those around him could obtain first-hand information about the court culture of Persianate rulers from people who had been part of their courts.⁴⁹ It seems plausible that information about the far-reaching claims to religious authority that were in vogue among Persianate rulers of the late 9th/15th and early 10th/16th centuries reached the Mamluk court and its head through the same channels of communication.⁵⁰ Moreover, as the following sections show, this information seems to have had a profound impact on how Mamluk rule was performed and enacted in the courtly context of scholarly and religious debates.

Ḥadīṭ* Scholarship in al-Ġawrī's *maǧālis

Al-Ḥusaynī, though by training apparently primarily a legal scholar, also participated regularly in discussions about topics from the field of *ḥadīṭ* scholarship in al-Ġawrī's *maǧālis*.⁵¹ These discussions about the Prophet Muḥammad's authoritative deeds and sayings are notably different from the form of engagement with prophetic traditions so far seen as typical for Mamluk court life, namely, the recitation of al-Buḥārī's

⁴⁸ See Šīr Nawā'ī, *Maǧālis al-naḫā'īs*, p. 99; Kirmānī, *Ḥā fiṣ-šīnāsī*, vol. 7, pp. 51–52.

⁴⁹ On participants from the Persianate world in al-Ġawrī's *maǧālis*, see in detail Mauder, "Being Persian."

⁵⁰ For a recent detailed discussion of what is known about transregional communication in this period that also refers to al-Ġawrī's court, see Markiewicz, *Crisis*.

⁵¹ On debates about *ḥadīṭs* in al-Ġawrī's salons and the following argumentation, see also Mauder, *Salon*, ch. 4.2.6.

collection with full *isnāds* or chains of transmitters at the Cairo Citadel during Ramaḍān and the subsequent issuing of hearing certificates to those present.⁵² This is not to say that this earlier practice was abandoned. We know that the traditional Ramaḍān recitations, which constituted events distinct from the Sultan's *maḡālis*, continued during al-Ġawrī's reign in largely unchanged fashion together with the accompanying practices of *ad hoc* commentary that have recently attracted scholarly attention.⁵³

In contrast, the way the members of al-Ġawrī's *maḡālis* approached the *ḥadīṭ* corpus during their sessions did not even come close to what late Mamluk religious scholars would have recognized as a full-fledged and proper transmission of traditions. There is not a single instance in our sources where the *isnāds* of the traditions discussed in the *maḡālis* are quoted, let alone evaluated, according to the standards of *ḥadīṭ* scholarship.⁵⁴ Rather, the participants of al-Ġawrī's *maḡālis* dealt exclusively with the *matns* or main texts of the traditions they analyzed and engaged in what modern scholarship refers to as *matn* criticism.⁵⁵ In particular, members of al-Ġawrī's *maḡālis* typically focused their attention on two or more seemingly contradictory traditions and sought to achieve a harmonization (*tawfīq*) allowing the acceptance of all pertinent traditions as authoritative. Both of the following examples of this approach come from al-Ḥusaynī's work, but are also attested to in similar form in one of the two other sources on al-Ġawrī's *maḡālis*:

⁵² See on these events e.g. Hirschler, *Written Word*, p. 27; Blecher, *Sa'id*, pp. 7, 58, 81–82, 130; Doris Behrens-Abouseif, "Citadel of Cairo," p. 57; Mauder, *Salon*, ch. 4.4.

⁵³ See e.g. Blecher, "Ḥadīṭ Commentary," pp. 275–282; Blecher, *Sa'id*, pp. 81, 89–96.

⁵⁴ On the general trend in Mamluk *ḥadīṭ* scholarship to pay attention to *isnāds* less with the purpose of ascertaining the authenticity of traditions, but more as means to establish spiritual connections with the Prophet Muḥammad, see Davidson, "Tradition;" and on the peculiarities of *ḥadīṭ* transmission in this period also Hirschler, *Monument*.

⁵⁵ On premodern *matn* criticism, see e.g. Brown, "How We Know;" Brown, *Hadith*; Brown, "Rules."

Third question: “What do you say about the saying of him whom God may bless and grant salvation [i.e. the Prophet] ‘Poverty is my point of pride and I am proud of it’ and his saying ‘Poverty is a shame [lit. a blackness of the face] in both worlds [i.e. this world and the next]’?”

Answer: Our lord the Sultan [i.e. al-Ġawrī] said: “Poverty is of two kinds, one blameworthy and one laudable. The blameworthy among them is the need for created things, and the laudable one is the need for the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*).”⁵⁶

The two *ḥadīths* quoted by the questioner are not included in the six Sunni canonical collections, but the members of al-Ġawrī’s *mağālis* apparently did not question the reliability of their chains of transmission – indeed, there is no evidence that they cared about them at all. Rather, the participants including the Sultan took the traditions seriously enough to harmonize their apparent contradiction through an appropriate interpretation.

In the second example, the Sultan is presented not only as the one who harmonized seemingly conflicting traditions, but also the one who brought them up in the first place:

Fourth question: Our lord the Sultan said: “The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him salvation, said: ‘The first thing that God created was my light.’ He also said: ‘The first thing that God created was the intellect.’ And he also said: ‘The first thing that God created was the pen.’”

Answer: The Sultan said, based on assessing them [i.e. the *ḥadīths*] as authentic (*ṣaḥīḥ*): “We say: The first of the immaterial things (*al-muğarradāt*) was the intellect, the first of the material things was the pen, and the first light was the light [of the Prophet], and this was really the first thing.”⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Al-Šarīf, *Nafā’is* (MS), pp. 50–51. The parallel passage is Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS), pp. 167–168.

⁵⁷ Al-Šarīf, *Nafā’is* (MS), pp. 88–89. The parallel passage is Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS), pp. 168–169.

Among the three traditions discussed here, the one about the pen is included in al-Tirmidī's (d. 279/892) and Abū Dāwūd's (d. 275/888) collections of authentic *ḥadīths*,⁵⁸ while the one about the intellect constitutes a shortened version of traditions included in al-Tirmidī's and Ibn Māğā's (d. 273/887) works.⁵⁹ The first tradition does not appear in the Sunnis' Six Books but was widely quoted and accepted, especially among scholars with Sufi inclinations.⁶⁰

The fact that, based on their *isnāds*, none of the traditions could be easily rejected highlighted even more clearly the need to harmonize them, given their apparently contradictory content. As in the first example, the Sultan is again credited with coming up with a fitting interpretation. However, he is in this instance portrayed not only as answering the question about the traditions, but also as bringing it up in the first place. In several other instances in which a person who posed a question in the *mağālis* is also shown as answering it, our sources indicate that he did so because no one else could provide a reply.⁶¹ We have every reason to assume that the same meaning was implied here, too.

While the second example given is the only instance in which the Sultan is said to have both asked the pertinent question and replied to it, he is directly involved in 12 out of the 16 conversations about *ḥadīth* harmonization narrated in the *mağālis* accounts, usually as the participant coming up with the solution to the problems posed by the seemingly contradictory traditions. These observations lead us to two interconnected questions: Why did the attendees of al-Ġawrī's *mağālis* engage on a regular basis in this – for a Mamluk context – unusual form of *ḥadīth* scholarship? And how can we explain the Sultan's equally unusual and – in comparison to other discussion topics – exceptionally active role in this scholarly endeavor?⁶²

⁵⁸ Al-Tirmidī, *Ğāmi'*, *Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, no. 3637; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, *Kitāb al-Sunna*, *Bāb fī l-qadr*, no. 4700.

⁵⁹ Al-Tirmidī, *Ğāmi'*, *Kitāb al-Tafsīr*, no. 3394; Ibn Māğā, *Sunan*, *Kitāb al-Muqaddima*, no. 187.

⁶⁰ See e.g. Bowen, *Muslims*, p. 110; Schimmel, *Messenger*, p. 126; Corbin, *Philosophy*, p. 41.

⁶¹ E.g. al-Šarīf, *Nafā'is* (MS), pp. 7, 13, 27; (ed. 'Azzām), pp. 6, 11.

⁶² Al-Ġawrī's active participation is especially noteworthy since Petry, *Protectors*, p. 161, depicts the Sultan as uninterested in *ḥadīths*.

As to the first question, from the biographical information available about them it is clear that many of the judges, *madrassa* teachers, and religious scholars who attended the Sultan's evening events had during their education acquired the necessary skills to engage in the scrutinization of *isnāds*. However, they did not do so. We thus must explain why the participants *chose* to approach the corpus of prophetic traditions differently. At least four mutually nonexclusive explanations seem possible: First, al-Ġawrī, al-Šarīf al-Ḥusaynī, and several other key figures of the *mağālis* belonged to the Ḥanafī *maḏhab*. Among the four schools of law recognized in the Mamluk realm, the Ḥanafīs traditionally had the reputation of being those least interested in *ḥadīths*, especially as far as the scholarly assessment of *isnāds* was concerned.⁶³ Known for their reliance on rational arguments in their engagement with the law, early Ḥanafī scholars, if they took an interest in prophetic traditions at all, are often considered to have focused particularly on *matn* criticism. Thus the way the attendees of al-Ġawrī's *mağālis* dealt with prophetic traditions might be connected to their membership in the Ḥanafī *maḏhab*. However, we have to acknowledge that members of other *maḏhabs* also attended the *mağālis* and that the vast majority of the *ḥadīths* discussed there lacked legal implications, rather focusing on cosmological, eschatological, and moral topics. A connection to the legal identity of the participants is thus not immediately apparent. Furthermore, the question of whether or not late Mamluk Ḥanafīs shared their earlier peers' assumed reluctance to engage with the *isnāds* of *ḥadīths* is in need of further study, especially as there are indications of a heightened interest in *ḥadīth* studies within the Ḥanafī community of Mamluk Cairo.⁶⁴

Second, the Sultan's *mağālis* were social venues for the production and transmission of knowledge, yet they also provided entertainment to the court. Although it is difficult to tell exactly what members of the scholarly and political elite of

⁶³ Brown, *Hadith*, pp. 151, 154–155. See also Brown, *Canonization*, pp. 49, 146–147, 209; Blecher, *Said*, p. 101.

⁶⁴ Mohammad Gharaibeh (Berlin), personal communication. For what is currently known about Ḥanafī *ḥadīth* scholarship in the late middle period, see Ghani, "Justifying;" Al-Azem, *Precedent, passim*; Göktaş, "Collection," esp. pp. 312–313.

late Mamluk Cairo might or might not have found amusing, it stands to reason that they perceived the harmonization of seemingly contradictory traditions as more entertaining and stimulating than the meticulous study of long chains of transmitters.

Third, one may assume that the *maǧālis* participants sought to defend the integrity of the Sunni corpus of prophetic traditions by demonstrating that it was free from internal contradictions. As plausible as this interpretation seems, we have no evidence for an intensification of critical approaches to the validity of the body of Sunni *ḥadīths* within the Mamluk realm during al-Ġawrī's time. Moreover, the traditions that caught the *maǧālis* participants' attention were hardly of fundamental religious importance for Sunni Muslims, and often enough did not even feature in their canonical *ḥadīth* collections.

Fourth and most importantly, through this form of engagement with prophetic traditions, the *maǧālis* participants made a conscious statement about themselves in general and their Sultan in particular – which brings us to al-Ġawrī's role in these courtly debates. Works from the field of *ḥadīth* scholarship circulating widely in Mamluk Cairo, such as 'Uṭmān Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Šahrazūrī's (d. 643/1245) famous *Ma'rifat anwā' 'ilm al-ḥadīth* (Knowledge of the Types of the Science of *ḥadīth*), better known as *al-Muqaddima fī 'ulūm al-ḥadīth* (Introduction to the Sciences of *ḥadīth*), note explicitly that the analysis of seemingly conflicting traditions is a task reserved for particularly skilled scholars. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ writes: "Only the leading authorities (*a'imma*) who combine the following skills reach perfection in performing [the analysis of contradictory *ḥadīths*]: [Mastery] in *ḥadīth* and legal studies as well as submersion in [the knowledge] of the precise meanings of words."⁶⁵ By harmonizing seemingly conflicting traditions, the *maǧālis* attendees thus performatively claimed the status of leading scholarly authorities knowledgeable in several central disciplines of Islamic learning.

This applies also and especially to Sultan al-Ġawrī, who took a particularly active role in the debates about this topic. Yet, by providing the answers to most of

⁶⁵ Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Ma'rifat anwā' 'ilm al-ḥadīth*, p. 390.

the questions raised, al-Ġawrī presented himself as more than a simple religious scholar. He was the *sulṭān al-‘ulamā’ wa-l-muḥaqqiqīn*, the head of scholars and verifiers. Put differently, we could also describe the Sultan as the “hermeneutical key”⁶⁶ who opened up for the members of his court the doors to knowledge that would otherwise have been unattainable, as demonstrated by the inability of the other *maǧālis* participants to come up with answers of their own. His ability to harmonize seemingly contradictory statements attributed to the Prophet and thus to impersonate a kind of *coincidentia oppositorum* demonstrated that he possessed as *sulṭān al-‘ārifīn* a religious rank that Ibn al-Muqaffa’ (d. c. 142/759–60) had much earlier demanded in a true Muslim ruler, namely, that of a supreme authority in scholarly conflicts.⁶⁷ Yet al-Ġawrī used his religious authority not for a radical break with earlier traditions of religious and political authority, as was the case with other rulers of his day, such as the Safavid Šāh Ismā‘īl who introduced a radical version of Shi‘i Islam in his previously largely Sunni realm. Rather, al-Ġawrī remained clearly within the religious cosmos of Sunni Islam and indeed did his best to rid it of apparent contradictions, thus buttressing its intellectual integrity. Rather than heralding the beginning of a new, millennial age in the manner of the self-proclaimed Safavid and Ottoman *mahdīs* and eschatological rulers of his period, al-Ġawrī appears in the sources about his *maǧālis* as a perfected traditional Sunni ruler who provides both religious guidance and sultanic leadership in a time rife with millennial anxieties and political turmoil.⁶⁸

Quranic Exegesis in al-Ġawrī’s *maǧālis*

Although the topic of prophetic traditions comes up repeatedly, it by no means dominates the *maǧālis* discussions. In contrast, Quranic exegesis was one of the most

⁶⁶ I owe this term to Matthew L. Keegan (New York).

⁶⁷ Berger, *Gesellschaft*, p. 52.

⁶⁸ On the structurally comparable case of a premodern Sunni ruler using *ḥadīth* studies to buttress his authority, see Hartmann, *an-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh*, pp. 206-232.

frequent matters of debate in the meetings al-Ġawrī convened: More than every fourth question discussed there dealt with the proper interpretation of the Islamic Scripture.⁶⁹ Again, the harmonization of seemingly contradictory Quranic verses was an important issue, as the following two examples show:

Question: "About the saying of Him Most High: 'They will be therein eternally as long as the heavens and the Earth continue to exist' [Q 11:107]. There can be no doubt that the heavens and the Earth are to perish, as indicated by the saying of Him Most High 'Everything on it [i.e. the Earth] will perish' [Q 55:26], but eternity does not pass."

Answer: His Excellency, our lord the Sultan [i.e. al-Ġawrī] said: "The meaning of 'the heavens and the Earth' is the heavens and the Earth of the Hereafter, as indicated by the saying of Him Most High 'The day on which the Earth will be replaced by another Earth, and so will the heavens' [Q 14:48]."⁷⁰

This passage follows a pattern already known to us from the preceding analysis of *ḥadīth* scholarship in al-Ġawrī's *mağālis*. An unnamed participant quoted two passages from revelation concerning eschatological matters that seemed to contradict each other, and the Sultan offered an explanation that showed how both statements could be accepted at the same time, in this case supporting his interpretation by quoting another Quranic verse.

In the second example, the authority quoted by the Sultan is notably different:

Question: "About the saying of Him Most High: 'And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city. Below it, there was a treasure that belonged to the two of them' [Q 18:82]. There can be no doubt that the hiding of treasures is not allowed, as is indicated by the saying of Him Most High: 'Those who hide gold and

⁶⁹ On exegetical debates during these events and the following argumentation, see in more detail Mauder, *Salon*, ch. 4.2.2.

⁷⁰ Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS), pp. 161–162.

silver and do not spend it in the way of God, [announce to them a painful chastisement,' Q 9:34]. How is it possible that a prophet hides a treasure?"

Answer: His Excellency, our lord the Sultan said: "Al-Ḥiḍr, peace be upon him, did not hide it for himself, but hid it for the two orphaned boys out of compassion for them. The author of *al-Kaššāf* said: 'This treasure was an emerald tablet on which was written: 'There is no god but God, Muḥammad is the Messenger of God.'"⁷¹

The first verse in this example comes from the Quranic story of Moses's encounter with an unnamed servant of God, whom tradition identified as the prophet al-Ḥiḍr. Verse 18:82 refers to a wall that the servant, to Moses's astonishment, had repaired without payment. The servant's explanation that the wall protected a treasure destined for two orphans could be understood as implying a legal problem, as the second Quranic verse quoted was taken to prohibit the hiding of treasures. The Sultan countered this objection with two arguments: First, he emphasized that al-Ḥiḍr had not hidden the treasure for his own benefit, but for the orphans. Second, the treasure did not consist of gold and silver, the two types of objects explicitly mentioned as the subject of the prohibition in the second verse.

Of primary interest here are not the arguments themselves, but the fact that the Sultan backed his reply with a reference to *al-Kaššāf 'an ḥaqā'iq al-tanzīl* (The Revealer of the Truths of the Revelation), the famous Quran commentary by Ḡār Allāh al-Zamaḥṣarī (d. 538/1144).⁷² Together with Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's (d. 606/1209) *Maḥātib al-ḡayb* (Keys to the Unseen) and 'Abdallāh b. 'Umar al-Bayḍāwī's (d. c. 716/1316) *Tafsīr anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta'wīl* (The Exegesis of the Lights of Revelation and the Secrets of Interpretation), this work was one of the most widely studied texts in Mamluk *madrasas*⁷³ and also represented the *tafsīr* most often quoted in the *maḡālis* accounts. In particular, *maḡālis* attendees including the Sultan invoked *al-Kaššāf*

⁷¹ Ibid. (MS), pp. 96–97.

⁷² The Sultan seems to refer here to al-Zamaḥṣarī, *al-Kaššāf*, p. 628.

⁷³ Saleh, "Remarks," pp. 10–11. See also Berkey, *Transmission*, pp. 185–186; al-Qalqašandī, *Ṣubḥ*, vol. 1, p. 470. See on this work in general Lane, *Commentary*; idem, "Book;" Ullah, *al-Kashshāf*.

during what appear to be their chronologically earlier meetings to support and back up their exegetical points of view.⁷⁴ In one such instance, fascicles of *al-Kaššāf* were physically brought to the Sultan's *maǧlis* to demonstrate that the Sultan was right in considering the brothers of the Quranic Joseph to have been prophets. When the first-person narrator of *Nafā'is maǧālis al-sulṭāniyya* thereupon objected that the author of *al-Kaššāf* had been a member of the Mu'tazila, a heated and prolonged debate erupted between the Sultan, the first-person narrator, and a local judge who had first adduced al-Zamaḥṣarī's work in an effort to support the Sultan's view about Joseph's brothers. At stake was whether or not *al-Kaššāf* constituted admissible evidence, given its author's Mu'tazilī background.⁷⁵ Al-Šarīf al-Ḥusaynī's account of the climax of the debate reads as follows:

Our lord the Sultan said: "What do you say in reply, judge? Is al-Šarīf's statement that *al-Kaššāf* includes the doctrine of the Mu'tazila right or not?"

He has said in reply: "Yes, [it is.]"

His Excellency, our lord the Sultan said: "You insane (*maǧnūn*) judge! When you knew that *al-Kaššāf* follows the doctrine of the Mu'tazila, why then did you draw conclusions from it, brought a quotation from it and based yourself on it? You fool, your motivation [in doing so] was only self-aggrandizement (*mukābara*), and not learned inquiry (*baḥth*) or scholarly disputation (*munāzara*)!"

The judge Maḥmūd said: "The author of *al-Kaššāf* was at first a Mu'tazilī, then in the end he repented from Mu'tazilism."

Reply: I [i.e. the first-person narrator] said: "The repentance of the author of *al-Kaššāf* does not remove the doctrine of the Mu'tazila from *al-Kaššāf*. We speak

⁷⁴ E.g. Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS), p. 17; (ed. 'Azzām), p. 12 (on Q 107:4–5); (MS), pp. 62 (on Q 46:35); pp. 96–97 (on Q 18:82); p. 102 (on Q 5:55); p. 110 (on Q 27:23); pp. 143–144 (on Q 19:31); p. 174 (on Q 43:81); pp. 221–222 (on Q 27:17–8); pp. 230; (ed. 'Azzām), p. 75 (on Q 2:260); (MS), p. 233; (ed. 'Azzām), p. 76; al-Šarīf, *Nafā'is* (MS), p. 160 (on Q 33:72); Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS), p. 295 (on Q 28:27); al-Šarīf, *Nafā'is* (MS), p. 261; (ed. 'Azzām), p. 138 (on Q 12:98).

⁷⁵ On this debate, see in detail Mauder, *Salon*, ch. 4.2.2.

[here] about *al-Kaššāf*, not about the author of *al-Kaššāf*. Sometimes, people say with their mouths things that are not in their hearts."⁷⁶

Even this short section from the account of the debate which, according to al-Ḥusaynī's work, was the main topic of three separate meetings of the Sultan's circle highlights the extraordinary level of tension the question of the status of *al-Kaššāf* caused among the *mağālis* participants. In the end, none of the parties involved in the debate emerged from it unharmed: Al-Ġawrī's earlier opinion that Joseph's brothers had been prophets was all but rejected and even presented as possibly reflecting Mu'tazilī teachings. Any attempt to back it through reference to *al-Kaššāf* was declared objectionable. Angry about this outcome of the debate and the stubbornness of its participants, al-Ġawrī banned al-Šarīf al-Ḥusaynī, the judge who had first adduced evidence from *al-Kaššāf*, and all other attendees wholesale from his presence.

This negative outcome for all parties involved notwithstanding, the debate is of special significance here for at least three reasons. First, al-Šarīf al-Ḥusaynī's banishment from the Sultan's circle was the apparent reason for his writing of *Nafā'is mağālis al-sulṭāniyya*, as mentioned above. Second, al-Ġawrī's decision to declare evidence from *al-Kaššāf* inadmissible to debates in his *mağālis* because of its possibly Mu'tazilī contents – even in cases where it apparently supported his own views – underlines the Mamluk Sultan's efforts to present himself as a consciously Sunni ruler whose court remained untainted by heretical doctrines. This scrupulous and highly critical approach toward al-Zamaḥšarī's *al-Kaššāf* in a Mamluk courtly context is all the more noteworthy when we recall that the same text was used widely in Mamluk *madrasas*. Third, the evidence from the accounts of al-Ġawrī's *mağālis* is relevant for the ongoing debate about how Sunni Muslims of the middle period positioned themselves vis-à-vis *al-Kaššāf*. As part of his efforts to demonstrate that al-Zamaḥšarī's *al-Kaššāf* was much less permeated by Mu'tazilī doctrine than previously

⁷⁶ Al-Šarīf, *Nafā'is* (MS), pp. 261–263; (ed. 'Azzām), pp. 139–140.

assumed (if indeed at all), Andrew Lane argued that the work was in general favorably received by Sunni readerships. He writes: “[O]n the whole, neither al-Zamakhsharī nor his commentary was poorly viewed or severely criticized by the Muslim scholarly tradition. [...] [W]hile his Mu‘tazilite leanings were neither unknown nor ignored, they did not become an obstacle for later generations. Likewise with the *Kashshāf*, what was offensive was usually ignored and the work retained its popularity.”⁷⁷ “On the whole, there does not seem to have been any kind of overtly hostile attitude towards [al-Zamakhsharī].”⁷⁸ Several later publications including most notably Kifayat Ullah’s recent monograph *al-Kashshāf: al-Zamakhsharī’s Mu‘tazilite Exegesis of the Qur’an* (2017) disagree with Lane’s characterization both of *al-Kashshāf* as exhibiting next to no Mu‘tazilī doctrinal influences and of the history of its reception. In Ullah’s reading, “[s]ince its inception, *al-Kashshāf* has been subject to [...] orthodox Sunnī criticism which centered on the basic principles of Mu‘tazilite theology.”⁷⁹ What we know about the reception of al-Zamakhsharī’s *al-Kashshāf* in al-Ġawrī’s *maǧālis* strongly supports this second line of interpretation: At least from the point onward when its Mu‘tazilī context of origin was made explicit, the work was no longer accepted as authoritative among the self-consciously Sunni members of the court, including its head Sultan al-Ġawrī.

Nevertheless, the Sultan’s marking of *al-Kashshāf* as containing unacceptable material did not mean that it was banned from the *maǧālis* debates altogether. Rather, it seems that over the following years the attendees – and first and foremost the Sultan – were eager to point out faulty interpretations in this work and to deconstruct its status as an authoritative exegetical reference text. Admittedly, there is no evidence that the *maǧālis* attendees thereby focused specifically on any of al-Zamakhsharī’s interpretations that could be seen as influenced by Mu‘tazilī doctrine. Rather, especially the Sultan is depicted in the sources as attacking those of al-

⁷⁷ Lane, *Commentary*, p. 223. See also idem, “Book,” pp. 83, 85.

⁷⁸ Lane, *Commentary*, p. xxii.

⁷⁹ Ullah, *al-Kashshāf*, p. 2. For similar findings, see Saleh, “Gloss,” pp. 218, 222, 224, 227, 249.

Zamaḥṣarī's points of view that were thought to contradict the literary meaning of the Quran, authoritative traditions, or the consensus of the community, all of which constitute central sources of knowledge for Sunni Muslims. Note the following example:

Question: "About the saying of Him Most High: 'Verily, your helper (*walīy*) is God, His Messenger, and those who believe, perform the prayer and pay the alms tax (*zakāʾt*) while they bow down' [Q 5:55]. The author of *al-Kaššāf* said that this verse was revealed regarding ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib – may God be satisfied with him – and that the reason for its revelation was that while he was praying, a beggar came and asked for something. [ʿAlī] had a large ring on his finger. He moved his hand and threw it to the beggar in a very slight movement while praying."

Answer: His Excellency, our lord the Sultan said: "This quoted opinion is not correct, because prayer is the believers' ascension [to heaven] and the emblem of those who profess God's unity. How could it be possible that [ʿAlī] performed during it an action that was not part of it and that made him lose his devotion to the Lord, although it is transmitted about him that he never removed his blade from his body except during prayer to ask for forgiveness from God Most High? Moreover, the gifting of the ring to the beggar belongs to the category of voluntary alms (*ṣadaqa*) and not to that of the alms tax (*zakāʾt*). Furthermore, there can be no doubt that the giving of voluntary alms is a recommendable action (*sunnā*) and the prayer is a duty, so how could he abandon a duty for a work of supererogation such as voluntary almsgiving?"⁸⁰

In providing this reply to the position introduced as coming from *al-Kaššāf*, the Sultan managed to do two things at once: First, he dismantled the basis of an obviously pro-Shi'i interpretation of the Quranic verse 5:55, which identified ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) as the believers' *walīy* alongside God and the Prophet Muḥammad. This is one of the most clear-cut critical engagements with pro-ʿAlid statements in the

⁸⁰ Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS), pp. 102–103.

accounts of al-Ġawrī's *mağālis*, and it is tempting to understand it as a reaction to the rise of the Shi'ī Safavids in neighboring Greater Iran.⁸¹ Second, through reference to accepted traditions about 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and fundamental categories of Sunni legal thought, the Sultan in this passage outright objected to al-Zamaḡṣarī's view and thus deconstructed the latter's rank as supreme exegetical authority.⁸² We thus have reason to assume that, from the point in the *mağālis* debates onward where al-Ġawrī declared evidence from al-Zamaḡṣarī's *al-Kaššāf* inadmissible, the Sultan and those around him engaged in a conscious campaign of dismantling the reputation of this exegetical standard reference work while at the same time affirming the validity of Sunni forms of exegetical reasoning based on the literal meaning of Scripture, reliable traditions, and communal consensus.

As *sulṭān al-'ulamā' wa-l-muḡaqqiqīn* who possessed an unrivalled ability to harmonize seemingly contradictory passages in God's revelation, al-Ġawrī not only presented himself as scrupulously avoiding non-Sunni doctrines, but also reclaimed for himself a level of exegetical authority that in the early 10th/16th century had long found its main *locus* in widely accepted earlier works of exegetical scholarship. This realignment of religious authority away from textual authorities to the person of the ruler, however, did not imply that the Sultan used his supreme exegetical status and acumen to advocate novel or millennial interpretations of God's revelation. His efforts were rather focused on maintaining and buttressing a purely Sunni understanding of Scripture. While the Sultan would probably have been hard-pressed to find a real live Mu'tazilī or Shi'ī scholar in late Mamluk Cairo, the Mu'tazilī character of *al-Kaššāf*, once explicitly addressed in his *mağālis*, combined with its popularity in Mamluk *madrasas*, made it an excellent target for al-Ġawrī's efforts to dramatize the century-old claim of Mamluk rulers to be the prime protectors of Sunni Islam – albeit not on

⁸¹ On how the members of al-Ġawrī's *mağālis* positioned themselves toward pro-'Alid tendencies, see Mauder, *Salon*, ch. 5.1.3.

⁸² For further, similar examples, see the debates narrated in Anonymous, *al-Kawkab* (MS), pp. 17–19, 110, 143–144, 174, 233–235, 295; (ed. 'Azzām), pp. 11–14, 76–78.

the battlefield, as his predecessors had typically done, but rather in the courtly arena of knowledge production and transmission in his *maǧālis*.

Conclusion

Al-Ġawrī turned his court into a center of learning at a time when Mamluk authority was being threatened both by a lack of the military accomplishments that had long been the mainstay of the Mamluks' reputation, and by the rise of transregional rivals such as the Ottomans and the Safavids, who not only achieved great victories in battle, but also buttressed their position through far-reaching and in part entirely new millennial claims of supreme religious status. Central to al-Ġawrī's endeavor to deal with these challenges was his holding of learned *maǧālis* at the Cairo Citadel, which gave the Sultan not only the chance to present himself as a wise, generous, and pious ruler and patron, but also provided him with opportunities to claim supreme religious authority as *sulṭān al-ʿārifīn*, as the analysis of the Sultan's role in debates about Quranic exegesis and *ḥadīth* scholarship has shown. The Sultan's demonstrations of his ability to harmonize apparently conflicting prophetic traditions and passages from the Quran marked him as ranking above all other attendees not only in social status, but also in intellectual abilities. The Mamluk ruler moreover strived to repersonalize the religious authority that Sunni Muslims of his time regularly accorded to widely accepted reference texts, as the analysis of his engagement with al-Zamaḥṣārī's *al-Kaššāf* revealed. Al-Ġawrī used his intellectual acumen and the authority that came with its demonstration, however, not to radically reinterpret the religious framework in which he was operating as some of his transregional rivals did, but rather to bolster the theoretical integrity of Sunni Islam.

By convening his *maǧālis*, the Sultan made sure that many of the highest-ranking members of both the local and the transregional political and scholarly elite of his time were present to witness the performative demonstrations of his role as "hermeneutical key" and the concomitant enactment of his status as a legitimate Sunni ruler. As the work of Rodney Barker reminds us, it was precisely such high

ranking members of courts – in addition to rulers themselves – that mattered the most in the legitimation of rule in premodern societies.⁸³

Moreover, the Sultan used patronage relations and processes of capital exchange to bind scholars to his court who possessed skills that could be helpful in his project of legitimizing Mamluk sultanic authority during a time of new challenges. A pertinent example here is the case of al-Šarīf al-Ḥusaynī, who had intimate knowledge of the learned and sophisticated Persianate court culture of the Islamicate late middle period which provided the broader frame of reference for al-Ġawrī's project. Al-Ḥusaynī also played an instrumental role in providing one of the literary accounts of the Sultan's *mağālis* on which our knowledge of al-Ġawrī's novel project of enacting and claiming religious authority is based, and which, in the form of unique manuscripts, represent material objects bearing witness to this heyday of Mamluk court culture. These texts indicate a fascination with the harmonization of apparently contradictory statements in the corpus of prophetic traditions and the Quran that seems to be without parallel in Mamluk intellectual culture and thus appears to constitute a distinctly courtly scholarly endeavor befitting the rank of a *sulṭān al-‘ulamā’ wa-l-muḥaqqiqīn*.

Bibliography

- Abu Dawud al-Siġistānī, Sulayman, *Sunan Abī Dawud*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ḥalidī, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1996.
- Alhamzah, Khaled A., *Late Mamluk Patronage: Qansuh al-Ghūrī's Waqfs and His Foundations in Cairo*, Boca Raton: Universal, 2009.
- Anonymous, *al-Kawkab al-durrī fī masā'il al-Ġawrī*, MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 1377.
- , *al-‘Uqūd al-ġawhariyya fī l-nawādir al-Ġawriyya*, MSS Istanbul, Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Ayasofya 3312 and 3313.

⁸³ Barker, *Identities*. See also Matthew L. Keegan's contribution to this volume.

- ‘Atā, ‘Alī ‘Uṭmān, *Mağālis al-šūrā fī ‘aṣr salāṭīn al-mamālik (648-923h/1250-1517m)*, Cairo: al-Dār al-Ṭaqāfiyya li-l-Našr, 2008.
- Awad, Mohammad, "Sultan al-Ghawri: His Place in Literature and Learning (Three Books Written under His Patronage)," *Actes du XXe Congrès International des Orientalistes: Bruxelles 5–10. September 1938*, Leuven: Bureaux du Muséon, 1940, pp. 321–322.
- Ayalon, David, "Mamlūkiyyāt: (B): Ibn Khaldūn’s View of the Mamlūk Phenomenon," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980), pp. 340–349.
- Al-Azem, Talal, *Rule-Formulation and Binding Precedent in the Madhhab-Law Tradition: Ibn Quṭlūbughā’s Commentary on The Compendium of Qudūn*, Leiden: Brill, 2017.
- ‘Azzām, ‘Abd al-Wahhāb (ed.), *Mağālis al-Sulṭān al-Ġawrī: Ṣafaḥāt min tāriḥ Miṣr min al-qarn al-‘āšir al-ḥiġnī*, Cairo: Maṭba‘at Laġnat al-Ta’līf wa-l-Tarġama wa-l-Našr, 1941.
- Barker, Rodney, *Legitimizing Identities: The Self-Presentations of Rulers and Subjects*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Behrens-Abouseif, Doris, "The Citadel of Cairo: Stage for Mamluk Ceremonial," *Annales Islamologiques* 24 (1989), pp. 25–79.
- , "Sultan al-Ghawrī and the Arts," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 6 (2002), pp. 71–94.
- Behzadi, Lale, "The Art of Entertainment: Forty Nights with Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawḥīdī," *The Weaving of Words: Approaches to Classical Arabic Prose*, eds. Lale Behzadi and Vahid Behmardi, Würzburg: Ergon, 2009, pp. 165–179.
- Berger, Lutz, *Gesellschaft und Individuum in Damaskus 1550–1791*, Würzburg: Ergon, 2007.
- Berkey, Jonathan P., "'Silver Threads among the Coal': A Well-Educated Mamluk of the Ninth/Fifteenth Century," *Studia Islamica* 73 (1991), pp. 109–125.
- , *The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo: A Social History of Islamic Education*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

- , "The Mamluks as Muslims: The Military Elite and the Construction of Islam in Medieval Egypt," *The Mamluks in Egyptian Politics and Society*, eds. Thomas Philipp and Ulrich Haarmann, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 163–173.
- , "Mamluk Religious Policy," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 13 (2009), pp. 7–22.
- Blecher, Joel, "Ḥadīth Commentary in the Presence of Students, Patrons, and Rivals: Ibn Ḥajar and Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī in Mamluk Cairo," *Oriens* 41 (2013), pp. 261–287.
- , *Said the Prophet of God: Hadith Commentary Across a Millennium*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2018.
- Bonebakker, S.A., "Adab and the Concept of Belles-lettres," *ʿAbbasid Belles-lettres*, eds. Julia Ashtiany *et al.*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp. 16–30.
- Bowen, John R., *Muslims through Discourse: Religion and Ritual in Gayo Society*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Brentjes, Sonja, *Teaching and Learning the Sciences in Islamicate Societies (800–1700)*, Turnhout: Brepols, 2018.
- Brown, Jonathan, *The Canonization of al-Bukhārī and Muslim: The Formation and Function of the Sunnī Ḥadīth Canon*, Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- , "How We Know Early Ḥadīth Critics Did Matn Criticism and Why It's So Hard to Find," *Islamic Law and Society* 15 (2008), pp. 143–184.
- , *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World*, Oxford: Oneworld, 2009.
- , "The Rules of Matn Criticism: There Are no Rules," *Islamic Law and Society* 19 (2012), pp. 356–396.
- Chamberlain, Michael, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Conermann, Stephan and Ulrich Haarmann, "Herrscherwechsel als Höfische Machtprobe: Das Beispiel der Mamluken in Ägypten und Syrien (1250–1517),"

- Hof und Macht: Dresdener Gespräche II zur Theorie des Hofes*, eds. Reinhardt Butz and Jan Hirschbiegel, Berlin: Lit, 2007, pp. 209–240.
- Corbin, Henry, *History of Islamic Philosophy*, London: Keegan Paul, 1996.
- Davidson, Garrett, "Carrying on the Tradition: An Intellectual History and Social History of Post-Canonical Hadith Transmission," PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2014.
- D'hulster, Kristof, "'Sitting with Ottomans and Standing with Persians': The *Šāhnāme-yi Türki* as a Highlight of Mamluk Court Culture," *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras VI*, eds. Urbain Vermeulen and Kristof D'hulster, Leuven: Peeters, 2010, pp. 229–256.
- El-Rouayheb, Khaled, *Islamic Intellectual History in the Seventeenth Century: Scholarly Currents in the Ottoman Empire and the Maghreb*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.
- Fleischer, Cornell H., "Mahdi and Millenium: Messianic Dimensions in the Development of Ottoman Imperial Ideology," *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation*, Vol. 3, *Philosophy, Science and Institutions*, ed. Kemal Çiçek, Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2000, pp. 42–54.
- , "Learning and Sovereignty in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)*, Vol. 1, eds. Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar and Cornell H. Fleischer, Leiden: Brill, 2019, pp. 155–160.
- Flemming, Barbara, "Šerīf, Sultan Ġavrī und die ‚Perser‘," *Der Islam*, 45 (1969), pp. 81–93.
- , "Aus den Nachtgesprächen Sultan Ġaurīs," *Folia rara: Wolfgang Voigt LXV. diem natalem celebranti ab amicis et catalogorum codicum orientalium conscribendorum collegis dedicata*, eds. Herbert Franke, Walther Heissig and Wolfgang Treue, Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1976, pp. 22–28.

- , "Literary Activities in Mamluk Halls and Barracks," *Studies in Memory of Gaston Wiet*, ed. Myriam Rosen-Ayalon, Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1977, pp. 249–260.
- , "Turks: 3. Turkish Literature of the Golden Horde and of the Mamlūks," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition: Online Version*, eds. P. Bearman *et al.*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_1261 (last accessed April 17, 2020).
- Franssen, Élise, "What Was There in a Mamluk Amīr's Library? Evidence from a Fifteenth-Century Manuscript," *Developing Perspectives in Mamluk History: Essays in Honor of Amalia Levanoni*, ed. Yuval Ben-Bassat, Leiden: Brill, 2017, pp. 311–332.
- Frenkel, Yehoshua, "The Mamluks among the Nations: A Medieval Sultanate in its Global Context," *Everything Is on the Move: The Mamluk Empire as a Node in (Trans-)Regional Networks*, ed. Stephan Conermann, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014, pp. 61–79.
- Ghani, Usman, "Justifying the Role of Prophetic Narration in Ḥanafī Jurisprudence: The Case of al-Zayla'ī's (d. 762/1361) *Naṣb al-rāya* as a *Ḥadīṭ* Companion to al-Margīnānī's (d. 593/1197) *al-Hidāya*," *Mélanges de l'Institut Dominicain d'Études Orientales* 34 (2019), pp. 99–109.
- Glassen, Erika, "Schah Ismā'īl, ein Mahdī der anatolischen Turkmenen," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 121 (1971), pp. 61–69.
- , "Krisenbewusstsein und Heilserwartung in der islamischen Welt zu Beginn der Neuzeit," *Die Islamische Welt zwischen Mittelalter und Neuzeit: Festschrift für Hans Robert Roemer zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Ulrich Haarmann and Peter Bachmann, Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1979, pp. 167–179.
- Göktaş, Recep Gürkan, "On the Hadith Collection of Bayezid II's Palace Library," *Treasures of Knowledge: An Inventory of the Ottoman Palace Library (1502/3–1503/4)*, Vol. 1, eds. Gülru Necipoğlu, Cemal Kafadar and Cornell H. Fleischer, Leiden: Brill, 2019, pp. 309–340.

- Haarmann, Ulrich, "Arabic in Speech, Turkish in Lineage: Mamluks and Their Sons in the Intellectual Life of Fourteenth-Century Egypt and Syria," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 33 (1988), pp. 81–114.
- , "Ideology and History, Identity and Alterity: The Arab Image of the Turk from the 'Abbasids to Modern Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20 (1988), pp. 175–196.
- Hämeen-Anttila, Jaakko, *Maqama: A History of a Genre*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002.
- Hartmann, Angelika, *an-Nāṣir li-Dīn Allāh (1180–1225): Politik, Religion, Kultur in der späten 'Abbāsidenzeit*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975.
- Hassan, Mona, *Longing for the Lost Caliphate: A Transregional History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017.
- Hernandez, Rebecca Skreslet, *The Legal Thought of Jalāl Al-Din Al-Suyūṭī: Authority and Legacy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Hirschler, Konrad, *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands: A Social and Cultural History of Reading Practices*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.
- , *A Monument to Medieval Syrian Book Culture: The Library of Ibn 'Abd al-Hādī*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020.
- Holt, Peter M., "Ḳānṣawh al-Ghawrī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam, New Edition: Online Version*, eds. P. Bearman *et al.*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_3873 (last accessed April 17, 2020).
- Ibn Ḥaldūn, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad, *Kitāb al-'ibar wa-dīwān al-mubtadā wa-l-ḥābar*, Būlāq: al-Maṭba'a al-Miṣriyya, 1867.
- Ibn Māğa, Muḥammad, *Sunan*, Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāt al-'Arabī, n.d.
- Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, 'Uṭmān al-Ṣahrazūrī, *Ma'rifat anwā' 'ilm al-ḥadīṭ*, eds. 'Abd al-Laṭīf al-Humaym and Māhir Yāsīn al-Faḥl, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2002.
- Irwin, Robert, "Mamluk Literature," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 7 (2003), pp. 1–29.

- , "The Political Thinking of the 'Virtuous Ruler,' Qansuh al-Ghawri," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 12 (2008), pp. 37–49.
- Junker, Heinrich F.J. and Bozorg Alavi, *Persisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002.
- Kirmānī, Saʿīd Niyāz, *Ḥāfiẓ-šīnāsi*, Tehran: Intišārāt-i Pāzanġ, 1987.
- Kollatz, Anna. *Inspiration und Tradition: Strategien zur Beherrschung von Diversität am Mogulhof und ihre Darstellung in Maġālis-i Ġahāngīn (ca. 1608–11) von ʿAbd al-Sattār b. Qāsim Lāhōnī*, Berlin: EB, 2016.
- Lane, Andrew J., *A Traditional Muʿtazilite Qurʾan Commentary: The Kashshāf of Jār Allāh al-Zamakhsharī (d. 538/1144)*, Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- , "You Can't Tell a Book by Its Author: A Study of Muʿtazilite Theology in al-Zamakhsharī's (d. 538/1144) *Kashshāf*," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 75 (2012), pp. 47–86.
- Larkin, Margaret, "Popular Poetry in the Post-Classical Period," *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*, eds. Roger Allen and D.S. Richards, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 191–242.
- Lev, Yaacov, "Symbiotic Relations: Ulama and the Mamluk State," *Mamlūk Studies Review* 13 (2009), pp. 1–26.
- Lewis, Bernard, *Islam from the Prophet Muhammad to the Capture of Constantinople*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987
- Little, Donald P., "Religion under the Mamluks," *The Muslim World* 73 (1983), pp. 165–181.
- Markiewicz, Christopher A., *The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam: Persian Emigres and the Making of Ottoman Kingship*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Mauder, Christian and Christopher A. Markiewicz, "A New Source on the Social Gatherings (*majālis*) of the Mamluk Sultan Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī," *al-ʿUṣūr al-Wuṣṭā* 24 (2016), pp. 145–148.

- Mauder, Christian, *Gelehrte Krieger: Die Mamluken als Träger arabischsprachiger Bildung nach al-Ṣafadī, al-Maḡnī und weiteren Quellen*, Hildesheim: Olms, 2012.
- , "'And They Read in That Night Books of History.' Consuming, Discussing, and Producing Texts about the Past in al-Ghawrī's *majālis* as Social Practices," *New Readings in Arabic Historiography from Late Medieval Egypt and Syria*, ed. Jo van Steenberg, Leiden: Brill, forthcoming.
- , "Being Persian in Late Mamluk Egypt: The Construction and Significance of Persian Ethnic Identity in the *majālis* of Sultan Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī (r. 906–922/1501–1516)," *al-ʿUṣūr al-Wuṣṭā*, forthcoming.
- , "The Development of Arabo-Islamic Education among Members of the Mamluk Military Elite," *Knowledge and Education in Classical Islam: Religious Learning between Continuity and Change*, ed. Sebastian Günther, Leiden: Brill, forthcoming.
- , *In the Sultan's Salon: Learning, Religion and Rulership at the Mamluk Court of Qāniṣawh al-Ghawrī (r. 1501–1516)*, Leiden: Brill, forthcoming.
- Mazor, Amir, *The Rise and Fall of a Muslim Regiment: The Maṣūriyya in the First Mamluk Sultanate, 678/1279-741/1341*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015.
- Melvin-Koushki, Matthew, "Early Modern Islamicate Empire," *The Wiley Blackwell History of Islam*, ed. Amando Salvatore *et al.*, Hoboken: Wiley-Blackwell, 2018, pp. 353-375.
- , "Taḥqīq vs. Taqlīd in the Renaissance of Western Early Modernity," *Philological Encounters* 3 (2018), pp. 193–249.
- Moin, A. Azfar, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.
- Muhanna, Elias, *The World in a Book: Al-Nuwayri and the Islamic Encyclopedic Tradition*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.

- Nawā'ī, Mīr 'Alī Šīr, *Mağālis al-nafā'is*, ed. 'Alī A. Ḥikmat, Tehran: Čāpḥāna-yi Bānk-i Millī Irān, 1945.
- Newhall, Amy Whittier, "The Patronage of the Mamluk Sultan Qa'it Bay, 872/901/1468–1496," PhD diss., Harvard University, 1987.
- Northrup, Linda S., "The Baḥrī Mamlūk Sultanate," *The Cambridge History of Egypt: Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 242–289.
- Petry, Carl F., *Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of the Mamlūk Sultans Al-Ashrāf Qāyṭbāy and Qanṣūh Al-Ghawrī in Egypt*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993.
- , *Protectors or Praetorians? The Last Mamlūk Sultans and Egypt's Waning as a Great Power*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1994.
- al-Qalqašandī, Šihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad, *Ṣubḥ al-a'šā fī šinā'at al-inšā'*, Cairo: Wizārat al-Taḳāfa wa-l-Iršād al-Qawmī, 1913-1922, repr. 1970.
- Sadan, Joseph, "Death of a Princess: Episodes of the Barmakid Legend in Its Late Evolution," *Story-Telling in the Framework of Non-Fictional Arabic Literature*, ed. Stefan Leder, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998, pp. 130–157.
- Saleh, Walid, "Preliminary Remarks on the Historiography of *tafsīr* in Arabic: A History of the Book Approach," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 12 (2010), pp. 6–40.
- , "The Gloss as Intellectual History: The *Ḥāshiyahs* on *al-Kashshāf*," *Oriens* 41 (2013), pp. 217–259.
- al-Šarīf, Ḥusayn b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī *Nafā'is mağālis al-sulṭāniyya fī ḥaqā'iq asrār al-Qur'āniyya*, MS Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı Kütüphanesi, Ahmet III 2680.
- al-Sayrafī, 'Alī b. Dawud, *Inbā' al-hasr bi-abnā' al-'asr*, ed. Ḥasan Ḥabashī, Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-'Arabi, 1970.
- Schimmel, Annemarie, "Some Glimpses of the Religious Life in Egypt during the Later Mamluk Period," *Islamic Studies* 4 (1965), pp. 353–392.
- , *And Muhammad Is His Messenger: The Veneration of the Prophet in Islamic Piety*, Chapel Hill; University of North Carolina Press, 1985.

- Spevack, Aaron, "Egypt and the Later Ash'arite School," *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 534–546.
- al-Tirmidī, Muḥammad b. 'Īsā, *al-Ġāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ wa-huwa sunan al-Tirmidī*, Cairo: Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1937.
- Ullah, Kifayat, *al-Kashshāf: al-Zamakhsharī's Mu'tazilite Exegesis of the Qur'an*, Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017.
- van Gelder, Geert Jan, "Some Brave Attempts at Generic Classification in Premodern Arabic Literature," *Aspects of Genre and Type in Pre-Modern Literary Cultures*, eds. Bert Roest and Herman Vanstiphout, Groningen: Styx, 1999, pp. 15–31.
- Wisnovsky, Robert, "Avicennism and Exegetical Practice in the Early Commentaries on the *Ishārāt*," *Oriens* 41 (2013), pp. 349–378.
- Yılmaz, Hüseyin, *Caliphate Redefined: The Mystical Turn in Ottoman Political Thought*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018.
- al-Zamaḥṣarī, Ġār Allāh Abū l-Qāsim Maḥmūd, *Tafsīr al-Kaššāf 'an ḥaqā'iq al-tanzīl wa-'uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wuġūh al-ta'wīl*, ed. Ḥ. Ma'mūn Šīḥā, Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 2009.