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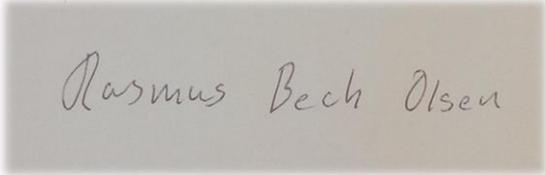
Just Taxes?

Tracing 14th Century Damascene Politics through Objects, Space and Historiography

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Ph.D. Thesis in History
Submitted to the Department of History, Classics and Archeology,
School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy,
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June 2017

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.



Rasmus Bech Olsen

Copenhagen 5th of June 2017

Abstract

In this thesis, I explore the political culture in Damascus during the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries by examining the symbolic practices through which sultanic rulers and their subjects negotiated local power relations.

As my point of departure, I use a protest against Mamluk tax policies that took place in 711/1311. I argue that this protest should not be understood as a spontaneous outburst of popular anger, but as a meaningful political act that reflects the wider political culture of the period and lends itself to interpretation of multiple levels.

First, I demonstrate how the 711 protesters engaged in a multi-layered form of visual communication by carrying objects that referenced local identity, contemporary politics and Islamic history. I then contextualise the protest within the urban landscape of medieval Damascus. By exploring the historical development of procession routes and parade grounds in Damascus, I argue that the choice of venue that characterised this and later protests was based on a desire to appropriate spatial nodes in the topography of sultanic power. I then turn to the Umayyad Mosque as the antithesis of the ceremonial culture of the military parade ground. I argue that the protesters of 711 used visual references to the mosque in their procession, especially by placing the *khaṭīb* (Friday preacher) as leader of the procession, but that his participation must also be understood in the light of his wider socio-political role.

Finally, I examine the narrative sources through which we access this and other political events in Mamluk Damascus. I argue that the use of these narratives as a source for political history must be accompanied by a comparison of how individual authors frame the same events and critical reflection on how representations of historical events are shaped by and shape the overarching agendas of their respective works.

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From the time I chose to focus my doctoral research on Mamluk Syria, I have received advice and assistance from many members of the international community of Mamluk scholars. Among them, Professor Stephan Conermann and Dr. Mohammad Gharaibeh deserve special thanks for hosting me at the Annemarie Schimmel Kolleg in Bonn during two workshops that helped to shape my topic and inspired the approaches I have used. Professor Caterina Bori also deserves special mention for generously providing me with ideas, reading suggestions and feedback.

For their invaluable help and support, I am indebted to my supervisors, Caroline Humfress and Konrad Hirschler. With their thoughtful commentary and persistent encouragement, they have guided me from the first to the final draft. Our many discussions of topics like symbols of power, violence and law in medieval societies and authorial agency in pre-modern literature have shaped both my thesis and my future scholarly horizon profoundly.

My way into medieval Islamic studies began during my BA studies at the University of Copenhagen, where June Dahy introduced me to Ibn Khaldūn. Over the course of my doctoral studies, she has generously helped me when I have struggled with the subtlety-ridden prose and poetry of Mamluk chroniclers and litterateurs.

Finally, I am grateful to my parents and siblings for their love and support and for keeping confidence in me at the points where I had doubts about where the project was headed. And to Maria for being an inspiring interlocutor, editor and audience of one, and for sharing with me both the strenuous and the joyous stretches of this process.

Table of contents	
Abstract	3
Acknowledgements	4
List of figures	7
List of tables	7
Chapter 1 - Introduction	8
<i>I. Point of Departure</i>	8
i. The 711 protest: a scene from 8 th /14 th century Damascus	8
ii. Thesis statement	9
iii. Thesis structure	11
<i>II. Conceptual Background and Thematic Approaches</i>	12
i. Mamluk Studies beyond dynastic history, ‘Cairo centrism’ and Mamluk exceptionalism	12
ii. Protests as political events: a framework for analysing the 711 protest	15
iii. Mamluk politics: from structure to practice	20
iv. Mamluk historians: from ‘transmitters’ to ‘actors’	22
<i>III. The Sources of the Present Thesis</i>	24
<i>IV. Transliteration Table</i>	34
Chapter 2 – The 711 protest: making sense of a Monday’s events	35
<i>I. Introduction</i>	35
<i>II. The 711 Tax – Negotiating Sultanic Demands in Damascus</i>	39
i. What kind of tax was imposed in 711/1311?	40
ii. Negotiations and collection attempts prior to the protest	41
iii. The aftermath of the 711 protest	43
iv. The position of the 711 protest within the tax conflict	45
<i>III. The 711 Protest as ‘Performance’</i>	46
i. What to bring to a protest? Part one: the Qur’ān and the sandal	47
iii. What to bring to a protest? Part two: the mosque banners	53
<i>IV. Contextualising the 711 Tax</i>	58
i. Mamluk <i>nafaqa</i> -taxes in the 7 th /13 th century	58
ii. The Muqarrar al-Khiyāla of 699–700/1299–1300	59
iii. 700 versus 711: comparing numbers and reactions	61
<i>V. Taxation and Legitimacy: Juridical Approaches</i>	64
i. War taxes in Ibn Jamā’a’s <i>Tahrīr al-Aḥkām</i>	64
ii. Shāfi’ī jurists as tax critics 657/1259–700/1300	67
iii. Ibn Taymiyya’s approach to the 700 and 711 taxes	71
<i>VI. Conclusion: the Message and Effect of the 711 Protest</i>	75
i. A moral economy of taxation?	75
ii. Did the 711 protest work?	77
Chapter 3 – Taḥt al-Qal’a: a medieval Islamic ceremonial space	80
<i>I. Introduction</i>	80
<i>II. Urban Citadels: a 6th/12th to 8th/14th Century Perspective</i>	82
i. Damascus, Aleppo, Cairo: three cities, three citadels	83
ii. The surroundings of the citadel and their ceremonial function	87
iii. The formation of the Taḥt al-Qal’a	88
<i>III. The Ceremonial Uses of the Taḥt al-Qal’a in Damascus</i>	99
i. Honorific processions	100
ii. The <i>maḥmal</i> presentation parade	103
iii. The Mamluk governor’s weekly parades	107
iv. Popular interventions in the governor’s parade: 711/1311 and beyond	108
<i>IV. Taḥt al-Qal’a and the Mamluk Monopoly on Violence</i>	111
i. Official executions in Sūq al-Khayl	112
ii. Interventions and lynchings in Sūq al-Khayl	114

iii. Some spatial considerations regarding murder of Ibn Nashū	116
V. Conclusion	118
Chapter 4 – The Mosque as Political Space, the Khaṭīb as Political Figure	120
I. Introduction	120
II. The Umayyad Mosque and its Ceremonies	122
i. The Umayyad Mosque in local and imperial culture	122
ii. Politics from the <i>minbar</i> : the uses of <i>al-du‘ā’ lil-sultān</i>	128
iii. Politics beyond the <i>minbar</i> : the function of the <i>sudda</i> and the <i>maqṣūra</i>	134
iv. Audience members’ strategic uses of the Friday ceremony	136
v. The Umayyad Mosque and the 711 tax conflict	137
III. The Khaṭīb as a Socio-Political Actor	141
i. The <i>khaṭīb</i> as intercessor on the <i>minbar</i> and beyond	144
ii. Local support and opposition to the <i>khaṭīb</i> : the case of Ibn al-Muraḥḥil	146
IV. A Personal Perspective: <i>Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī as Khaṭīb</i>	152
i. From immigrant scholar to chief judge of Egypt: the life of Jalāl al-Dīn	152
ii. Jalāl al-Dīn the Ash‘arī?	157
V. Conclusion	162
Chapter 5 - Historiography as Socio-Political Practice: Eight Accounts of 711/1311 Compared	164
I. Introduction	164
i. Approach and sources	164
ii. The political situation of 711/1311 revisited	168
II. The Events of 711/1311 from a Contemporary Damascene Perspective	170
i. The Damascene chronicler as stakeholder in the 711 protest	170
ii. With God on our side? The 711 protest and local political agency	174
iv. Weighing the local and imperial dimensions	181
v. Ibn Taymiyya’s connection with the 711 protest as presented by Ibn Kathīr	184
vi. Al-Jazarī*’s portrait of Governor Karāy: a parable about <i>maẓālim</i> ?	190
vii. Authorial agency and the Syrian school: conclusions from the 711 protest	193
III. The Events of 711/1311 from a Contemporary Egyptian Perspective	195
i. Ibn al-Dawādārī	195
ii. Baybars al-Manṣūrī	200
iii. al-Yūsufī (via al-‘Aynī)	203
iv. Prepared or paranoid? Debating the merits of Sultan al-Nāṣir	206
IV. The Perspective of the Scholar-Bureaucrat	206
i. Al-Ṣafadī and his local and imperial connections	207
ii. Temper, passion and sense of duty: a psychological portrait of Karāy	209
V. Conclusion	216
Chapter 6 – Conclusion	220
Figures 1 – 7	232
Bibliography	237
I. Titles in Arabic	237
II. Titles in European languages	240

List of figures

FIGURE 1: DAMASCUS	232
FIGURE 2: ALEPPO	232
FIGURE 3: CAIRO	233
FIGURE 4: ALEPPO, CITADEL CLOSE-UP	233
FIGURE 5: CAIRO, CITADEL CLOSE-UP	234
FIGURE 6: DAMASCUS, CITADEL CLOSE-UP	234
FIGURE 7: DAMASCUS, CITADEL WITH PAVILION LOCATIONS	235

List of tables

GROUP A) DAMASCENE HISTORIANS WITH SCHOLARLY BACKGROUND	165
GROUP B) EGYPTIAN HISTORIANS WITH MILITARY BACKGROUND	166
GROUP C) BIOGRAPHER WITH BUREAUCRATIC/SCHOLARLY BACKGROUND	166

Chapter 1 - Introduction

I. Point of Departure

i. The 711 protest: a scene from 8th/14th century Damascus

On the morning of Monday the 13th of Jumādā I 711/27th of September 1311, two separate ceremonial processions collided in the city of Damascus. At daybreak, Sayf al-Dīn Karāy al-Manṣūrī (d. 719/1319), the Mamluk governor of Damascus and viceroy of Syria, mustered his troops for the customary Monday inspection parade. Surrounded by his entourage, Karāy rode out from his lodgings near al-Maydān al-Akhḍar (The Green Hippodrome), which lay west of the walled city, and headed towards Sūq al-Khayl (The Horse Market), which lay north of the Barāda River across from the citadel and functioned as market place and parade ground.

If we assume that this parade followed official Mamluk protocol, the arrival at Sūq al-Khayl would have been followed by an announcement of the ranks and privileges of the attending amirs as well as a presentation of their equipment and horses.¹ However, on this particular Monday morning, the inspection parade did not run according to plan. At some point, a protest procession made up of local civilians set forth from the walled city towards Sūq al-Khayl. Their intention was to interrupt the assembly and divert the governor's focus away from the army inventory toward the hardship brought on by current tax policies.

The 'clash of processions' in Sūq al-Khayl was the outcome of a tax imposed on Damascus a month earlier (Rabī' II 711/July-August 1311) that was intended to fund an expansion of the local cavalry garrison. During Jumādā I/September, local merchants and notables had negotiated with the governor in an attempt to reduce the tax. These attempts proved unsuccessful, and in the week prior to the parade an unspecified group of Damascenes had asked for intervention from their religious leaders. On Friday the 10th of Jumādā I/24th of September, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338), the imam and *khaṭīb* (Friday preacher) of the Umayyad Mosque, agreed to present a complaint about the matter to the governor. The protest procession on the following Monday morning constituted this complaint. On his way to seek out the governor, al-Qazwīnī led a group consisting of 'ulamā' (Islamic scholars), Qur'ān readers, muezzins and ordinary civilians. They walked from the Umayyad Mosque through the walled city through the northwestern gate, Bāb al-Faraj, and across the Barāda. From there they turned west

¹ Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā fī Kitābat al-Inshā'* 14 Vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1914), vol. 4, 195–196.

through the area known as Taḥt al-Qal'a (Below the Citadel) and ended in Sūq al-Khayl. We do not know exactly what the participants said or shouted during their march or upon arrival, but according to local contemporary sources, they brought with them the three most important symbolic artefacts available to civilian actors in Damascus: the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān, the Sandal of the Prophet and the black caliphal banners that hung in the Umayyad Mosque.

The governor did not welcome the civilian procession; instead, he dismissed the complaints about the tax and had the crowd broken up by his club-wielding guards. During this commotion, the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān fell on the ground, which caused the civilian protesters to pelt the governor's entourage with stones before retreating towards the walled city. The following evening, Governor Karāy summoned al-Qazwīnī along with 'Imād al-Dīn al-Tūnisī (d. 718/1319), a North-African grammarian and Qur'ān recital expert residing in Damascus, and Najm al-Dīn Ibn Ṣaṣrā (d. 724/1324), the Shāfi'ī Chief Judge (*qāḍī*) of Damascus. The governor verbally abused all three men for plotting against him. Al-Tūnisī was then beaten by the governor's guards and later jailed alongside al-Qazwīnī, while Ibn Ṣaṣrā was released.

On Tuesday, a group of professional witnesses (*shuhūd*) approached the governor and vouched for al-Qazwīnī and al-Tūnisī, after which both men were released. On the following Friday, threats of a new round of protest prompted the governor to reopen the negotiations about the tax. He eventually agreed to lower the amount and postpone the collection until the tax collectors from Cairo arrived in Damascus and demanded the money. Whether Karāy would have upheld his end of this bargain is impossible to know since he was arrested on accusations of treason approximately two weeks after the protest and sent off in shackles to prison in Jordan.

The events of this Monday morning, which will henceforth be called 'the 711 protest', constitute one of the rare cases where street politics in early Mamluk Damascus were captured in rich detail by contemporary authors, whose narratives have survived until today. This thesis unfolds the dense layers of meaning imbedded within the 711 protest, and use it as a prism through which to explore political culture in Damascus during the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries.

ii. Thesis statement

The above description of the 711 protest comes from the *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān*, a 7th/13th – 8th/14th century annalistic chronicle focused on Syria and Damascus. It is one

of six contemporary and near-contemporary sources for the protest that are used throughout this thesis. (A comprehensive source overview is presented in Section III of this chapter).

The rich though sometimes contradictory narratives found in these sources allow us to approach the 711 protest at an unusually high level of detail. More specifically, they give us the opportunity to explore the following four questions: what was the political context of the 711 protest on the local and imperial level? What did the protesters do and where did they do it? Who led the protest? And finally, who wrote about it and how? These specific questions related to the 711 protest will be answered over the course of the following four chapters. Simultaneously, each question will serve as a vantage point from which to examine political culture in 7th/13th and 8th/14th century Damascus. ‘Political culture’ in this context is defined as *the forms of symbolic communication through which political power relations were asserted, negotiated and opposed*.² The 711 protest, I argue, ties together multiple elements of political culture that are found across the period in question, albeit in smaller and often much simpler constellations. By using the 711 protest as a prism, we are able to detect wider patterns and make new connections between such diverse phenomena as the cult of relics in Damascus, power and urban topography in Syro-Egypt, military ceremonial protocol and proto-patriotism in Damascene chronicles.

This thesis provides a detailed, step-by-step examination of a single historical event and a series of thematic explorations that will hopefully lead to a broader understanding of political culture in Damascus during the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries.

² There are many theoretical models for studying ‘political culture’ used in fields such as anthropology, sociology and psychology. My use of the term is broadly inspired by what Richard Wilson calls ‘the hermeneutic or interpretive approach’ that focuses on the role of symbolic communication, rituals and collective myths. Richard W. Wilson, ‘Review: The Many Voices of Political Culture: Assessing Different Approaches’, *World Politics* 52, no. 2 (2000): 246–73, 249. This approach is adopted by David I. Kertzer, among others. Kertzer argues that political processes across all types of societies consist primarily of communication through rituals, which are defined as ‘actions wrapped in a web of symbolism’, instead of the use of direct force. As he states ‘Political rites are important in all societies, because political power relations are everywhere expressed and modified through symbolic means of communication’. David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 178.

iii. Thesis structure

Chapter 2 unfolds the immediate local context of the 711 protest as well as its historical context, specifically the recurrent cases where the Mamluk Sultans, from Muẓaffar al-Dīn Quṭuz (d. 658/1260) to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (d. 741/1341), demanded war taxes from their Egyptian and Syrian subjects. The chapter then explores the 711 protesters' use of symbolic objects in the context of early Islamic history, Damascene devotional cultural and official Mamluk ceremonial practices. The chapter also connects the symbolic communication of the protesters with the contemporary juridical discourses on taxation, justice and the extent of the sultan's discretion in governing during war- and peacetime.

Chapter 3 examines Taḥt al-Qal'a and Sūq al-Khayl, the two spaces where the 711 protest took place. Through a comparative historical analysis that traces the emergence of citadels and 'citadel zones' in Damascus, Aleppo and Cairo between the 6th/12th and 8th/14th centuries, this chapter argues that the 711 protesters consciously chose to confront the governor in a space designed for first, Ayyubid and later Mamluk performances of military and punitive power. The chapter then discusses how protesting in this space can be interpreted as a symbolic gesture of criticism and dissent.

Chapter 4 begins by analysing the objects carried by the protesters as symbolic references to the Umayyad Mosque and the special political culture tied to this space. It then expands its scope to encompass the leader of the protest, the *khaṭīb* al-Qazwīnī. The involvement of the *khaṭīb* is analysed as a symbolic reference to the mosque, as an expression of a socio-political agency connected to the office of *khaṭīb* and finally as one of al-Qazwīnī's personal strategies for navigating the politics of high office in Damascus.

Chapter 5 compares nine different accounts of the political events of the year 711/1311 in Damascus and Syro-Egypt at large. The chapter compares how each author approaches the 711 protest and the wider political situation of that year. The results of this comparison are then evaluated in the context of the available biographical information about each of the respective authors as well as the general trends in their respective works.

II. Conceptual Background and Thematic Approaches

i. Mamluk Studies beyond dynastic history, 'Cairo centrism' and Mamluk exceptionalism

In chronological terms 'Mamluk Period' or 'Mamluk Era' denote the period between death of the last Ayyubid Sultan al-Malik al-Mu'azzam Tūran Shāh in 648/1250 and the Ottoman conquest of Egypt and Syria in 922/1516–1517. In the period between these two events, Egypt and large parts of Syria³ formed a polity ruled by Cairo-based sultans who were either mamluks (freed military slaves of non-Arab primarily Turkic descent) or descendants of mamluks.⁴ The field of study dedicated to this time and place in history is known today as 'Mamluk Studies'.

This thesis is concerned first, with studying an event in Damascus in 711/1311 approximately fifty years after the city came under the rule of the Mamluk sultans, and second, with related developments in the 7th/13th and the 8th/14th centuries. In terms of chronological and geographical focus, it is therefore firmly entrenched within the scholarly tradition of Mamluk Studies. But what does it mean to practice Mamluk Studies? For David Ayalon, one of the scholars who pioneered the field in the 1940s and 50s, it meant first and foremost to study the Mamluks themselves and their institutions, especially the army.⁵ In recent decades, however, Mamluk Studies has evolved into a much broader discipline concerned with the full breadth of Syro-Egyptian history between the 7th/13th and 10th/16th centuries. By focusing on the interaction between provincial taxpayers and the Mamluk state, this thesis contributes to this general broadening of the field. More specifically, in terms of its scope and methods, it connects with three trends that characterise Mamluk Studies today.

The first trend regards the shift in source material and methodology that accompanied the broadening of the field of Mamluk Studies. The gradual expansion

³ In Mamluk Studies 'Syria' refers to the geographical region which is also known as *bilād al-shām* and not the Syrian Arab Republic of the 20th and 21st centuries. See C. E. Bosworth, J. Lentin, and V. Perthes, 'Al-Shām', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 9*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 261–81, pp. 261–262.

⁴ When studying this period, modern researchers have tended to distinguish between the period of the *Bahrī Mamluk sultans* of Turkic descent, who ruled from 648/1250 to 784/1382, and the period of the *Burjī Mamluk sultans* of Circassian descent, who ruled between 784/1382 and 922/1517. As this thesis is not concerned with the details of this shift, it does not use the terms *Bahrī* and *Burjī*, but rather 'early Mamluk' and 'late Mamluk'.

⁵ See e.g., David Ayalon, 'Studies on the Structure of the Mamluk Army I', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 15, no. 2 (1953): 203–228 + Pt. II (BSOAS 15, no. 3 (1953): 448–476) and Pt. III (BSOAS 16, no. 1 (1954): 57–90); David Ayalon, 'The System of Payment in Mamluk Military Society', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 1, no. 1 (1957): 37–65; David Ayalon, 'The System of Payment in Mamluk Military Society (Concluded)', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 1, no. 3 (1958): 257–96.

beyond dynastic or institutional history and the conversion of Mamluk Studies into a field that covers all available facets of life in the Mamluk polity also included the incorporation of new forms of sources that shed light on more than courtly and military life. The Egyptian annalistic chronicles that once dominated the field and perhaps prompted researchers to focus on lives of sultans and amirs, are today studied in conjunction both with chronicles of a more provincial nature as well as new types of textual sources, such as literary anthologies, chancery manuals, fatwa collections and biographical dictionaries. In addition to this, material sources such as art objects, architecture, coins and archaeological data are also frequently used. In terms of methodology, the field is marked today by a remarkable willingness to combine what Winslow W. Clifford has called ‘the traditional research methods based on philology, chronology and historiography’⁶ with methods from fields as diverse as economics, legal and political history, art history, historical anthropology, archaeology and comparative literature.⁷

This thesis is bound firmly to the traditional source type of the field – historical narratives from chronicles and biographical dictionaries. However, most of them are from Damascus and concerned with local affairs. Moreover, these historical narratives are analysed here in the context of other types of written sources including fatwa-literature, political treatises, topographical descriptions and chancery manuals. In addition to this, material sources including architecture, infrastructure and numismatics are drawn in by way of secondary literature. This combination of diverse source material is analysed through a methodological approach that combines economic, legal and political history with performance theory, urban geography, literary analysis and even palaeography.

The second current trend in Mamluk studies that this thesis connects with regards the issue of geographical focus. An almost exclusive focus on Egypt and Cairo used to be a natural side effect of the focus on sultans and their courtly world. However, the gradual shift towards a broader societal focus and a broader source base has generated an increased awareness of regional differences and stimulated an effort to do away with ‘Cairo centrism’. The number of scholarly works focusing on Syria in the Mamluk

⁶ Winslow W. Clifford, 'Ubi Sumus ? Mamluk History and Social Theory', *Mamluk Studies Review* 1, no. 1 (1997): 45–62, 46.

⁷ The potential of this interplay across disciplinary boundaries has been demonstrated over the course of the last two decades, e.g., in the articles of the journal *Mamluk Studies Review* published by the Middle East Documentation Center at the University of Chicago and the book series *Mamluk Studies* published by the Annemarie Schimmel Kolleg of the University of Bonn.

period is growing, although it is still relatively modest compared to works on Cairo and Egypt. In terms of monographs, Michael Chamberlain's *Knowledge and Social Power in Medieval Damascus* from 1994 still stands out as a ground breaking exploration of the political and social world of Damascus. Within the field of historiographical studies, Li Guo's *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography* from 1998 and Konrad Hirschler's *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors* from 2006 demonstrate the importance of studying the rich chronicle tradition of 7th/13th and 8th/14th century Syria.⁸

By focusing its attention around a specific event in Damascus and a set of sources dominated by Damascene authors, this thesis inscribes itself within this emerging subfield of Mamluk Studies focused on Syria and Damascus. However, because this focus should not be allowed to overshadow the very real cross-regional connectivity that dominated Damascene politics in the early 8th/14th century, a non-local perspective is also brought in at several points. A case in point is Chapter 5, which examines Damascene politics through both Damascene and Egyptian sources. This chapter shows that each set of sources promotes its own form of centrism (Damascene vs. Cairene) that can only be accounted for through cross-regional comparison.

The third trend that informs the thesis is an increasing scepticism about the exceptionality of Syro-Egyptian history between 1250 and 1517 and of the utility of 'Mamluk' as a distinct analytical category. Earlier in 2017, this form of scepticism found its expression in a collaborative volume from the Annemarie Schimmel Kolleg titled *The Mamluk-Ottoman Transition – Continuity and Change in Egypt and Bilād al-Shām in the Sixteenth Century*.⁹ The editors of this volume, Conermann and Şen, argue for the need to replace 'The Mamluk Era' with a broader research framework such as the 'Middle Islamic Period', defined as the period between the 6th/12th and 11th/17th

⁸ Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Li Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography- Al-Yūnīnī's Dhayl Mir'āt Al-Zamān 2 Vols.* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 1998); Konrad Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors* (London: Routledge, 2006). Beyond the world of Anglophone academia, French research on Medieval Syria has existed for much of the 20th century. See, e.g., the works of Jean Sauvaget, or more recently Anne-Marie Eddé and Anne Troadec. In terms of joint research initiatives, the 2015 conference at the Annemarie Schimmel Kolleg 'Between Saladin and Selim the Grim: Syria under Ayyubid and Mamluk Rule' assembled scholars from across the globe who discussed the region of Syria under thematic headings such as religion, archaeology, economy and military history. <https://www.mamluk.uni-bonn.de/mamluk-events/archive/conferences/conference-bilad-al-sham-july-bonn.pdf> (last accessed 20/06 2017).

⁹ Stephan Conermann et al., *The Mamluk-Ottoman Transition – Continuity and Change in Egypt and Bilād Al-Shām in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen (Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2017).

centuries.¹⁰ As they explain, the ‘Middle Islamic Period’ makes it possible to study the Mamluk polity in the context of the pre- and succeeding polities and to study developments ‘for which the establishment or demise of Mamluk rule do not establish an absolute starting block or endpoint’.¹¹ Conermann’s and Şen’s focus is the 10th/16th century, a century that saw the end of Mamluk and the beginning of Ottoman rule. They argue that such a non-dynastic framework shows this period as marked by protracted political and cultural transitions and partial continuities rather than a sharp divide tied specifically to 922/1517, the year of the Ottoman conquest.¹²

We focus here on the beginning rather than the end of the Mamluk Era. However, as previous studies have pointed out, questioning the importance of dynastic divides is equally relevant for the Ayyubid–Mamluk transition in the 7th/13th century.¹³ In the present thesis the importance of the Ayyubid legacy for political culture in the Mamluk period will be highlighted when we turn to the issue of symbolic communication between ruler and ruled in urban space. As Chapter 3 demonstrates, the Mamluks did not invent ceremonial spaces such as the Sūq al-Khayl, where the 711 protest took place, nor did they design the military ceremonies that took place there *ex nihilo*. Rather than *innovation*, the Mamluk methods of asserting their power in the urban landscape were marked by *intensification* and *adaptation* of Zangid and Ayyubid practices that trace back to the 6th/12th century and are related to the emergence of the citadel as the primary locus of urban politics. Therefore, while the present study examines political culture during the early Mamluk period, it does not argue for the existence of a fully separate ‘Mamluk political culture’.

ii. Protests as political events: a framework for analysing the 711 protest

This thesis applies what might be called a ‘bottom-up’ approach to politics and political culture. It starts with a protest in the streets of Damascus and gradually demonstrates

¹⁰ R. Stephen Humphreys uses a similar term, the ‘Islamic Middle Period’, but points to the fragmentation of the Abbasid Empire and the rise of the Buyid Sultans in the 4th/10th century as its beginning and the 10th/16th century rise of the Ottomans and Safavids as its end. R. Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History: A Framework for Inquiry* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2009), 129.

¹¹ Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen, ‘Introduction: A Transitional Point of View’, in *The Mamluk-Ottoman Transition – Continuity and Change in Egypt and Bilād Al-Shām in the Sixteenth Century*, ed. Stephan Conermann and Gül Şen (Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2017), 13–30, 16.

¹² *Ibid.*, 22.

¹³ For example, Michael Chamberlain suggests that it was the horror associated with the imagining of Mamluk slave soldiers usurping power from the Ayyubid Dynasty that prompted 18th century European historians like Edward Gibbon (d. 1794) to distinguish sharply between the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods. Chamberlain, 1994, 44. Chamberlain specifically avoids the conventional periodisation by focusing on the period 1191–1350, i.e., the Ayyubid and early Mamluk periods as a continuum.

how this event connects with the political situation and the forms of symbolic communication that characterised early Mamluk Damascus. At the core of this approach lies the argument that protests are complex and meaningful political events, not simply spontaneous and unconscious outbursts of collective rage. This argument is inspired by several previous studies of protesting in the Mamluk and Ottoman period that are presented here followed by an outline of my own approach.

Since the 1980s, Edward P. Thompson's theory of the 'moral economy' has been frequently used in this type of studies because it proposes a framework for analysing the ideas of protesters outside the paradigm of 20th century capitalism. Thompson, a historian of pre- and early modern England, argues that when city dwellers in 18th century England took to the streets to demand grain and resorted to pillaging mills and bakeries, they were not simply driven by empty bellies but rather by a set of ideas. These ideas, he argues, revolved around a paternalistic vision of the king's moral responsibility to ensure a fairly priced food supply. To describe this set of ideas, Thompson coined the term 'the moral economy', which he defines as:

[...] a traditional view of social norms and obligations, of the proper economic functions of several parties within the community, which taken together can be said to constitute the moral economy of the poor [...]¹⁴

In his study of grain protests in Mamluk Cairo from 1980, Boaz Shoshan borrowed Thompson's approach. Instead of regarding the protesters storming grain storages as hunger-crazed, he interprets their actions as popular appeals to a form of sultanic paternalism, that is, the manifestation of a popular claim about how food ought to be distributed.¹⁵ In 1986, Edmund Burke III also picked up Thompson's concept. Extending the scope beyond subsistence policies, Burke describes what he calls 'the social programme' of 18th century Arab protesters as a sharia variation on 'the moral economy': a set of norms covering all socio-political aspects of pre-modern life from food to criminal punishment inspired by the sharia although not expressed in the legalistic discourse of *fiqh*.¹⁶ In this thesis, I have used Burke's broader reconceptualisation of the 'moral economy' to tackle the problem of how to connect the *behaviour* of the 711 protesters with their own goals and broader sharia-based norms around military taxation.

¹⁴ Edward P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past & Present*, no. 50 (1971): 76–136, 79.

¹⁵ Boaz Shoshan, 'Grain Riots and the 'Moral Economy': Cairo, 1350–1517', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 10, no. 3 (1980): 459–78.

¹⁶ Edmund Burke III, 'Understanding Arab Protest Movements', *Arab Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (1986): 333–345.

With specific regard to the question of *protester behaviour*, this thesis draws inspiration from a number of studies that focus more on the practical acts of protesting and less on its underlying ideological programme. Two scholars of specific importance here are James Grehan and Konrad Hirschler, both of whom have studied protesters' use of violence as a form of symbolic communication. Both argue that pre-modern Arab protesters' use of violence was primarily affirmative (or in Grehan's terminology 'deferential'); by imitating official forms of violence (corporal punishment, execution) they criticised the ruler for not living up to his responsibilities but simultaneously affirmed his legitimacy. Hirschler, moreover, distinguishes between these affirmative acts of imitation and negating acts of transgression where violence beyond the normal official repertoire (burning, corpse-mutilation and desecration of graves) was employed with intent of showing direct opposition to the political order.¹⁷

While the present study is primarily concerned with non-violent protesting practices such as parading and displaying sacred objects, the imitative aspect of these practices will be highlighted through comparisons with official Mamluk ceremonies that make use of some of the same symbols. Moreover, the distinction between affirmative and negating protests will be employed for instance when comparing the 711 protest with 8th/14th century examples of protest through violence and lynching.

In addition, the thesis also draws on a number of studies that analyse protests in their broader political contexts. Here, Lutz Wiederholdt and Ibrahim Mahmood stand for out combining close observations of local violent protest with political developments at the imperial level.¹⁸ In a similar fashion, my thesis also contextualises the 711 protest within the larger framework of early Mamluk fiscal policies and intra-Mamluk power struggles in Damascus and beyond.

To my knowledge, the only scholar who has gone beyond the article format and subjected the phenomenon of protesting in Mamluk Syro-Egypt to the form of multifaceted analysis possible in a monograph is Amina Elbendary. In *Crowds and*

¹⁷ James Grehan, 'Street Violence and Social Imagination in Late-Mamluk and Ottoman Damascus', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35 (2003): 215–236; Konrad Hirschler, 'Riten Der Gewalt: Protest Und Aufruhr in Kairo Und Damaskus (7./13. Bis 10./16. Jahrhundert)', in *Islamwissenschaft Als Kulturwissenschaft, 1: Historische Anthropologie. Ansätze Und Möglichkeiten*, ed. S. Conermann, S. and v. Hees (Schenefeld (Hamburg): EB-Verlag, 2007), 205–233.

See also Fumihiko Hasebe, 'Invocations from the Tops of Minarets : A Popular Uprising and Its Aftermath in Ottoman Cairo, November 1724', *Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko* 63 (2005): 89–105.

¹⁸ Lutz Wiederholdt, 'Legal-Religious Elite , Temporal Authority , and the Caliphate in Mamluk Society : Conclusions Drawn from the Examination of a "Zahiri Revolt" in Damascus in 1386', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31, no. 2 (1999): 203–235; Mahmood Ibrahim, 'The 727 / 1327 Silk Weavers' Rebellion in Alexandria : Religious Xenophobia , Homophobia, or Economic Grievances', *Mamluk Studies Review* 16, 2012, 123–142.

Sultans: Urban Protests Late Medieval Syria and Egypt from 2016, Elbendary presents an extensive examination of 9th/15th century Mamluk history in order to explain why urban protests multiplied over the course of this century. On the basis of an impressively wide-ranging yet focused analysis, she concludes that urban protesting grew in frequency because economic, political, social and cultural transformations since the late 8th/14th century had created a more open political field. Elbendary dismisses the common association of the late Mamluk period with decline and crisis, and argues that the period should be understood instead as one of transformation and flux that put the sultanic system under pressure and allowed the non-elites to enter politics, for example, through protesting.¹⁹

The force of Elbendary's macro-analytical approach is that she is able to challenge a dominant paradigm in the study of late Mamluk history and make a persuasive call for understanding protests as a serious political practice, a call that this thesis heeds. However, the breadth of her conclusions comes at the expense of detail. While she refers recurrently to protesting as a form of negotiation, she never goes into detail about what protesters did and how they formulated their demands through symbolic communication.²⁰

In contrast, my thesis adopts a micro-analytical approach that focuses on one particular protest. While this precludes paradigmatic conclusions akin to those of Elbendary, it makes it possible to observe the relationship between ideas and aims of protesters as they translate into practical acts. Moreover, it makes enables us to analyse how the behaviour of protesters was linked to the broader ceremonial practices and symbolic forms that characterised the period in question.

The studies surveyed above have provided general inspiration for this thesis and some of them are discussed in detail the individual chapters. While I have not followed any one of their approaches to the letter, these studies, in conjunction with the

¹⁹ Amina A. Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans: Urban Protests in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2016). Elbendary's explanatory model is far too wide-ranging to be adequately summarised here. In very general terms, she argues that the Mamluk sultans of the late 8th/14th and 9th/15th centuries responded to decreasing tax revenues caused by the plague and dwindling imports of precious metals caused by regional power shifts by selling state assets and leasing out state functions. While these tactics generated immediate income, they gradually destabilised the sultanate and gave way to a multipolar political field where negotiation through protest became an efficient political tool.

²⁰ In Chapter 6, Elbendary argues that protesters reacted in defense of a 'perceived higher order' or in response to state transgression of 'thin lines' or as a way of 'policing the ruler', but she generally does not explain exactly how this defence or policing translated into practice. See *Ibid.*, Chapter 6.

results of my own research, constitute the basis for the formulation of the following four thematic strands that guide my thesis.

The first thematic strand is *political contingency*. A protest is always a contingent political event that should be examined on two levels: as a geographically and temporally specific response to a particular set of circumstances and as part of a protracted struggle of ideas. This theme is primarily explored in Chapter 2.

The second theme is *multiplicity of symbolic meaning*. While the behaviours of pre-modern protesters can easily be boiled down to a seemingly static inventory of actions, their acts carry dense layers of meaning that are tied to, among other things, contemporary religious practices, collective memory and symbolic stagings of rulership. Through examination and contextualisation of protesters' behaviour, we can bring some these layers to light. This theme is explored in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

The third theme is *complexity of agency*. Even if a protest conforms to a wider pattern, e.g., 'ulamā' at the front, commoners at the rear'²¹, its composition cannot be explained simply as a pre-configured pattern. To be sure, groups like the 'ulamā' did hold a particular intercessionary role across time, but the way they chose to play this role was contingent upon other factors such as their personal background and their position within a local socio-political field. This theme is explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

The fourth and final theme is *partiality of representation*. Medieval Islamic protests are not accessible to the modern observer as empirical phenomena, but as narratives. This means that all conclusions about protesters' behaviour agenda and results must be accompanied by detailed discussion of the lens(es) through which we observe them. This theme is explored in Chapter 5.

Although by no means exhaustive, these four thematic strands constitute what I conceive of as an operational preliminary framework for studying medieval Islamic protests through the prism of narrative sources. However, as stated at the beginning of this section, examination of the 711 protest itself also provides the base for analysing politics and political culture from other and far broader perspectives, most importantly the relationship between state and society and historiography as socio-political practice.

²¹ 'Ulamā' leadership of protests, which we also find in the 711 protest, has been portrayed by some scholars as a more or less static pattern in pre-modern Middle Eastern protesting. See, e.g., André Raymond, *Artisans et Commerçants Au Caire Au XVIIIe Siècle 2 Vols.* (Damascus: Institut Francais de Damas, 1973), vol. 2, 432.

iii. Mamluk politics: from structure to practice

One of the questions that has occupied scholars in Mamluk Studies since the birth of the field is how we should conceive of and study the relationship between the Mamluk sultanate and the society over which it ruled. Since it takes as its point of departure a confrontation between the Mamluk rulers and their Damascene subjects²² over taxation, one of the fundamental aspects of rulership, this thesis also constitutes an exploration of this relationship.²³

The study of the relationship between the Mamluks and their subject populations began in earnest with the work of Ira M. Lapidus in the 1960s. Lapidus studied the social and political life of major Mamluk cities and their rural hinterland through the lens of structural functionalism. His work presents a state-society model characterised by an equilibrium ensured through the steady cooperation between the Mamluk elite and the ‘*ulamā*’.²⁴

In the 1990s, Lapidus’s former student Michael Chamberlain, who was also mentioned earlier, replaced his mentor’s macro-analytical focus on cohesive social groups and inter-group cooperation with a micro-analytical focus on individual actors and intra-group competition. Chamberlain, who draws on Pierre Bourdieu’s post-structuralist sociology of social practice, demonstrates how the Damascene ‘*ulamā*’ consisted of household formations that would compete amongst each other for influence and resources rather than cooperate for the preservation of an overarching social equilibrium.²⁵

In the late 1990s, William W. Clifford argued for a balance between macro-visions of a social order built on shared values *à la* Lapidus and micro-visions of a social-field dominated by self-interested strategic actors *à la* Chamberlain. His proposed solution is a focus on symbolic communication. Using the example of George Herbert Mead’s theory of *symbolic interactionism*, Clifford argues that society essentially consists of

²² I must underline that when using expressions like ‘Damascene subjects’, ‘the Damascenes’ or ‘the civilian population of Damascus’, I am referring to Muslims unless otherwise indicated. Mamluk Damascus had a community of both Christians and Jews, but since almost all of the contemporary narrative sources on Damascus were written by Muslims, these communities remain largely invisible to the modern observer.

²³ Pierre Bourdieu et al. have conceptualised the state as a process of establishing a legitimate monopoly within four areas, one of which is taxation, which necessarily begins as a form of organised robbery. Pierre Bourdieu, Lois J. D. Wacqaunt and Samar Farage, ‘Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field’, *Sociological Theory* 12, no. 1 (1994): 1–18, 5–7.

²⁴ Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1984). For a detailed discussion of the connection between Lapidus and the Talcott Parson’s structural functionalism, see Clifford, 1997, 46–57.

²⁵ Chamberlain, 1994.

‘gestural communication’ between different parties that only works because of mutual recognisability. In other words, even the strategic actor who participates in the ‘social game’ in order to fulfil his own personal agenda must do so through shared symbols that reference a higher social order.²⁶

Clifford strikes this balance in his own doctoral dissertation on the history of the early Mamluk sultanate. Focusing on the Mamluk military class, Clifford argues that the members of the Mamluk military class balanced their own personal interests with a corporate attachment to the principle of *nizām* (literally ‘system’) – a shared moral code that demanded the distribution of state titles and resources according to seniority.²⁷ Clifford conceptualises the early Mamluk period as a series of contained struggles between adherents of *nizām* and those who wished to upend this moral code. He argues that these struggles were contained because they took the form of communication through mutually interpretable gestures of symbolic violence (e.g., military theatrics or temporary exile) that prevented full-scale bloodshed.

This thesis does not focus exclusively on intra-Mamluk power struggles, nor does it subscribe to the theories of G. H. Mead. However, it emphasises the role of symbolic communication and mutual recognisability of symbols in politics. In practical terms, it employs Charles Tilly’s concept of *contentious repertoires* to place the behaviour of the 711 protesters within a wider register of recognisable symbolic gestures shared between the sultanate and civilian society.²⁸

Since the 1990s, the shift towards ‘politics as social practice’ has further intensified. One example is the work of Jo Van Steenberg, who demonstrates how the political field in the middle decades of the 8th/14th century was dominated not by *the legitimate power* vested in the sultan but the *effective power* of competing amirs, who managed to extend their patronage beyond their immediate household and take control of the realm. The resulting constellations of power, he argues, only existed temporarily

²⁶ Clifford, 1997, 61–62.

²⁷ Winslow W. Clifford, *State Formation and the Structure of Politics in Mamluk Syro-Egypt, 648–741 A.H/1250–1340 C.E.*, ed. S. Conermann (Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2013). The idea of an underlying system of ‘seniority’ had dominated Mamluk studies for decades in the form of the concept of generational *khushdāshiyya* (solidarity among former barrack comrades) and *ustādhiyya* (loyalty to the master). In *State Formation*, Clifford, who criticised this concept as ‘rigid and institutionalized’, decreases the emphasis on specific generational ties and argues that Mamluk Amirs were not lodged in an all-out generational war, but supported an overarching system of resource distribution. For a discussion of *khushdāshiyya*, see also Clifford, 1997, 55.

²⁸ Charles Tilly, ‘Contentious Repertoires in Great Britain, 1758–1834’, *Social Science History* 17, no. 2 (1993): 253–280.

until conflict arose and new patronage constellation formed.²⁹ In recent years, Steenbergen has moved from privileging effective networks of power over static state structures to asking whether the Mamluk state as structure existed at all. He argues that what appears to modern historians as an objective Mamluk state positioned vis-à-vis society is in fact a constellation of *the structural effects* of multiple social practices (e.g., social reproduction, elite integration and political distinction). While these practices give off the semblance of coherency and structure, Steenbergen argues that they should be understood as processes within a field of power relations that constantly fluctuate between uni- and multipolarity.³⁰

This thesis does use terms like *Mamluk state* and *state resources*. However, it maintains a constant focus on the performative and processual aspects of statehood rather than on static structures. Each chapter presents detailed examinations of how *the state*, understood as the amirs and sultans who controlled the military and bureaucratic systems, ‘performed’ their claim to power and statehood, for example, by developing and monopolising specific sections of Damascene urban space or by managing the content of the Friday sermon. A specific focus is placed on how these performances were received, and at times co-opted by the Damascene people, as happened during the 711 protest, where the Monday inspection parade, a weekly recurring practice of marking the distinct identity of the Mamluk army, was interrupted.

By combining attention to symbolic communication with continuous focus on the processual aspect of Mamluk politics, this thesis is part of a continuous emphasis on more complex and comprehensive models for understanding the Mamluk state and its relationship with subject populations like the inhabitants of Damascus.

iv. Mamluk historians: from ‘transmitters’ to ‘actors’

Recent decades have also seen a significant change in the way modern scholars understand the practice of writing history in the Islamic Middle Period, hereunder the Mamluk period. This thesis is shaped by this change and seeks to add to our understanding of the nature of the work of medieval historians through the examination of a range of 8th/14th chronicles and biographical dictionaries.

²⁹ Jo Van Steenbergen, *Order Out of Chaos: Patronage, Conflict and Mamluk Socio-Political Culture* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 2006).

³⁰ Jo Van Steenbergen, "'Mamlukisation" between Social Theory and Social Practice: An Essay on Reflexivity, State Formation, and the Late Medieval Sultanate of Cairo', ASK Working Papers (Bonn, Annemarie Schimmel Kolleg, 2015).

In the 1950s, Franz Rosenthal described the chroniclers of the post-Abbasid period as mere ‘transmitters of facts’ in whose works researchers could not hope to find originality but merely redacted versions of earlier texts that could be identified through source-criticism.³¹ Criticising Rosenthal’s rather pessimistic conclusion, Konrad Hirschler explains that Middle Islamic historiographical research from the late 1990s became increasingly marked by attention to the voice and agenda of medieval historians:

This interest in the chronicler’s voice included an interest in how an authorial decision was made to organise events and of how to endow them with new meanings. The increased textual room for manoeuvre allowed the chroniclers to craft texts more individually and a comparison of works that report the same events in the Middle Period suffices to show how these authors used this room.³²

Hirschler’s own monograph, *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors* (2006), provides an illuminating example of this approach by comparing two accounts of the life of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (d. 589/1193) written by two 7th/13th century Damascene chroniclers, Abū Shāmā al-Maḡdisī (d. 665/1268/) and Ibn al-Wāṣil (697/1298). Hirschler concludes that these two authors crafted two different narratives that contain, respectively, *a reformist* and *an accommodationist* view of ideal rule. In other words, these authors were writing political philosophy in annalistic form.³³ Hirschler is far from the only scholar to have challenged Rosenthal’s approach in the last decades. The attention to historiography as a narrative craft can be seen in studies by scholars such as Boaz Shoshan and Tayyeb Hibri, albeit they are both concerned with works from the Abbasid rather than the Ayyubid and Mamluk eras.³⁴

As for the treatment of Middle Islamic historiography as a form of political thought, another example is presented by Tarif Khalidi in his *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (1994). In chapter 5, titled ‘History and *Siyasa*’, Khalidi launches a wider discussion of how the historiography of the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods reflects a divergence between *sharia*- and *siyāsa*-oriented historians.³⁵ This divergence overlaps

³¹ Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1952), 48–58.

³² Konrad Hirschler, ‘Studying Mamluk Historiography: From Source-Criticism to the Cultural Turn’, in *Ubi Sumus? Quo Vademus?: Mamluk Studies—State of the Art*, ed. S. Conermann (Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2013).

³³ For the discussion of historiography as political thought see Hirschler, 2006, Chapter 6.

³⁴ Boaz Shoshan, *The Poetics of Islamic Historiography: Deconstructing Tabari’s History* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 2004); Tayeb El-Hibri, *Parable and Politics in Early Islamic History: The Rashidun Caliphs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

³⁵ Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). For this model, see 195.

somewhat with Hirschler's distinction between *reformism* and *accommodationism*, but unlike Hirschler, Khalidi adopts a deductive approach focused on showing how each author fits in to the two pre-established categories of *sharia*- and *siyāsa*-oriented historiography. While this approach certainly makes it possible for Khalidi to include a greater number of authors and thus present a wider picture of the historiographical landscape of the 7th/13th–9th/15th centuries, it also prevents him from engaging with the individual author and his text in the detailed fashion which characterises Hirschler's work.

This thesis approaches the sources for the 711 protest and its broader political context primarily from the angles proposed by Hirschler and Khalidi, thereby adding further weight to the argument that studying the socio-political history of the Mamluk and other Medieval Islamic societies must include discussion of how historical events are turned into narrative, by whom and for what ends.

III. The Sources of the Present Thesis

As stated above, this study relies primarily on six accounts of the 711 protest drawn from 8th/14th century narrative sources. This section introduces these sources and the authors, and also presents three sources that are used to contextualise the protest within the wider political landscape of 711/1311.

Four of the six narratives of the 711 protest used here are written by members of what Li Guo calls 'the Syrian school of medieval Muslim historical writing'³⁶, which he claims existed between the first half of the 7th/13th and the second half of the 8th/14th centuries. Since the notion of a Syrian school itself is also discussed at length in this thesis, it is worth noting some general features about it before introducing the individual members.

The chroniclers identified as part of this school were typically members of the Damascene branch of either the Shāfi'ī or Ḥanbalī law school. More importantly, they were all *muḥaddithūn*, scholars whose primary field of study was the science of *ḥadīth*. Their connection through *ḥadīth* studies was reinforced by personal connections and collaboration within the field of historical writing; thus we see these authors appearing as sources as well as compilers or editors of the works of their colleagues. Moreover, the collegial spirit was cultivated through book titles, as they often named their own works

³⁶ Li Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography—Al-Yūnīnī's Dhayl Mir'āt Al-Zamān Vol. I & II* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 1998), vol. 1, 83. Similarly, Stephen Humphreys calls it a 'long-lived school of Damascene historians'. See Humphreys, 1991, 241.

as continuations (sing. *dhayl*, pl. *dhuyūl*) of the works of their predecessors, thus embedding in their works a sense of continuity across generations of scholars.

From a formal perspective, this group of authors organised their works as variations on a shared model that combined the annalistic scheme of the classical *tārīkh* (e.g., al-Tabarī's *Tārīkh al-Rusūl wa-al-Mulūk*) with the biographical scheme of a work of the *ṭabaqāt* genre (pl. of *ṭabaqa* – generation). In the works from the Syrian school, each year is typically divided into a *ḥawādith* (events) and a *wafayāt* (obituaries) section.³⁷ This historiographical model was originally used by the 6th/12th century by Ḥanbalī jurist and *muḥaddith*, 'Abd al-Raḥmān Abū al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) in his universal history *al-Muntazam fī Tārīkh al-Mulūk wa-al-Ummam*. The model was transferred to Syria by his maternal grandson Yūsuf ibn 'Abd Allāh Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī (d. 654/1256), a Ḥanbalī and later Ḥanafī scholar who moved from Baghdad to Damascus. Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī used his uncle's organisational principle in his own universal chronicle *Mir'āt al-Zamān fī Tārīkh al-A'yān*, which then became a model for later Damascene chroniclers.³⁸ Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī is regarded as part of the first generation of the Syrian school, along with the Shāfi'ī *muḥaddith* Shihāb al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ismā'īl Abū Shāma al-Maqdisī (d. 665/1267). Two chronicles from Abū Shāma's hand have come down to us: *Kitāb al-Rawḍatayn fī Akhbār al-Dawlatayn al-Nūriyya wa-al-Ṣālihiyya*, a chronicle of the lives and deeds of Nūr al-Dīn Zangī (d. 569/1174) and Salāḥ al-Dīn ibn Ayyūb (d. 589/1193), and *al-Dhayl 'alā al-Rawḍatayn*, a diary-like chronicle of local events and scholarly life in Damascus running from 590/1194 to 665/1267.

While both Sibṭ ibn al-Jawzī's and Abū Shāma's works are used occasionally in the coming chapters, the main focus is placed on members of the 2nd and 3rd generation of the Syrian school.

i. Al-Yūnīnī's *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān* & al-Jazarī's *Ḥawādith al-Zamān*

The source for the introductory description of the 711 protest presented in Section I is introduced here along with another chronicle because recent scholarship has shown the two to be directly connected. Since they are two of the most important sources for this thesis, the issue of their connectivity deserves to be addressed at length.

³⁷ George Makdisi has argued that medieval *muḥaddithūn* wrote 'research notes' that recorded events and the deaths of scholars in order to control the validity of *isnād* (chains of transmission). According to Makdisi, some of these notes were transformed into what he calls '*tārīkh 'alā al-sinīn*' – chronicles arranged by year where each year is divided into a separate *ḥawādith* and a *wafayāt* section. Makdisi, 1986, 185.

³⁸ Guo, 1998 vol. 1, 83.

The chronicle titled *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān* is ascribed to Quṭb al-Dīn Mūsā ibn Muḥammad al-Yūnīnī (d. 726/1325-26). Al-Yūnīnī was a Ḥanbalī *muḥaddith* and chronicler who was born in Damascus in 640/1242 into a family of prominent Ḥanbalīs from the village of Yunīn near Baalbek in modern day Lebanon. Throughout his life, al-Yūnīnī worked on an abridgement of Ṣibt Ibn Jawzī's *Mir'āt al-Zamān fī Tārīkh al-A'yān* and hereafter wrote a continuation of it that became the *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān*. Like its precursor, the *Dhayl* is an annalistic chronicle arranged according to the *ḥawādith/wafayāt* scheme.

At the time of my research for this thesis, I did not have access to the combined edition of Ṣibt Ibn Jawzī's *Mir'āt al-Zamān* and al-Yūnīnī's *Dhayl* that was published in Beirut in 2013. Therefore, I have relied on two earlier partial editions of the *Dhayl*. First, I consulted the Hyderabad edition from 1954, which covers the years 654/1256–670/1272.³⁹ Since this edition does not cover the year 711, it is used primarily for short references and verification of information from other sources.

The second edition of the *Dhayl* is, however, much more central to the thesis. It contains a text which has been regarded as the final part of al-Yūnīnī's *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān*. It covers the years 697/1297–711/1312 and was published in Abu Dhabi in 2007 under the title *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān: Tārīkh al-Sanawāt m1312–1297/ h711–697*.⁴⁰ This edition of the *Dhayl* contains the longest and most detailed account of the tax conflict and protest in Damascus in 711/1311 that I have been able to identify.

However, I subscribe to Li Guo's theory that the authorship of the 691–702 and 702–711 sections of the *Dhayl* is questionable at best.⁴¹ With regard to the 691–702 section of the *Dhayl*, Guo argues that this part of the chronicle consists of a al-Yūnīnī's *synthesis* of the corresponding section of the *Tārīkh Ḥawādith al-Zamān wa-Anbā'ihī wa-Wafayāt al-Akābir wa-al-A'yān min Abnā'ihī*, an annalistic chronicle covering the years 586/1191–738/1338 written by Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Abū Bakr al-Jazarī (738/1338), a Shāfi'ī *muḥaddith* and chronicler who lived his whole life in Damascus. Two sections from al-Jazarī's *Ḥawādith* that cover the years 689–699 and

³⁹ Quṭb al-Dīn Mūsā ibn Muḥammad al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān Min Sanat 654 Ilā Sanat 670 H*, ed. N. N. (Hyderabad, 1954).

⁴⁰ Quṭb al-Dīn Mūsā ibn Muḥammad al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān: Tārīkh al-Sanawāt m1312–1297/ h711–697*, ed. Ḥamza A. 'Abbās (Abu Dhabi: Hay' at Abū Zaby lil-Thaqāfa wa-al-Turāth, al-Majma' al-Thaqāfi, 2007).

⁴¹ For Guo's discussion of this issue, see Li Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography—Al-Yūnīnī's Dhayl Mir'āt Al-Zamān 2 Vols.* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 1998), vol. 1, 55–59 and Li Guo, 'Mamluk Historiographic Studies: The State of the Art', *Mamluk Studies Review* 1 (1997): 15–43, 38.

725–738 have come down to us. This thesis makes recurrent use of the combined edition of these sections published in Beirut in 1998.⁴²

As for the final section of the *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān*, which covers the years 702–711 and includes the lengthy description of the 711 protest, Guo argues that this section was almost certainly written by al-Jazarī without al-Yūnīnī's involvement. Guo argues that this section of al-Jazarī's work must have been mistakenly attributed to al-Yūnīnī after both authors had died. According to Guo, this mistake is most likely a result of the fact that they had the same editor and copyist, 'Alam al-Dīn al-Qāsim al-Birzālī (d. 738/1338). Al-Birzālī was a lifelong acquaintance of both authors, who also frequently cite him as a source. Moreover, according to Guo, he is the person who most likely supplied al-Yūnīnī with al-Jazarī's draft for the 691–702 section. Guo suggests that al-Birzālī might have confused the two manuscripts; either that, or a later scribe copying from al-Birzālī's manuscripts could have made the mistake.⁴³

Guo's conclusions about the *Dhayl* have been incorporated here in the following manner: Al-Jazarī is regarded as the author behind the 702–711 section of the *Dhayl*, including the narrative of the 711 protest; whenever the author of this section of the *Dhayl* is mentioned in the main text he therefore identified as 'al-Jazarī*'. Meanwhile, the authorship of the 691–702 section of the *Dhayl*, which includes the lengthy description of the Mongol occupation of Damascus in 699–700/1299–1300, is regarded as shared between al-Yūnīnī and al-Jazarī, and the author is identified in the main text as 'al-Yūnīnī/al-Jazarī'. In the footnotes, however, I refer to the *Dhayl* simply as 'al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, x', in keeping with the 2007 Abu Dhabi edition and in order to avoid confusion between the *Dhayl* and the 1998 Beirut edition of al-Jazarī's *Hawādith*.

ii. Al-Birzālī's *al-Muqtafī 'alā al-Rawḍatayn*

Besides being the editor and copyist of the al-Yūnīnī and al-Jazarī, 'Alam al-Dīn Qāsim al-Birzālī was a *muḥaddith* and a chronicler in his own right. As a historian, he had extensive influence and is quoted numerous times by contemporaries and successors in and outside Damascus; his colleagues call him both 'the historian of the age' and 'the historian of Islam'.⁴⁴

⁴² Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Abū Bakr al-Jazarī, *Tārīkh Hawādith al-Zamān wa-Anbā'ihī wa-Wafayāt al-Akābir wa-al-A'yān Min Abnā'ihī 3 Vols.*, ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmūrī (Ṣaydā - Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, 1998).

⁴³ Guo, 1998, vol. 1, 58.

⁴⁴ See al-Dhahabī, *Dhayl 'alā tārīkh al-Islām*, 449 and Guo, 1998 I, 78 n. 183.

Al-Birzālī began studying *ḥadīth* with his father as a child in the 670s/1270s. During much of his adult life, he held the chair of *ḥadīth* studies at the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Nūriyya and Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Nafisiyya in Damascus.⁴⁵ Although we know from other sources that he authored several works, the only one that has come down to us is *al-Muqtafī ‘alā kitāb al-Rawḍatayn*, a chronicle of his own lifetime focused on Damascus, which is also referred to in Medieval sources as *al-Muqtafī* or *Tārīkh al-Birzālī*.⁴⁶ It is in this work that we find al-Birzālī’s account of the 711 protest that is used throughout this thesis.

Even though the title would have us believe that it is a continuation of Abū Shāma’s *al-Rawḍatayn*⁴⁷, *al-Muqtafī* is in fact a continuation of Abū Shāma’s other chronicle, the diary-like *Dhayl ‘alā al-Rawḍatayn*. Al-Birzālī states that he decided after having read and copied Abū Shāma’s *Dhayl* to continue it by writing the *al-Muqtafī*.⁴⁸ The work thus begins with 665/1267, the year of Abū Shāma’s death and coincidentally also the year of al-Birzālī’s birth. It seems to have ended with 738/1338, the year of al-Birzālī’s own death, although the 729–738/1329–1338 section has only survived in the form of quotations in other works.⁴⁹ In thematic terms, the *al-Muqtafī* is similar to Abū Shāma’s *Dhayl*: it is concerned with daily life in Damascus and the careers and deeds of Damascene scholars, not rulers.

iii. Ibn Kathīr’s *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya fī al-Tārīkh*

Ismā‘īl Ibn ‘Umar Ibn Kathīr (d. 773/1373) was a Damascene Shāfi‘īte who authored numerous works on history, biographies, jurisprudence and theology. This thesis makes use of his universal history, *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya fī al-Tārīkh*.⁵⁰ This multi-volume work covers history from creation and ends with 772, two years before the author’s

⁴⁵ ‘Abd al-Qādir ibn Muḥammad al-Nu‘aymī, *al-Dāris fī Tārīkh al-Madāris 2 Vols.*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, n.d.), vol. 1, 83.

⁴⁶ ‘Alam al-Dīn al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Birzālī, *Muqtafī ‘alā al-Rawḍatayn al-Ma‘rūf Bi-Tārīkh al-Birzālī 4 vols.*, ed. ‘Umar A. S. Tadmurī (Saydā - Beirut: al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣriyya, 2006).

⁴⁷ *Muqtafī* is derived from the root ‘q f w’ – to follow. Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. M. Cowan (New York: Spoken Language Services, 1994), 915.

⁴⁸ Muriel Rouabah, 'Une Édition Inattendue: Le Ta’rīkh D’al-Birzālī’, *Arabica* 57, no. 2 (2010): 309–318, 310.

⁴⁹ The printed edition of Tadmurī is based on two manuscripts from Istanbul and Leiden that cover the years 665/1268 through 720/1320. After this, Tadmurī inserts a short appendix consisting of Birzālī quotes from other works covering parts of the period 721–729/1321–1329. In this thesis, al-Birzālī’s *al-Muqtafī* is used primarily as a source for the events of the year 711/1311; a thorough discussion of the section 720–729/1320–1329 section is beyond the scope of this presentation. For Tadmurī’s explanation, see al-Birzālī, *Muqtafī* vol. 1, 121. See also Rouabah, 2010, 316.

⁵⁰ Abū al-Fidā’ Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Umar ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya fī al-Tārīkh 20 pts. in 11 Vols.* (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2010).

death. The vast *al-Bidāya* contains several theological/ideological trajectories that have been mapped by modern scholars. This thesis is only concerned with the part of *al-Bidāya* that covers the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries, where Ibn Kathīr maintains a continuous focus on event in Damascus and the deaths of his Damascene compatriots. In these sections, he draws on the earlier generations of the Syrian school, quoting from both Abū Shāma, al-Yūnīnī and al-Jazarī. His primary source, however, is al-Birzālī, whose work he quotes extensively when writing about the first four decades of the 8th/14th century. Ibn Kathīr’s connection to al-Birzālī and his work was so strong that he even calls the 738–768/1338–1368 section of *al-Bidāya* a *dhayl* of al-Birzālī’s work.⁵¹ As for the section of the *al-Bidāya* that overlaps with al-Birzālī’s *al-Muqtafī* (i.e., the years 665–738/1267–1338), Ibn Kathīr uses al-Birzālī’s work extensively with and without naming him as source. One example of this is Ibn Kathīr’s description of the 711 protest that appears to be a slightly extended adaptation of al-Birzālī’s version.

iv. Al-Dhahabī’s *Dhayl al-‘Ibar*

Along with Ibn Kathīr, al-Dhahabī (d. 747/1347) can be regarded as the third generation of the *muḥaddith* chroniclers of the Syrian school. Al-Dhahabī worked for most of his life as the *shaykh* of ḥadīth studies at the Madrasa of Umm Sālīḥ in Damascus.⁵² As a historian, al-Dhahabī is most famous for his *Tārīkh al-Islām wa-Wafayāt al-Mashāhīr wa-al-a‘lām*, a history of Islam divided into *ḥawādith* and *wafayāt* starting with Muhammad and ending with the year 700/1299–1300. Al-Dhahabī later wrote a *Dhayl* for this work that ends in 750/1349–1350.⁵³ However, this continuation consists almost exclusively of obituaries of Damascene scholars, which makes it largely irrelevant as a source for events. Therefore, this thesis makes only occasional use of *Tārīkh al-Islām* and the associated *Dhayl* for referencing, while another of al-Dhahabī’s works is used as a source for the 711 protest. The work in question is *Dhayl al-‘Ibar fī Khabar Man Ghabar* – a short account of events and obituaries from the 1st half of the 8th/14th century which al-Dhahabī wrote as a continuation of his own works on broader Islamic history called *al-‘Ibar fī Khabar Man Ghabar*.⁵⁴

⁵¹ See *al-Bidāya* vol. 8, Pt. 16, 285 and Mirza, 2012, 103–105.

⁵² Mirza, 2012, 38.

⁵³ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Dhayl Tārīkh al-Islām Lil-Imām al-Ḥāfiẓ Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī*, ed. Māzen Bin Sālīm Bāwazīr (Riyyad: Dār al-Mughnī lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī‘, 1998). Since al-Dhahabī died in 747/1347, this *Dhayl* must have been taken over by someone else at some point.

⁵⁴ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, 'Dhayl Al-‘Ibar fī Khabar Man Ghabar', in *al-‘Ibar fī Khabar Man Ghabar + al-Dhuyūl (al-Dhahabī - al-Ḥusaynī) 4 Vols.*, ed. Abū Hājir Muḥammad al-Sa‘īd b. Basyūnī Zaghilūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1985), vol. 4, 3–118. As the title of the book

Like the *Tārīkh al-Islām*, *al-‘Ibar* is composed of short *ḥawādith* and extensive *wafayāt* sections and also ends in 700/1299–1300.⁵⁵ However, unlike the *Dhayl Tārīkh al-Islām*, the *Dhayl al-‘Ibar* includes both events and obituaries and covers the years 700–740. The description of the 711 protest found in the *Dhayl al-‘Ibar*, like the one found in Ibn Kathīr’s *al-Bidāya*, appears to be an adapted version of al-Birzālī’s account from *al-Muqtafi*.

v. Al-Ṣafadī’s *A ‘yān al-‘Aṣr wa-A ‘wān al-Naṣr*

While the bureaucrat and litterateur Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī (d. 1363/764) was connected with the Syrian school, we cannot strictly speaking consider him a member of it. Al-Ṣafadī was born in the Syrian city of Safad and studied and worked in different cities in Syria and Egypt throughout his life. In his youth he studied with the *‘ulamā’* of Damascus, identified as a Shāfi‘īte and remained in contact with scholars such as al-Birzālī and al-Dhahabī all his life. However, instead of becoming a professional scholar, he entered the ranks of the chancery clerks and worked in the chanceries of Safad, Cairo and Damascus.

Al-Ṣafadī’s literary oeuvre is extensive – it spans several genres – but he is most famous for his biographical dictionaries. The first is *al-Wāfi bil-Wafayāt*, a work of some 5500 entries spanning Islamic history from the Prophet Muḥammad until al-Ṣafadī’s own day. The second is *A ‘yān al-‘Aṣr wa-A ‘wān al-Naṣr*, a shorter work of 1800 entries focused solely on his contemporaries.⁵⁶ The *A ‘yān al-‘Aṣr* constitutes a vast gallery of the personalities who dominated the first half of the 14th/8th century in the fields of scholarship, administration, war and politics. Moreover, his biographies are not simply repositories of biographical facts; each biography is a condensed literary narrative that includes vivid descriptions of situations in the life of the biographee. The entry from the *A ‘yān* used most extensively in this thesis is the biography of Governor Karāy, the man responsible for extracting the 711 tax. The biography includes a description of the 711 protest that borrows from both al-Jazarī* and al-Birzālī.

suggests, there is more than one *Dhayl* of al-‘Ibar. In this edition, al-Dhahabī’s own *Dhayl* is followed by one written by a scholar named Abū Maḥāsīn al-Ḥusaynī al-Dimashqī (d. 765/1365) that ends with the year 764.

⁵⁵ al-Dhahabī states that he wrote *al-‘Ibar* as an abridgement of the *Tārīkh*, but closer examination shows that *al-‘Ibar* contains information not found in the *Tārīkh*, and vice-versa. See al-Dhahabī, *al-‘Ibar*, vol. 1, page marked ‘ç’.

⁵⁶ Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *A ‘yān al-‘Aṣr wa-A ‘wān al-Naṣr 6 Vols.*, ed. ‘Alī Abū Zayd et al. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1998).

vi. Al-Nuwayrī's *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab*

Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad al-Nuwayrī (d. 732/1332) came from a professional background similar to that of al-Ṣafaḍī. He was a bureaucrat who worked for the Mamluk treasury in different parts of Egypt and Syria. His last appointment was as *nāẓir al-jaysh* (inspector of the army, in practice the inspector of the distribution of fiefs to the army) in Tripoli, a post from which he retired in 716/1316 in order to dedicate his attention to writing.⁵⁷ Al-Nuwayrī authored a work called *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab*, which includes a description of the 711 protest and other events in Damascus around that time.⁵⁸ The *Nihāya* is not a chronicle in the ordinary sense but an encyclopedia containing knowledge that al-Nuwayrī deemed relevant to the learned bureaucrat. This knowledge is divided into five disciplines (*funūn*): cosmology, human biology, fauna, flora and history. In the section on history, which takes up far more space than the other four disciplines combined, al-Nuwayrī presents a dynastic history of the known world, ending with the history of the Mamluk Sultanate up to 721/1321.⁵⁹ Unlike the authors of the Syrian school, al-Nuwayrī does not use the annalistic model or the *ḥawādith/wafayāt* scheme; instead, he arranges his narrative by event. Al-Nuwayrī was obviously acquainted with the works produced by the Syrian school; his account of the 711 protest draws heavily on the one provided by al-Jazarī*.

Apart from the six authors whose accounts of the 711 protest are used throughout this thesis, we must note three additional authors who are all from Egypt and tied to the military and the court rather than to scholarly milieus or the bureaucracy. These authors do not provide any information about the 711 protest, but elaborate on the wider political context of the protest that is sometimes omitted, particularly in the Damascene sources. They are used primarily in Chapter 5.

vii. Ibn al-Dawādārī's *Kanz al-Durar*

The first of these Egyptian chroniclers is Abū Bakr ibn ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-Dawādārī (d. after 736/1336), who was the son of a Mamluk officer and himself a holder of a military

⁵⁷ M. Chapoutot-Remadi, 'Al-Nuwayrī', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 8*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 156–60.

⁵⁸ Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab 33 Pts. in 15 Vols.*, ed. Najīb M. Fawwāz et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2004).

⁵⁹ Chapoutot-Remadi, 1995, 158–159.

appointment. Ibn al-Dawādārī's chronicle *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmi' al-Ghurar*⁶⁰ covers the history of the central Islamic lands from the 4th/10th century, ending in 736/1336. This work is annalistically organised, but al-Dawādārī often disregards the division between two years for the sake of presenting a continuous narrative. In the context of this thesis, the most valuable aspect of Ibn al-Dawādārī's chronicle is the fact that the author claims to have been stationed in Damascus along with his father from 710/1310. Therefore, he constitutes the only direct observer of the events pertaining to Sayf al-Dīn Karāy's governorate and arrest apart from the local chroniclers affiliated with the Syrian school.

viii. Baybars al-Manṣūrī's *Kitāb al-Tuḥfa al-Mulūkiyya Fi al-Dawla al-Turkiyya*

The next Egyptian whose chronicle is used is the Mamluk Amir Baybars al-Manṣūrī (d. 725/1325). Baybars al-Manṣūrī was a high ranking Mamluk officer originally pertaining to the guard of the sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (d. 689/1290). He continued to hold military appointments in the army under the successors of his master. In 711/1311, al-Manṣūrī was appointed to the office of viceroy of Egypt by the Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad; however, he was deposed from this post and incarcerated the following year due to accusations of treason. Parallel to his military and political career, Baybars al-Manṣūrī had a keen interest in history; this thesis refers to his short chronicle of the Mamluk Empire ending in 711/1311, *Kitāb al-Tuḥfa al-Mulūkiyya fī al-Dawla Al-Turkiyya*.⁶¹ The relevance of al-Manṣūrī's work in the present context is primarily related to the fact that it contains a vivid description of the political situation in Cairo around 711/1311.

xi. Al-'Aynī's *'Iqd al-Jumān/al-Yūsufī's Nuzhat al-Nāẓir*

The last chronicle presented here is the work of the Ḥanafī jurist and chronicler Badr al-Dīn al-'Aynī (d. 1453/855), *'Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān*.⁶² Al-'Aynī was born in northern Syria but settled in Cairo where he commanded several offices, including the

⁶⁰ Abū Bakr ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmi' al-Ghurar 9 Vols.*, ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Cairo: Hans Robert Roemer, 1971).

⁶¹ Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Kitāb al-Tuḥfa al-Mulūkiyya fī Al-Dawla Al-Turkiyya: Tārīkh Dawlat al-Mamālik al-Baḥriyya fī al-Fatra Min 648–711 Hijriyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd Šāliḥ Ḥamdān (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyya al-Lubnāniyya, 1987).

⁶² Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-'Aynī, *'Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān 5 Vols. (647–712 AH)*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyya, 2010).

post of *muhtasib* (market inspector) and Ḥanafī chief judge.⁶³ While al-‘Aynī’s work is referenced occasionally throughout this thesis for corroboration of information from other sources, our primary interest in the *Iqd* relates to the fact that it gives us partial access to an earlier work: an early 8th/14th century chronicle of the rule of al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, *Nuzhat al-Nāzir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir*, which was written by an Egyptian officer in the auxiliary forces by the name of Mūsa Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Yaḥyā al-Yūsufī (d. after 755/1355). The *Nuzha* was circulated anonymously, most likely because it contained a scathing critique of al-Nāṣir.⁶⁴ This critical approach makes the account of the events of 711/1311 in *Nuzha* an interesting alternative to the accounts of al-Manṣūrī and Ibn al-Dawādārī, both of which are very positive towards the sultan.

The *Nuzha* is now lost, but 9th/15th century chroniclers such as Al-‘Aynī had access to it. Al-‘Aynī does not seem to have known the identity of the author behind the *Nuzha*, but when he cites it, and he does so extensively, he calls his source *ṣāhib kitāb sīrat al-Nāṣir* (the master of the biography of al-Nāṣir) *ṣāhib al-Nuzha* (the master of the *al-Nuzha*) or *al-rāwī* (the narrator). By collating the few surviving passages of al-Yūsufī’s *Nuzha* with the corresponding sections of al-‘Aynī’s *Iqd*, Donald P. Little has concluded that all of these monikers refer to al-Yūsufī, and that al-‘Aynī’s has a habit of quoting long passages from him without introducing significant changes.⁶⁵

In addition to these nine sources, all of which are used extensively, this thesis makes occasional use of a long list of other primary sources spread over different genres, including chronicles, fatwa collections, political treatises, topographical works, chancery manuals and biographical dictionaries. Since each of these sources is used on a limited scale, they are introduced briefly as they are brought up in each chapter.

⁶³ William Marçais, 'Al-‘Aynī', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 1*, ed. H. A. R. Gibb et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), 790–91.

⁶⁴ Donald P. Little, 'The Recovery of a Lost Source for Bahri Mamluk History: Al-Yūsufī's *Nuzhat al-Nāzir Fi Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir*', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, no. 1 (1974): 42–55.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 43–44.

IV. Transliteration Table

ا = ā / a

ب = b

ت = t

ث = th

ج = j

ح = ḥ

خ = kh

د = d

ذ = dh

ر = r

ز = z

س = s

ش = sh

ص = ṣ

ض = ḍ

ط = ṭ

ظ = ḏ

ع = ʿ

غ = gh

ف = f

ق = q

ك = k

ل = l

م = m

ن = n

ه = h

و = ū / w

ي = ī / y

ى = ā

ة = t (only in idāfa)

ء = ʾ (excluded at beginning of word)

Diphthongs:

ي + َ = -ay

و + َ = -aw

Fem. nisba:

يَّة = -iyya

Chapter 2 – The 711 protest: making sense of a Monday’s events

I. Introduction

The tax protest that took place in Sūq al-Khayl on the 13th of Jumādā I 711/27th of September 1311 stands out as one of the best described processes of negotiation between a ruling figure and a large group of civilians in Damascus during 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries. In fact, it is the only regular protest march in the city during this period that is described in more than a few lines and by more than one or two chroniclers. Thanks to the accounts of al-Jazarī* (d. 738/1338), al-Birzālī (738/1338), al-Dhahabī (d. 748/1349), Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), al-Nuwayrī (733/1333) and al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1364), which were presented in the previous chapter, this case provides us with an exceptional opportunity to explore the practical negotiations between civilians and their rulers, including their use of symbolic communication.⁶⁶ This is, in short, what we will do in the present chapter: We begin with a close examination of the protest in its immediate local context, we analyse and interpret the protesters’ use of symbolic objects and we then contextualise the protest within the wider history of early Mamluk taxation.

The 711 protest has attracted a few scattered references in the scholarly literature to date.⁶⁷ Most of these references have focused on the three symbolic objects wielded

⁶⁶ Quṭb al-Dīn Mūsā ibn Muḥammad al-Yūnīnī*, *Dhayl Mir’āt al-Zamān: Tārīkh al-Sanawāt m1312–1297/ h711–697*, ed. Ḥamza A. ‘Abbās (Abu Dhabi: Hay’at Abū Zaby lil-Thaqāfa wa-al-Turāth, al-Majma’ al-Thaqāfi, 2007), 143–1440; ‘Alam al-Dīn al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Birzālī, *Muqtafi’ alā al-Rawḍatayn al-Ma’rūfbi-Tārīkh al-Birzālī 4 Vols.*, ed. ‘Umar A. S. Tadmurī (Ṣaydā - Beirut: al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣriyya, 2006) vol. 4, 21; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, ‘Dhayl al-‘Ibar fī Khabar Man Ghabar’, in *al-‘Ibar fī Khabar Man Ghabar + al-Dhuyūl (al-Dhahabī - al-Ḥusaynī) 4 Vols.*, ed. Abū Ḥājir Muḥammad al-Sa’īd b. Basyūnī Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1985), vol. 4, 3–118; Abū al-Fidā’ Ismā’īl ibn ‘Umar ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya fī al-Tārīkh 20 pts. in 11 Vols.*, (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2010), vol. 8 pt. 16, 88; Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab 33 pts. in 15 Vols.*, ed. Najīb M. Fawwāz and Hikmat K. Fawwāz (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2004), vol. 15 pt. 32, 136–139; Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *A’yān al-‘Aṣr wa-A’wān al-Naṣr 6 Vols.*, ed. ‘Alī Abū Zayd et al. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1998), vol 4, 150–155.

*As explained in Chapter 1, I subscribe to Li Guo’s theory that the 697–702 section of the *Dhayl Mir’āt al-Zamān* is al-Yūnīnī’s *synthesis* of al-Jazarī’s chronicle entries for this period, while the 702–711 section of the *Dhayl* is written by al-Jazarī* and misidentified by a later copyist as belonging to the *Dhayl*. In the maintext, I identify the author of the 697–702 section as *al-Yūnīnī/al-Jazarī*, while the author of the 702–711 section is identified as *al-Jazarī**. In footnotes, the *Dhayl* is referred to as al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, *x* in keeping with the Abu Dhabi edition from 2007. See above, 25–27.

⁶⁷ The case is briefly mentioned in Seeger A. Bonebakker’s article on al-Qazwīnī in the Encyclopaedia of Islam. See Seeger A. Bonebakker, ‘Al-Kazwīnī’, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 4*, ed. E. van Donzel et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 863–864. The case is also described briefly in the following articles: Henri Laoust, ‘La Biographie d’Ibn Taimiya D’après Ibn Katir’, *Bulletin D’études Orientales* 9 (1942): 115–62; Joseph W. Meri, ‘Relics of Piety and Power in Medieval Islam’, *Past & Present*, no. Supplement 5 (2010): 97–120.

in the protest without any serious treatment of the economic and political aspect of the case. For instance, Josef Meri briefly describes the protest as an example of how the Sandal of the Prophet and the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān were wielded as symbols 'in the fight against injustice and oppression'.⁶⁸ I generally agree with Meri's point, but this chapter makes clear that the protest in which these symbolic objects were wielded was not simply against an arbitrary and individual act of abuse.

First, I argue that the protest needs to be understood as a part of local politics, and that when placed in its proper context, it can shed light on how power relations were negotiated in 8th/14th century Damascus. Second, I argue that the lack of parallel cases of protest in early Mamluk Damascus does not mean that the 711 protest was an isolated event. In fact, it was connected to a longer and more intricate series of tax conflicts between the Mamluk sultans and their subjects that had flared up at several points during the preceding 50 years, but apparently without developing into protests before we reach 711/1311. These were essentially conflicts about how to finance the Mamluk Sultans' wars against the Mongol Ilkhāns of Iraq and Persia and their regional allies. The risk of open hostility between the two neighbours was more or less permanent between the Mongol invasion of Syria in 658/1260 and the establishment of diplomatic relations between Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (d. 741/1341) and the Ilkhān Abū Sa'īd (d. 736/1335) in the 720s/1320s.⁶⁹ Between these two points in time, the need for money to fight campaigns created a recurrent cycle of imposition–resistance–abolishment–and re-imposition of war taxes.

The first precursor to the 711 tax conflict presented in this chapter is the tax campaign in Egypt in 658/1259–1260 conducted by sultan Muẓaffar al-Dīn Quṭuz (d. 658/1260). In this year, the Ilkhān Hülegü (d. 663/1265) launched an invasion of Syria and succeeded in conquering both Aleppo and Damascus. Quṭuz's tax was intended to finance the Egyptian army that eventually defeated Hülegü's forces at the battle of 'Ayn al-Jalūt in the early fall of 658/1260.

The second precursor is Sultan al-Malik al-Zāhir Baybars's (d. 676/1277) tax campaigns in Egypt and Syria during the 670s/1270s. Specific focus is placed on a tax claim imposed on Damascus in 675/1276–77 that was intended to finance the sultan's military campaign against the Christian kingdom of Armenian Cilicia.

⁶⁸ Meri, 2010, 111.

⁶⁹ For a detailed examination of this relationship, see Anne F. Broadbridge, *Kingship and Ideology in the Islamic and Mongol Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Chapter 4.

The third precursor is the tax campaign initiated by the generals of the adolescent sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad in 699–700/1300 called Muqarrar al-Khiyāla (the Cavalry Tax). In the winter of 699/1299, a new Mongol invasion of Syria was launched by the Ilkhān Ghazān (d. 704-1304). Ghazān initially succeeded in defeating the Mamluk armies, and as they fled to Egypt, the Mongols took Damascus. The Muqarrar al-Khiyāla was imposed in Egypt after this defeat in order to finance the reconquest of Syria. In the late summer of 700/1300, once Syria had been brought back under Mamluk rule, a new version of the tax was imposed in Damascus. This time the purpose was financing a local cavalry force charged with preventing the Mongols from retaking the city.

However, before we get to these historical precursors, we begin by examining the 711 protest in its wider local political context. As we saw in Chapter 1, Amina Elbendary has argued that protesting was an integral part of politics in Mamluk urban centres during in the 9th/15th century. Elbendary underlines what she sees as the three primary characteristics of this practice.⁷⁰ First, protests were premeditated, and protesters acted rationally by adopting repertoires of action designed to optimise impact, for example, by choosing the right time and place. Second, protesting was simply one among many tools of negotiation (intercession, long-distance diplomacy, etc.) that were combined strategically according to the demands of the situation. Third, protests did not erupt *ex nihilo*, but relied on pre-existing urban social networks instead of fixed institutions such as guilds.⁷¹ In this chapter's initial discussion, I follow Elbendary's example and contextualise the 711 protest with the economic challenges that the Damascenes faced in this particular year and the other negotiating strategies through which they responded. I also demonstrate that a protest must be examined not simply as a strategic response to an immediate political problem, but also as an act related to a wider political culture. By this I mean that the protesters responded to the specific economic grievance through acts of symbolic communication, specifically, the presentation of important local relics and banners.

In order to make the connection between the tax conflict and the wielding of these objects, it is helpful to look to Charles Tilly's concept of reading protests as *contentious performances*. Tilly's field of study was collective political action such as protest marches, coordinated public violence and demonstrations. In his studies of the ways

⁷⁰ Amina A. Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans: Urban Protests in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2016), 125–126.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* See Chapter 5, especially 127–131.

people, primarily English crowds in the 18th and 19th centuries, voiced their claims through collective action, Tilly observed that people involved in collective *action* revert to more or less defined sets of limited behaviours such as the wielding of special symbols, the chanting of specific slogans and so forth. To describe these sets of behaviours, Tilly coined the term *repertoires of contention*, which he defines as ‘the established ways in which pairs of actors make and receive claims bearing on each other’s interests’.⁷² With regard to the 711 tax conflict, the *contention* clearly consists of the fiscal claim on the Damascenes as well as their resistance to it. But what of the *repertoire*? Tilly understands this term as the practices that make up collective action within a given time and place: ‘The word *repertoire* identifies a limited set of routines that are learned, shared and acted out through a relatively deliberate process of choice’.⁷³ In this chapter, the term *repertoire* is used to examine the Qur’ān, the sandal and the banners that the protesters used. With Tilly, I argue that the protesters chose this particular set of objects because they were already endowed with connotations of local identity, hierarchies of power and political legitimacy.

I then examine the potential connections between the ‘message’ of the 711 protest and the broader conflict about war taxes. Some scholars of Mamluk economic history have been acutely aware of the recurrent pattern of taxation intended to cover immediate defense expenditure. For example, we can point to David Ayalon’s work on Mamluk army finances, as well as the work of Subhi Labib and Hassanein Rabie on the Mamluk economy in general.⁷⁴ These works, however, are mostly focused on the structure of the military economic system and do not provide detailed examinations of the discourses which surrounded taxes. The third section of this chapter approaches the taxation pattern identified by Ayalon, Labib and Rabie from a philosophical and legal angle, examining the strategies of legitimisation through which Mamluk rulers sought to ratify their tax policies and the counter-arguments presented by Islamic jurists (*faqīh* pl. *fuqahā*). On this background, I argue that not only was the 711 tax part of a broader pattern, the display of symbolic objects that characterised the 711 protest can be understood as a

⁷² Charles Tilly, ‘Contentious Repertoires in Great Britain, 1758–1834’, *Social Science History* 17, no. 2 (1993): 253–280, 265.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 264.

⁷⁴ E.g., David Ayalon, ‘The System of Payment in Mamluk Military Society’, *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 1, no. 1 (1957): 37–65; Subhi Y. Labib, *Handelsgeschichte Ägyptens Im Spätmittelalter (1171–1517)* (Wiesbaden: Frantz Steiner Verlag, 1965), 248; Hassanein Rabie, *The Financial System of Egypt A.H. 564–741/A.D. 1169–1341* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 117–118.

symbolic extension of this ongoing and protracted discussion about taxation, legitimate rule and justice.

II. The 711 Tax – Negotiating Sultanic Demands in Damascus

The 711 protest occurred one and a half years into the third reign of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad, who would continue to rule until his death in 741/1341. Since the contextualisation of the protest within both the local and regional political contexts touches upon developments related to the political life of al-Nāṣir, a brief summary is in order.

During his first and shortest reign in 693–694/1294, al-Nāṣir had been an eight-year old child under the guardianship and control of the Maṣṣūriyya corps, the former Mamluks of his father, Sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (d. 689/1290). After less than a year one of the leading amirs around the child sultan, Sayf al-Dīn Kitbughā (d. 702/1302) took over the sultanate. Kitbughā remained in power until 696/1296 when he was driven off the throne and replaced by Ḥusām al-Dīn Lājīn (d. 698/1299).

Al-Nāṣir's second rule lasted from 699/1299 until 708/1309. During this time, the adolescent sultan was still under the guardianship of two Maṣṣūrī amirs, Sayf al-Dīn Salār (d. 710/1310) and Baybars al-Jāshankīr (d. 709/1310). In 708/1309, al-Nāṣir abdicated, left the throne to al-Jāshankīr and went into exile at Karak, Jordan. Ten months later, in 709/1310, al-Nāṣir left his exile and returned to Cairo to reclaim the throne. During his return journey through Syria and Egypt, more and more leading Maṣṣūrī amirs came out in support of him. When al-Nāṣir reclaimed the throne from al-Jāshankīr, the amirs who had shown him their support were rewarded with high posts such as governorships in Syria.

One of the amirs who had supported al-Nāṣir was the antagonist of the 711 protesters, Sayf al-Dīn Karāy al-Manṣūrī (d. 719/1319). Karāy had previously served as the governor of Safad, but in 709/1310 he was living in Jerusalem. When al-Nāṣir left his exile, Karāy offered him his assistance and was charged with conquering and holding Gaza to aid the advance on Cairo. After al-Nāṣir's return to the throne, Karāy was given various military assignments in Syria until he was appointed as the governor of Damascus in the spring of 711/1311.

The rest of this section determines what form of tax Karāy attempted to impose on the Damascenes in the fall of 711/1311 and how it was negotiated before and after the protest. It shows that the 711 protest was part of a wider process of negotiation rather

than a spontaneous outburst of popular frustration. The section also includes a proposed typology for dealing with Mamluk taxes that allows us to proceed to a comparison between the 711 tax and earlier taxes.

i. What kind of tax was imposed in 711/1311?

The only author who informs us about the motive behind the tax is al-Nuwayrī, who writes that Sultan al-Nāṣir decided to augment the cavalry forces of Damascus in the late summer of 711/1311 upon receiving reports of renewed Ilkhānite troop movements.⁷⁵ Extraordinary taxes imposed in preparation for a military campaign was a recurrent feature of Mamluk rule. As David Ayalon explains, launching campaigns required the payment of *nafaqa*, a field-bonus to pay for equipment and provisions that were not covered by the annual salary soldiers received through the system of *iqṭāʿ* 's (*fiefs*).⁷⁶

The Damascene sources do not comment on the background for the tax claim of 711/1311, but both al-Jazarī* and al-Birzālī note that a sultanic decree (*marsūm*) demanding a sizeable expansion of the local garrison reached Damascus on the 10th of Rabīʿ II 711/26th of July 1311.⁷⁷ Al-Jazarī*'s version of this decree contains instructions for each Mamluk amir who commanded between ten and one hundred horsemen (*fāris* pl. *fawāris/fursān*) to double the troops under his command.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, the civilian population of Syria is instructed to provide mares (*khiyyal al-hijjar*) for the army.⁷⁹

Because this *mare-claim* is not mentioned by any other sources and is not repeated in al-Jazarī*'s account, it is unclear whether it was in fact included in the complaint lodged by the protesters. Instead, we get the clear impression that the claim that fueled the protest was a claim of funds to pay for 1500 horsemen. Except for this number, none of the sources specify exactly what the tax was supposed to fund, but al-Birzālī does mention that the amount raised for each horseman was 500 dirhams, which brings the total claim to 750.000 dirhams.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* vol. 15 pt. 32, 136.

⁷⁶ Ayalon, 1957, 56–59.

⁷⁷ al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafī* vol. 4, 21; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1431.

⁷⁸ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1431 '[...] inna kull amīr maʿhu min mīʿat fāris ilā ʿashara yastakhdim ʿalā khāṣatihi bi-mithla mā kān maʿhu min al-ajnadʿ.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1431 '[...] an yaṭlub min ahl Dimashq wa-min barrahā wa-bilād al-shām khiyyal al-hijjar [...]'. See the almost identical description in al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* vol. 15 pt. 32, 180.

⁸⁰ al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafī* vol. 4, 21. Al-Dhahabī and Ibn Kathīr quote the same amounts but without specification. See al-Dhahabī, 'Dhayl al-ʿIbar', 27 and Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 80.

The portions of 500 dirhams per horseman indicate that the tax was not supposed to cover full salaries,⁸¹ but *nafaqa*, the field-bonus described by Ayalon. Referring to the work of Ayalon, Rabie states that the typical *nafaqa* distributed in the 8th/14th century ranged between 1–3.000 dinars for the most prominent Mamluk amirs to 1.000 dirhams for officers of the *ḥalqa* (non-Mamluk auxiliary forces).⁸² A sum of 500 dirhams per man would suggest that the 1500 horsemen were low-ranking troops of the *ḥalqa* who would be mobilised in order to defend Syria against the suspected Ilkhānite attack. We lack precise economic data to determine exactly how much value the sum of 750.000 dirhams represented in Damascus in 711/1311. However, the comparison with earlier tax claims shows that the tax was significantly higher than the most recent example, a tax of 480.000 dirhams that was imposed in 700/1300. Moreover, regardless of how heavy the burden was in economic terms, the process of negotiating the tax shows that the Damascenes clearly felt that both the tax and the manner in which it was imposed were oppressive.

ii. Negotiations and collection attempts prior to the protest

Al-Birzālī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Dhahabī and al-Nuwayrī simply mention the claim of 1500 horsemen and proceed straight to descriptions of the protest. Al-Jazarī*, however, gives us a more detailed view of the preceding negotiations.⁸³ According to his account, the governor convened the local elites (*al-akabīr wa-al-ru'asā'*) to a meeting at the Madrasat Ibn Manjā on the 1st of Jumādā I/14th of September, roughly six weeks after the decree arrived in Damascus.⁸⁴ This meeting lasted a full day and included the discussion of a sub-claim on 300 people from among the assembled elites. The sub-claim demanded that this group pay for 800 out of the 1500 horsemen.⁸⁵ No agreement was reached during the meeting; instead, the assembled would-be taxpayers asked the governor to expand the tax base so as to lessen the burden on each individual. Al-Jazarī* gives an account of a two-stage expansion: First, the governor allowed the tax to be expanded to include

⁸¹ According to the numbers provided by Sato Tsugitaka, the annual salaries of even the low-ranking auxiliary troops at the beginning of the 8th/14th century ranged between 10–20.000 dirhams. See Sato Tsugitaka, *State and Rural Society in Medieval Islam – Sultans, Muqta's and Fallahun* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 1997), 133.

⁸² Rabie, 1972, 34.

⁸³ The different ways in which the authors choose to frame the protest vis-à-vis the preceding and succeeding negotiations is not examined in this chapter; below in Chapter 5 I deal explicitly with questions of framing and authorial agency.

⁸⁴ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1434.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 1434. See also al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* vol. 15 pt. 32, 136.

the markets of Damascus, which was agreed to during a meeting at the al-Madrasa al-Qulayjiyya on the 5th of Jumādā I/18th of September. Hereafter, the markets remained closed for two days while the collectors of the treasury (*al-maḥāzim min bayt al-māl*) made their rounds.

However, even with the inclusion of the markets, the collectors still came up short. On the 8th of Jumādā I/22nd of September, a second expansion was declared that ordered taxes imposed on all real estate in Damascus, including the *awqāf* (pl. of *waqf*, or *pious endowment*). The properties were taxed through a method known as *taṣqīʿ*, which consisted of demanding a sum for each property calculated on the basis of the rent that it brought in.⁸⁶ Employees from the treasury and the office of the chief judge (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*) as well as the secretaries of the *wālī* (*prefect*) began registering all properties and rents (*al-amlāk wa-kirāʾātihā*) quarter-by-quarter.⁸⁷

It seems to have been this particular shift towards a universal tax on property that provoked the protest procession on the following Monday. Moreover, we can speculate that the taxation of the property of the *awqāf* in particular was an important mobilising factor.

The term *waqf/awqāf* refers to the traditional Islamic pious foundations through which a legally capable person donates part of his or her estate either to his or her descendants (*waqf ahlī*) or to a public purpose (*waqf khayrī*). The latter category could range from building and financing madrasas to feeding the poor. The amounts charged on the properties of Damascus are not quoted, but according to al-Jazarī*, one of the complaints presented to Karāy during the protest came from a group of blind beneficiaries of a *waqf* that had been charged a sum equivalent to four months' rent.⁸⁸

In principle, *awqāf* were beyond the reach of the state treasury, and taxation or confiscation of *waqf* funds was considered illegal according to sharia law.⁸⁹ However, state violations of the *awqāf* were common occasions for demonstrations and even riots in pre-modern Middle Eastern societies. According to Miriam Hoexter, these riots were motivated not only by economic grievances that befell those who subsisted on *waqf* funds, but also by the fact that infractions on the sanctity of the *awqāf* were seen as a

⁸⁶ Rabie, 1972, 107. See also al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* vol. 15 pt. 32, 136.

⁸⁷ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1435.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1435.

⁸⁹ Rudolph Peters, 'Wakf I', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 11*, ed. P. J. Bearman et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002), 59–63.

violation of one of the basic principles of good rulership.⁹⁰ Given this background, it seems reasonable to suspect that Karāy's decision to tax the *awqāf* produced a similar mix of economic grievances, and that moral outrage was at least one of the factors that caused the Damascenes to lose their patience and decide to march on Sūq al-Khayl.

iii. The aftermath of the 711 protest

According to Jazarī*, a second round of negotiations took place four days after the protest, on 17 Jumādā I/Friday the 1st of October. On this day, the governor was sought out by the Sufī *shaykh*, 'Alī Ibn 'Alī al-Ḥarīrī (d. 715/1315), who made a slightly veiled threat that the protest led by al-Qazwīnī might not be the last display of malcontent that the governor should expect:

He [al-Ḥarīrī] talked to him [Karāy] about the situation of the people of Damascus and about easing the claim on them and among other things he said: I love the House of Qalāwūn and I don't want anyone to curse them (*an yad'ū 'alayhim*), and he exerted himself in speech (*bālagha fī al-qawl*).⁹¹

While covering his own bases with a statement of loyalty, al-Ḥarīrī seems to have suggested that the governor should change his fiscal policy lest he end up with a general uprising against the sultan on his hands. At this point, it should be noted that this *shaykh* was one of the leaders of the *Ḥarīriyya* Sufī order, which had been founded by his father 'Alī al-Ḥarīrī (d. 645/1248) in the first half of the 7th/13th century.⁹² The biographers of al-Ḥarīrī the younger describe him as a man who was famous and revered among the people (*mashhūran, mukarraman 'inda al-nās*) and respected by members of the state establishment (*lahu ḥurma 'inda al-dawla*).⁹³ The *shaykh* could have spoken to Karāy as someone who enjoyed the respect of the Mamluk establishment, or he could have been threatening the governor with renewed protest and disorder staged by the *Ḥarīriyya* of Damascus and their sympathisers amongst the common population. In any case, the

⁹⁰Miriam Hoexter, 'Waqf and the Public Sphere', in *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies*, ed. M. Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, and Nehemia Levtzion (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 119–38, 133.

⁹¹ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1436.

⁹² The founder was a silk-weaver turned mystic. He was vehemently criticised and accused of pederasty and drinking by leading Shāfi'ī scholars, who called for his execution several times. He was imprisoned in 628/1231 and later banned from Damascus. His son, 'Alī ibn 'Alī, was reconvened to Damascus and given financial support by the Mamluk Sultan Kitbughā (d. 702/1302) in 695/1296. See Louis Pouzet, *Damas Au VII/XIII S. Vie et Structures Religieuses Dans Une Metropole Islamique* (Beirut: Dar el-Mashreq Sarl Editeurs, 1991), 219–222. See also R. Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols – The Ayyubids of Damascus 1193–1260* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), 209–210.

⁹³ al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafī* vol. 4, 192. See also al-Ṣafādī, *A'yān* vol. 3, 466.

words of the *shaykh* apparently had some effect on the governor, who, according to al-Jazarī*, answered by exculpating himself in the affair of the tax:

I am not to blame, they told me that the claim was 700 horsemen and the decree that reached me instructed me to double what had been stipulated [...].⁹⁴

At this point, the amir Sayf al-Dīn Ṭūghān al-Manṣūrī (d. 724/1324), who was the *shadd al-Dawāwīn* (military head of the treasury)⁹⁵, interrupted and argued that he used to collect funds for only 200 horsemen from Damascus:

In the time of the martyred sultan, I extracted from the city 200 horsemen and from its hinterland 300, in the period where I held the two *wālī*ships (*al-wilāyatayn*) [...].⁹⁶

According to al-Birzālī, Ṭūghān was appointed as *wālī* of Damascus proper by Sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn in 683/1284 at the same time as he was relieved from the office of *wālī al-birr* (*prefect of the hinterland*).⁹⁷ This suggests that a tax of funds for 200 horsemen existed in the early 680s/1280s. While I have not been able to find any further references to the tax-collection activity of Ṭūghān, the chronicles suggest that *nafaqa-taxes* of the same type as the 711 tax had been imposed in both Syria and Egypt in the preceding decades. The connection between these cases will be explored in the final section of this chapter.

Upon hearing Ṭūghān's statement, Karāy invited representatives of the city to another meeting where he promised to lower the number from 1500 to 400 horsemen (i.e., double the claim described by Ṭūghān).⁹⁸ The readjustment of the tax, which was agreed upon on Friday afternoon, seems also to have included a return to the original tax base consisting of the fortunes of the Damascene elites. Al-Jazarī* describes how between the 20th and 23rd of Jumādā I/7th and 10th of October, a group of local elites

⁹⁴ Ibid., 1436–1437.

⁹⁵ According to Rabie, it is unclear exactly what the nature of this office was. But he argues with reference to the *Ṣubḥ al-A'shā fī Kitābat al-Inshā'*, the manual of secretaryship written by Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418), that the *shadd al-dawāwīn* was 'a military associate who gave support to the native staff in collecting taxes', i.e., an enforcer who provided bureaucrats with military muscle. See Rabie, 1972, 151.

⁹⁶ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1437.

⁹⁷ al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafī* vol. 2, 49. The use of the title *al-sulṭān al-shahīd* corresponds with the 680s/1280s, as this was one of the titles posthumously attributed to the then reigning sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn because he died while on a military campaign. See e.g., Stefan Heidemann, *Das Aleppiner Kalifat (AD 1261): Vom Ende Des Kalifates in Bagdad Über Aleppo Zu Den Restaurationen in Kairo* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 186.

⁹⁸ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1437.

were detained at the al-Madrassa al-Qulayjiyya under the obligation to agree on a payment plan for the renegotiated sum.⁹⁹ However, their qualms about coming up with a new plan seem to have been relieved by outside interference, as Karāy was arrested and relieved of his command on the third day of their confinement. Soon hereafter the tax was abolished. (This final turn of events is also treated in the concluding section of this chapter.)

iv. The position of the 711 protest within the tax conflict

We can summarise the case at this point by saying that the 711 protest was a conscious and premeditated response to administrative changes, and that it should be understood as part of a longer process of negotiation that stretched over a period of two months. There are several elements to this case that seem to support Amina Elbendary's view of protests as an integral part of urban politics characterised by premeditation, strategy, reliance on networks and combination with other forms of negotiation. First, we find contours of both strategy and premeditation in the action of the 711 protesters: they did not act spontaneously, but upon an agreement made three days prior. Moreover, they chose their time of departure in coordination with the existing Mamluk parade protocol. Second, the initiators, who sadly remain nameless in the sources, used the networks surrounding the Umayyad Mosque to organise the protest, the *khaṭīb* of the mosque took on the leadership and was followed, it seems, by many people employed in the mosque. The protest seems to have been coordinated on Friday, which suggests that the mosque also served as the physical framework for the coordination. Third, the protest occurred at a particular low point in the wider negotiation process, and apart from being itself a form of negotiation featuring the delivery of a complaint, the protest was also integrated into the subsequent negotiations which led to the adjustment of the tax level and tax base. As noted above, al-Ḥarīrī made use of the protest to make thinly veiled threats of additional protests with a wider destabilising effect as leverage against Karāy. We cannot tell whether this Sufi *shaykh* had coordinated with al-Qazwīnī, but the accounts definitely show that negotiators were willing and able to integrate the protest into their wider strategies. As stated in the introduction, Elbendary considers urban protesting as a form of political participation that became a widespread phenomenon as part of the flux and transformations of the 9th/15th century. The fact that the 711 protest is one of

⁹⁹ Ibid., 1438.

the only detectable cases of organised protest in Damascus from the early 8th/14th century compared to the frequent recurrence of protests in later periods supports this conclusion. However, this case also shows us that the patterns of protesting behaviour found in the 9th/15th were not an invention of that century but a form of political participation available to civilian actors of earlier centuries, although they might have exercised it less frequently.

While Elbendary presents a persuasive framework for studying protests in a wider socio-political context, she does not explore the layers of meaning produced by protesters through their inventories of props or the choice of protesting venues. She argues in several places that protesters seem to have acted upon a form of *moral economy*, but she does not examine the symbolic forms through which defence of such a *moral economy* was articulated.¹⁰⁰ These are exactly the questions that we delve into now as we shift focus from the position of the protest within the tax conflict towards the ‘inner semantics’ of protesting with special items such as a Qur’ān linked to one of the ‘rightly-guided caliphs’, a sandal linked to the Prophet and a set of banners linked to the great caliphal Dynasty of the Abbasids.

III. The 711 Protest as ‘Performance’

In his explanation of his theory of *contentious performances*, Tilly states that we should see all available forms within repertoires of collective action as means of communication. Underlining the importance of reciprocity and mutual understanding, he argues that each action in a repertoire:

[...] takes its meaning and effectiveness from shared understandings, memories, and agreements, however grudging, among the parties. In that sense, then, a repertoire of actions resembles not individual consciousness but a language [...]¹⁰¹

The question we must begin with is: how can we think of the display of relics and banners or the disruption of the Monday inspection parade in 711/1311 as part of a *repertoire*? The lack of description of earlier protest marches in Mamluk or Ayyubid Damascus, which could have included the same objects, means that we cannot simply explain the actions of al-Qazwīnī and his co-protesters as if they were following an established playbook of protest behaviour. However, by examining the function of symbolic objects

¹⁰⁰ See, above, 16 and below, 75–77 for further discussion of this concept.

¹⁰¹ Tilly, 1993, 268.

in religious and socio-political practice beyond the narrow category of *protesting*, we can understand these items as part of a wider repertoire of communication and tease out part of the message that the protesters wished to send by using them.

i. What to bring to a protest? Part one: the Qur'ān and the sandal

The first relic registered by the chroniclers is called 'the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān', the 'Blessed 'Uthmānī Qur'ān Codex' (*al-muṣḥaf al-karīm al-'uthmānī*) or the 'Qur'ān of the Imām'. As implied by the name, this is a special Qur'ān codex associated with the 3rd of the 'rightly-guided caliphs' (*al-khulafā' al-rashīdūn*), 'Uthmān Ibn 'Affān (d. 47/656).¹⁰² 'Uthmān is usually credited with being the Caliph who commissioned the harmonisation of Muhammad's revelations and its rendition into a one-volume version of the Qur'ān during the 630s/640s, and therefore a Qur'ān tied to his particular reign would constitute a direct material link with the formation of Islam.

The association of a specific Qur'āns with 'Uthmān was not limited to 8th/14th century Damascus. Another version comes up in the Iraqi court bureaucrat Hilāl al-Ṣābī's (d. 447–48/1056) guide to Abbasid court protocol, the *Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa*. Al-Ṣābī describes how a Qur'ān of 'Uthmān was one of the ceremonial objects placed in front of the caliph during audiences in the 4th/10th century.¹⁰³ On the western side of the Mediterranean, the Almohad rulers of the 5th/11th and later the Marinid rulers of the 7th/13th century claimed that a splendid Qur'ān kept in the Grand Mosque in Cordoba had in fact been sent to Damascus by 'Uthmān and had come to Andalusia with the Umayyads in the 130s/750s.¹⁰⁴ 'Uthmān is said to have either written these Qur'āns personally or to have commissioned them for personal use. With regard to the copy in Damascus, some have even held that the Caliph had been reading it when he was assassinated and that his blood was smeared on its pages.¹⁰⁵

Later generations saw the rule of 'Uthmān and the other rightly guided Caliphs as an age of justice and piety when rulers displayed a humble and conscientious attitude towards their political mandate. This made the Qur'ān codices tied to 'Uthmān a valuable

¹⁰² The title 'rightly guided' is given to the caliphs Abū Bakr (d. 13/634), 'Umar (d. 23/644), 'Uthmān (d. 37/656) and 'Alī (d. 40/661). Their combined period of rule is associated with piety and justice.

¹⁰³ Hilāl al-Ṣābī, *Rusūm Dār al-Khilāfa* (Baghdad, 1964), 81 and 91.

¹⁰⁴ Pascal Buresi, 'Une Relique Almohade: L'utilisation Du Coran de La Grande Mosquee de Cordoue (Attribue a 'Uthmān B. 'Affān [644–656])', in *Lieux de Cultes: Aires Votives, Temples, Eglises, Mosqueses – IXe Colloque International Sur L'histoire et L'archeologie de l'Afrique Du Nord Antique et Medievale Tripoli, 19–25 Fevrier 2005* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2008), 273–280.

¹⁰⁵ See Daniella Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria: Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons Under the Zangids and Ayyūbids (1146–1260)* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 2007), 56.

source of legitimacy for rulers in the medieval Islamic East and West. Therefore, we can speculate that the protesters of 711/1311 wished to reference the purity and just government associated with the early Caliphate as they marched against the fiscal oppression inflicted by the rulers of their own age.

Moving from the general use of ‘Uthmānī Qur’āns across the region, we now focus on the background of the Damascene version. The Qur’ān of ‘Uthmān used in the 711 protest was kept in Damascus from around the year 490/1100. The Burid prince of Damascus brought the codex from Tiberias and installed it in a special shrine (*khizāna*) in the Umayyad Mosque.¹⁰⁶ In the 8th/14th century, the Qur’ān of ‘Uthmān was still kept in its shrine, which was located in the Maqṣūrat al-Khiṭāba, the central prayer enclosure of the Umayyad Mosque.¹⁰⁷ The shrine was covered by an elaborate veil and under the auspices of an appointed guardian selected from among the local ‘*ulamā*’.¹⁰⁸

From the time it arrived in Damascus, the Qur’ān of ‘Uthmān became one of the city’s central relics, revered as a protective object capable of averting all sorts of danger from harming the city.¹⁰⁹ The 6th/12th century Damascene historian Ibn al-Qalānisī (d. 555/1160) writes in his chronicle *Tārīkh Dimashq* that during a conflict with the crusaders in 506/1113, the prince of Damascus assembled his officers and ‘they performed the Friday prayer together and sought blessing [*tabarrakū*] by looking at the Qur’ān, which ‘Uthmān Ibn al-‘Affān carried to Tiberias’.¹¹⁰

Here, al-Qalānisī connects the Qur’ān of ‘Uthmān with an important medieval religious practice, that of seeking *baraka* (*blessing*). In the Qur’ān, *baraka* is used mainly in the plural *barakāt* and denotes the blessings which God bestows on the believers on a par with *raḥma* (*mercy*).¹¹¹ In medieval Islam, it was believed that prophets and other holy persons living or dead, as well as objects or places associated with such persons,

¹⁰⁶ Ḥamzah ibn Asad Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Tārīkh Dimashq : 360–555 H* (Damascus: Dār Ḥassān lil-Ṭibā‘a wa-al-Nashr, 1983), 298. With regard to this reference, I am indebted to Jean-Michel Mouton, who refers to Ibn al-Qalānisī’s report. See Jean-Michel Mouton, *Damas et Sa Principauté Sous Les Saljoukides et Les Bourides (468–549)* (Paris: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1994).

¹⁰⁷ This space will be explored in detail as part of the spatial examination of the Umayyad Mosque in Chapter 4 below.

¹⁰⁸ Regarding the replacement of the veil, see e.g., Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Abū Bakr al-Jazarī, *Tārīkh Hawādith al-Zamān wa-Anbā’ihī wa-Wafayāt al-Akābir wa-al-A’yān Min Abnā’ihī 3 Vols.*, ed. ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Salām Tadmurī (Saydā - Beirut: al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣriyya, 1998) vol 3, 764. See obituary notices of guardians of the Qur’ān of ‘Uthmān in al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafī* vol. 4, 39 and al-Jazarī, *Hawādith* vol. 2, 220.

¹⁰⁹ Talmon-Heller (2007), 57.

¹¹⁰ Ibn al-Qalānisī, *Tārīkh*, 298.

¹¹¹ G. S. Colin, ‘Baraka’, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 1*, ed. H. A. R. Gibb et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 1032.

could act as channels through which divine *baraka* was transmitted to the believer. While seeking *baraka* from relics and persons was not incorporated into Sunni Islamic doctrine, this practice constituted an important part of religious practice in both the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, a practice that brought together people from across the social and sometimes even the confessional spectrum.¹¹² As the story of the crusader assault shows, the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān was revered as a powerful transmitter of *baraka* capable of guarding the entire city. The protective powers of this relic were also invoked in a similar fashion at several points during the following centuries. In 543/1148, the Qur'ān was taken out once again to avert a crusader army from taking Damascus.¹¹³ In 680/1281, a procession departed from the Umayyad Mosque with the leader holding the Qur'ān over his head praying that the armies of Cairo would defeat the Ilkhānite Mongols who had just crossed over the Euphrates and into Mamluk territory.¹¹⁴ When the 711 protesters brought out the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān, they could also have been seeking the same form of protective *baraka* that had hitherto kept the city safe as a defence against the economic hardship of Karāy's tax policies.

We now turn to the second relic paraded by the protesters, a sandal, which is called either 'the Sandal of the Prophet' (*qadam al-nabī*) or 'the Prophetic Relic' (*al-athr al-nabawī*). This sandal had been housed in Damascus since the 620s/1220s and was, as the name suggests, believed to have been worn by the Prophet Muhammad himself. Like the multiple Qur'āns of 'Uthmān, prophetic sandals appear several times over the course of medieval Islamic history, and their origin is the subject of a diverse body of stories and prophetic lore. According to one such story, it was even believed that the sandal housed in Damascus had been worn by Muḥammad during his night journey (*al-mi'rāj*) from Jerusalem to God's seat in the seventh heaven, and that the prophet had touched God's throne with his sandal-clad foot.¹¹⁵ Like the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān, the sandal would therefore also have been a powerful source of *baraka* when wielded in the protest.

Before it came to Damascus, the sandal had been in the possession of one Nizām al-Dīn Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd (d. 625/1228), who had spent his adult life travelling from court

¹¹² Good discussions of the role played by saint veneration and the seeking of *baraka* in Ayyubid and Mamluk Syria and Egypt can be found in Konrad Hirschler, 'Umstrittene Heilige Orte Im Sunnitischen Islam: Syrien Und Agypten Im Spaten Mittelalter', in *Heilige Orte in Asien Und Afrika: Raume Gottlicher Macht Und Menschlicher Verehrung*, ed. Konrad Hirschler and Angelika C. Messner (Schenefeld (Hamburg): EB-Verlag, 2006), 113–137.

¹¹³ Meri, 2010, 116–117.

¹¹⁴ Pouzet, 1991, 296 and 386.

¹¹⁵ Meri, 2010, 106.

to court presenting the relic to different rulers.¹¹⁶ Shortly before his death, he displayed the sandal at the court of the Ayyubid prince al-Ashraf Mūsā (d. 635/1237) in Eastern Anatolia. The prince was apparently taken with the relic and after briefly considering cutting off a piece of it for himself as a keepsake, he decided to make Nizām al-Dīn part of his courtly entourage.¹¹⁷ When the latter died a few months later, he left the sandal to al-Ashraf, and when al-Ashraf was appointed prince of Damascus in 626/1229 as a result of internal struggles in the Ayyubid federation, he brought the sandal with him.¹¹⁸ The arrival of al-Ashraf constituted a major shift in religious policy in Damascus in which the sandal played a pivotal role.

Al-Ashraf's immediate successors, al-Nāṣir Da'ūd (d. 656/1258) and al-Mu'azzam 'Isā (d. 624/1226), adhered to the Ḥanafī school of law and had supported the study of rationalist theology, logic and philosophy. In contrast, al-Ashraf was a staunch Shāfi'ī traditionalist who leaned more towards the conservative Ḥanbalī school.¹¹⁹ The major symbol of al-Ashraf's traditionalism was his concerted effort to aid the study of *ḥadīth* through the founding of two colleges: the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiyya al-Birāniyya (extramuros) in the suburb of al-Ṣālihiyya and the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiyya al-Juwayniyya (intramuros) inside the walled city immediately east of the citadel. Al-Ashrafiyya al-Juwayniyya was completed around 630/1228 and it was here, in close proximity to his palace, that al-Ashraf placed the Sandal of the Prophet.¹²⁰ The relic was stored inside an elaborate shrine where it would remain until it disappeared during Tīmūr's (d. 805/1402) conquest of Damascus in 803/1401. When we consider the

¹¹⁶ According to the 17th/11th century Andalusian writer al-Maqqarī (d. 1041/1631), who wrote a panegyric 'biography' of the sandal of the prophet titled *Faṭḥ al-Mut'āl fī Madḥ al-Ni'āl*, the sandal in the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiyya had been in the possession of the Banī Abī al-Ḥadīd since the early decades after the death of the prophet. It had been passed on from one generation to the next until the family had shrunk to two brothers who divided the family estate, leaving one brother, Nizām al-Dīn with the sacred sandal. See Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Maqqarī, *Faṭḥ al-Mut'āl fī Madḥ al-Ni'āl* (Cairo: Dār al-Qādir 'Ayyād lil-Turāth, 1997), 517–525.

¹¹⁷ Humphreys, 1977, 212–213.

¹¹⁸ al-Ashraf originally left Anatolia with his army at the behest of the Ayyubid prince of Damascus al-Nāṣir Da'ūd (d. 656/1258), who sought his protection against a possible advance of al-Malik al-Kāmil (d. 635/1238), the Ayyubid sultan in Cairo. Al-Ashraf ended up siding with al-Kāmil against al-Nāṣir Da'ūd. His forces laid siege to Damascus for several months; in the summer of 626/1229, he was appointed as prince of Damascus. Humphreys, 1977, 198–199.

¹¹⁹ Once in power, he banned rationalists from teaching at the madrasas of Damascus, exiled several Sufi groups, including the followers of the aforementioned 'Alī al-Ḥarīrī the older. He also stimulated congregational worship by founding several Friday Mosques in the Damascene suburbs. One of these mosques, Jāmi' al-Tawbā in the suburb of al-'Uqayba, was built on the site of a *khān* that al-Ashraf had razed because it was notorious as a place of drinking and debauchery. See *Ibid.*, 210–211.

¹²⁰ 'Abd al-Qādir ibn Muḥammad al-Nu'aymī, *al-Dāris fī Tārīkh al-Madāris 2 Vols.*, ed. Ibrahīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, n.d.) vol. 1, 15.

Damascene protesters' use of the sandal in 711/1311, we should mark not only its inherent *baraka*, but also the special role it assumed in the religious life of Damascus once it was placed in the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiyya.

The Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiyya became the leading Damascene institution for *ḥadīth* studies and counted many prominent Shāfi'ī scholars among its *shaykhs* and students. Its first *shaykh* (in this context, headmaster) was Ibn al-Ṣalāh al-Shahrazūrī (d. 643/1245), a renowned Shāfi'ī jurist and *muḥaddith* (*ḥadīth* scholar) whose profile matched the traditionalism of al-Ashraf. Ibn al-Ṣalāh headed the college for more than a decade until his death.¹²¹

The role of the Ashrafiyya College in Damascus extended far beyond full-time scholars and their circles of students. As Eerik Dickinson argues, the Ashrafiyya was the center of a broader public cult of proximity (*qurb*) to the Prophet cultivated through veneration of the Prophet's Sandal and reciting *ḥadīths*. As Dickinson explains, the emergence of authoritative *ḥadīth* collections like the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim (d. 261/875) in the 3rd/9th century lessened the need to study *ḥadīths* for the purpose of authentication. Instead, what made the study of *ḥadīths* popular among ordinary medieval Muslims and caused people flock to institutes like al-Ashrafiyya was the search for *ḥadīths* with the shortest possible chain of transmitters (*silsilat al-isnād*), since they were believed to give *elevation* (*'ulūw*). In its simplified form, *elevation* describes the degree of separation between the individual transmitter and the prophet Muhammad, that is, the shorter the chain through which he or she has received a prophetic saying, the closer he or she is to the prophet.¹²² This logic fueled popular demand for old transmitters who had started reciting in their childhood and consequently rulers, including the Ayyubid princes, sponsored tours of geriatric *shaykhs* around their lands. The Ashrafiyya College had a special provision that bestowed a generous stipend for visiting transmitters with *elevation*.¹²³

Like the *ḥadīths*, which were transmitted at the institute, the Sandal of the Prophet was also believed to grant proximity to the prophet and was revered accordingly, for

¹²¹ Ibn al-Ṣalāh was followed by the Shāfi'ī judge and *khaṭīb* al-Ḥarastānī (d. 662/1264), who was followed by the historian Abū Shāma al-Maqdisī (d. 665/1267), who again was followed by the jurist al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277). In the 8th/14th century, Ibn Kathīr's mentor al-Mizzī (d. 742/1341) held the post for 23 years. Apart from being a student at the institute, Ibn Kathīr was himself briefly appointed as head of the college and his colleague al-Dhahabī was also in play for the position at one point. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 15–37. For the 8th/14th century, see also Yunus Y. Mirza, 'Ibn Kathīr (D. 774/1373): His Intellectual Circle, Major Works and Qur'anic Exegesis', (Georgetown University, Washington, DC, 2012).

¹²² Dickinson describes six different forms of *elevation*. See *ibid.*, 492–494.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 490.

example, by visitors who transferred the contours of the sandal on to sheets of paper for talismanic use.¹²⁴ By incorporating this sandal into their symbolic repertoire, the 711 protesters were also referencing a defining form of local worship that spanned beyond the circles of professional scholars: the belief that proximity to the prophet was attainable for the public through veneration and recital at the Ashrafiyya.

However, the question is whether the incorporation of these two items, the Qur'ān and the sandal, into the repertoire of the protesters of 711/1311 was simply an attempt to reference the reign of 'Uthmān or to transfer divine blessing and prophetic proximity to the protest.

Another aspect of the relics worth noting is the fact that by the 8th/14th century, they had become localised and less tied to ruling figures. Remember that both objects were brought to Damascus by 6th/12th and 7th/13th century, and local rulers also took part in the cult that surrounded the relics. In contrast with these earlier practices, the Mamluk sultans do not seem to have had a particularly strong connection to these items. To be sure, all royal visitors who attended prayer in the Umayyad Mosque would automatically be close to the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān since its shrine stood in the central prayer enclosure where visiting rulers would typically pray. But according to the chronicle of Ibn Kathīr, it seems that only one Mamluk sultan before 711/1311 actively pursued the strategy of associating himself publically with these relics as their Burid, Zangid and Ayyubid predecessors had done. Thus, in Dhū al-Qa' da 695/September 1296, the sultan al-'Ādil Kitbughā (d. 702/1302) prayed in the Maqṣūrat al-khiṭāba and visited the shrine where the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān was kept as part of his first official visit to Damascus.¹²⁵ He returned to the city in Muḥarram 696/October 1296 and prayed in the Maqṣūra two weeks in a row before leaving for Egypt.¹²⁶ However, Kitbughā also visited a range of holy places in Damascus, so the Qur'ān might simply have been one item on his list of local sacred spots to visit.¹²⁷

Based on this information, we should also see the use of these items in the 711 protest as a very local, perhaps even local-patriotic, gesture. In other words, by presenting the deputy of the sultan in Cairo with items tied to the specific religious

¹²⁴ Ibid., 484. Dickinson describes a particular conflation of the practices of *hadīth* transmission and the veneration of the sandal through the example of a travelling scholar who recited the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Abū Muslim in front of the sandal. See Ibid., 502.

¹²⁵ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 15, 593.

¹²⁶ Ibid. vol. 8 pt. 15, 597.

¹²⁷ Ibn Kathīr mentions two additional places – *qabr hūd* (the grave of Hūd) and *maḡhārat al-damm* (the cave of blood). Ibid.

landscape of Damascus, the protesters could have been bolstering their resistance to the imposition of a tax policy communicated from the distant capital by wielding specifically local symbols of piety and rulership.

Furthermore, apart from extraordinary crises such as impending invasions, Joseph Meri notes that the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān was used in everyday practices such as letting debtors swear on it in order to hold them accountable for settling their debts¹²⁸. Richard McGregor also suggests that this particular Qur'ān played a part in what he calls 'simple acts of social regulation' against, for example, the selling of hashish and other morally objectionable practices.¹²⁹ Such invocations of accountability or social regulation could also be at play in the present case if we conceive of the tax as somehow breaking with a set of perceived moral principles regulating the relationship between ruler and ruled. Later in this chapter, this set of possible connotations is explored in further detail by comparing the 711 case with earlier cases of *nafaqa* taxation. First, however, we turn to the second category of employed items, which have more clear-cut connotations relating to political legitimacy and Mamluk ceremonial practices.

iii. What to bring to a protest? Part two: the mosque banners

The sources employ different terminology when describing the banners used in the protest. Al-Jazarī* calls them 'the mosque banners' (*sanājiq al-jāmi'*), al-Birzālī simply calls them 'the banners' (*al-sanājiq*),¹³⁰ al-Dhahabī calls them 'the *khuṭba* banners' (*a'lām al-khuṭba*)¹³¹ and Ibn Kathīr calls them 'the caliphal banners' (*al-sanājiq al-khalīfiyya*).¹³² On the basis of these descriptions, we can conclude that we are dealing with the set of black banners that adorned the *minbar* (pulpit) of the Umayyad mosque, under which the *khaṭīb* would perform the Friday sermon. Remembering that the leader of the protest, al-Qazwīnī, was in fact the *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque, the use of these banners could be seen partially as a gesture underlining his authority as the leader of the protest.¹³³ However, in addition to their customary placement in the mosque, we also need to keep in mind that caliphal banners and the concept of the caliphate in a

¹²⁸ Meri, 2010, 116.

¹²⁹ Richard McGregor, 'Networks, Processions, and the Disruptive Display of Religion', in *Everything Is on the Move*, ed. S Conermann, (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2014), 311–324.

¹³⁰ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1435 and al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtaf* vol. 4, 21.

¹³¹ al-Dhahabī, 'Dhayl al-'Ibar', 27.

¹³² Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 88.

¹³³ The office of the *khaṭīb*, the nature of his authority and al-Qazwīnī's use of his office in the 711 protest are discussed in more detail below in Chapter 4.

broader sense also played a role in Mamluk official ceremonies. In other words, the banners were already part of a political *repertoire* which could also have motivated the protesters to use these banners when making their case to the governor.

However, in order to explore the use of the banners, we need to move beyond the immediate confines of the Umayyad Mosque and the city of Damascus and take a brief look at the position of the Abbasid caliphate within political discourse of the period.

Black banners had been part of the Abbasid ceremonial since the 2nd/8th century when the second Abbasid Caliph al-Manṣūr (d. 158/775) claimed that the Prophet Muhammad had appeared to his predecessor the Caliph Abū ‘Abbās al-Saffāh (d. 136/754) in a dream and had handed him the right to the Caliphate in the form of a black banner.¹³⁴ While the political power of the Caliph was eclipsed by that of the Buyid and later Saljuq sultans as early as the 5th – 6th/10th-11th centuries, the Abbasid Caliphate of Baghdad continued to exist until 656/1258 when the Mongols stormed Iraq and killed the caliph al-Musta‘ṣim Billāh. In 661/1262, the caliphate was moved to Cairo by Sultan Baybars, who installed an Abbasid descendant as Caliph under the regal title of al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Illāh (d. 701/1302).¹³⁵

Neither Baybars nor his successors were interested in restoring any power to the person of the Caliph; rather, they were interested in reaping the political benefit from being associated with this historic institution. The continued existence of the caliphate in Cairo allowed the Mamluk sultans to promote an important but wholly fictitious claim: that the power claimed by consecutive Mamluk sultans was based on a formal delegation of military power from the Caliph.¹³⁶ As for the Caliph himself, he was relevant only insofar as he could solidify the sultanate; he is usually mentioned only by way of his relation to the sultan.¹³⁷ Stephan Heidemann points this out in reference to

¹³⁴ Khalīl Athmina, 'The Black Banners and the Socio-Political Significance of Flags and Slogans in Medieval Islam', *Arabica T. 36 Facs*, 1989, 307–326, 317.

¹³⁵ Stefan Heidemann suggests that Baybars' primary motivation for re-establishing the caliphate might have been to consolidate his alliance with the newly converted leader of the Golden Horde, Berke Khān (d. 665/1266), and to persuade him to fight his brother, the Ilkhān of Iraq and Persia, Hülegü (d. 664/1266) under the banner of *jihād*. Heidemann, 1992, 202. Anne Broadbridge adds to this that the Caliph was personally present at the first round of negotiations between Baybars and Berke, but excluded thereafter. She also casts doubt on whether this propaganda strategy in fact worked on Berke. See Broadbridge, 2008, 56 and 58.

¹³⁶ Albrecht Fuess, 'Mamluk Politics', in *Ubi Sumus? Quo Vademus?: Mamluk Studies—State of the Art*, ed. S. Conermann (Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2013).

¹³⁷ Heidemann, 1992, 174. In this regard, Heidemann makes a special reference to *sikka*: the ruler's right to have his name engraved on coins. Heidemann states that the caliph was not mentioned on Egyptian Mamluk coins either with his name or the title *amīr al-mu'minīn* (prince of the faithful). Instead, the sultan was mentioned as *qāsim amīr al-mu'minīn* (partner of the prince of the faithful).

Sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn's endorsement of his son al-Ashraf Khalīl (d. 693/1293) as heir to the throne. In the endorsement, the sultanate is described as an office bestowed by the Caliph, but it does not mention the name or title of the Caliph. Moreover, this endorsement came after Qalāwūn had kept the Caliph away from the public for more than a decade.¹³⁸ Al-Ashraf Khalīl brought the Caliph back into his own public appearances and also re-employed the symbols of the caliphate, such as the black robes and banners, and expanded his own regnal title with the honorific *muḥyī al-dawla al-'abbāsiyya* (*reviver of the Abbasid state*).¹³⁹ The active and public use of the Caliph was continued under later sultans but his position rarely exceeded that of a ceremonial office bound by protocol.¹⁴⁰

During the 8th/14th century, we also see that symbols of caliphal legitimacy were a standard feature of a plethora of less important official Mamluk ceremonies, both at the court in Cairo and in the provincial cities such as Damascus. At these ceremonies, it was not the Caliph but simply the black color synonymous with his office that was employed. One example of this is found in the description of a sultanic procession orchestrated by the governor of Damascus, Amir Sayf al-Dīn Quṭlūbughā al-Fakhrī (d. 742/1342), in 741/1342. According to Ibn Kathīr, as the Sultan entered the city, the governor stood flanked by the chief judge (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*) of each of the four law schools surrounded by various pieces of ceremonial paraphernalia, including the caliphal and sultanic banners.¹⁴¹

Appeals to the caliphate and employment of its signature colour were thus already part of a *repertoire* of official symbolic actions in the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries. Even more clearly than the use of the relics mentioned above, the protesters' use of this specific piece of politico-religious paraphernalia lodged itself within the framework of a much wider field of public political communication. This could be a gesture akin to what James Grehan has called *deferential* appropriation of official forms of violence, that is, confronting the ruling order with its own symbols not as an outright challenge, but as a way of 'prodding and exhorting the social order to honor its professed ideals'.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Ibid., 183.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 186. See also Broadbridge, 2008, 45 n. 87.

¹⁴⁰ Heidemann, 1992, 194.

¹⁴¹ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 300.

¹⁴² James Grehan, 'Street Violence and Social Imagination in Late-Mamluk and Ottoman Damascus', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35 (2003): 215–36, 230.

In the present case, the professed ideals could have been some form of promise to treat the Damascene subjects with justice.

However, apart from simply mirroring the symbolic communication of the Mamluk sultanate, the use of the banners could also have expressed an appeal to a form of higher justice embedded within the idea of the caliphate itself. We have some cases that suggest that the idea of the caliphate was endowed with a critical potential vis-à-vis injustice and tyranny. For example, in one protest, which took place in Cairo against a corrupt Ḥanafī judge, participants wielded the banner of the Caliphs taken from a congregational mosque.¹⁴³

In order to understand the use of the caliphal banner in 711/1311 in Damascus, however, we also have to understand the specific role of the caliphate in Syria and in Damascus in particular. Heidemann argues that one reason for the Mamluk re-establishment of the caliphate Cairo might have been to prevent a rebellion from forming in Syria around a self-proclaimed Abbasid Caliph.¹⁴⁴ As an indication of Baybars's awareness of a stronger Syrian attachment to the caliphate, Heidemann points out that the Syrian mint, unlike its Egyptian counterpart, continued to produce coins bearing the Caliph's name and title until the death of Baybars in 676/1277.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, seven decades after the 711 protest, we do in fact see the caliphate in play as part of a revolt emanating from Damascus. In a study of this revolt, Lutz Wiederholdt demonstrated that plot to undermine the sultan Barqūq (d. 801/1399), which included both members of the Mamluk military elite and local scholars, was partially formed around the idea of a political restoration of the caliphate in Syria. According to Wiederholdt this suggests that:

[...] the caliph, despite his marginal influence on the political affairs of the day, was still a prominent religious-political figure among the scholarly elite and the populace of the two urban centers of the Mamluk empire Cairo and

¹⁴³ Konrad Hirschler, 'Riten Der Gewalt: Protest Und Aufruhr in Kairo Und Damaskus (7./13. Bis 10./16. Jahrhundert)', in *Islamwissenschaft Als Kulturwissenschaft; 1: Historische Anthropologie. Ansätze Und Möglichkeiten*, ed. S. Conermann and v. Hees (Schenefeld (Hamburg): EB-Verlag, 2007), 205–33, 218. The signature colour of the Mamluk sultans was usually yellow. For more details on the use of yellow in Mamluk ceremonies, see below, 108.

¹⁴⁴ Heidemann, 1992, 174.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 174.

Damascus – and that faithfulness to the caliphate in their circles was regarded as a sign of outstanding piety.¹⁴⁶

With regard to the 711/1311 case, the evidence is too meagre to conclude whether there was a rebellious streak attached to the employment of the black banners. But this later case should nevertheless be remembered, since it suggests that caliphal banners could be wielded as a symbols of an imagined legitimate and proper government beyond the Mamluk political order.

A detail worth noting with regard to the use of banners is that the only author who identifies the banners used in 711/1311 as the ‘banners of the caliphate’ is Ibn Kathīr. As Mohammad Gharaibeh has pointed out, Ibn Kathīr’s chronicle, *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya fī al-Tārīkh*, can be read as a vehement defense of the institution of the caliphate even after its 661/1262 ‘revival’ in Cairo.¹⁴⁷ As noted above, the black banners were indeed tied to the caliphate, but by identifying the banners as such, Ibn Kathīr might have sought to underline this connection even further.¹⁴⁸

The sources for the protest are not very explicit about what the protesters said to the governor and there are almost no ascribed comments that make reference to these items or what they meant specifically. The one exception is al-Şafadī, who reports that one of the comments made by the protesters when the governor dismissed their claims was ‘*al-muṣḥaf mā yuradd*’¹⁴⁹ (‘the Qur’ān cannot be disregarded/rejected’). Generally speaking, we should not take the direct speech in an 8th/14th century source as solid evidence for the ideological programmes of the people described therein. Yet, the suggestion that the protesters presented a claim that they saw as sanctioned by the objects they carried, (the Qur’ān, in particular), is fully compatible with the inherent meaning of these objects as symbols of justice and piety from the Islamic past.

While the use of these items clearly shows that the protesters wanted to manifest their claims in unambiguous Islamic terms, we are not told whether they simply insisted on some notion of ideal Islamic justice represented by these objects or whether they

¹⁴⁶ Lutz Wiederhold, 'Legal-Religious Elite, Temporal Authority, and the Caliphate in Mamluk Society : Conclusions Drawn from the Examination of a "Zahiri Revolt" in Damascus in 1386', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31, no. 2 (1999): 203–235, 215.

¹⁴⁷ Mohammad Gharaibeh, 'Geschichtsschreibung Im Dienste Des 'abbāsīdischen Kalifats – Das Al-Bidāya Wa N-Nihāya Des Ibn Kathīr (1301–1373) – Ein Geschichtstheologisches Werk', *Jahrbuch Für Islamische Theologie Und Religionspädagogik* no. 3 (2014): 95–124.

¹⁴⁸ The political and theological layers of Ibn Kathīr’s 711 protest narrative and their relationship to his chronicle as a whole are explored in further detail below in Chapter 5.

¹⁴⁹ al-Şafadī, *A'yān* vol. 4, 153. As explained below in Chapter 5, al-Şafadī is particularly fond of inventing dramatic dialogues in his biographies. See below, 209.

formulated their claims in Islamic legal terms. We shall see later in this chapter that earlier efforts at imposing *nafaqa* taxes were recurrently met with criticism formulated on the basis of the sharia and that there was an already existing framework of Islamic legal thought about the legality of taxation that the protesters in 711/1311 could have invoked, either vocally or indirectly through their display of relics and banners.

IV. Contextualising the 711 Tax

i. Mamluk nafaqa-taxes in the 7th/13th century

Throughout the second half of the 7th/13th century, recurrent campaigns were launched from Cairo to prevent attacks from the Ilkhānite Mongols and their regional allies such as the Christian kingdom of Armenian Cilicia. Every campaign launched from Egypt required a new round of *nafaqa*, which was usually raised through taxation. In 657–658/1259, when the armies of the Hülegü were on the verge of entering Syria, the Mamluk sultan Muẓaffar al-Dīn Quṭuz began preparing for the campaign that would eventually lead to the defeat of the Mongols at the battle of ‘Ayn al-Jalūt on the 26th of Ramaḍān 658/3rd of September 1260. In order to cover the *nafaqa* for the campaign, Quṭuz initiated a wide-ranging tax programme all over Egypt. He imposed an inheritance tax of 33% (*thulth al-tarak al-ahliyya*), a two-fold increase in the payments of *zakāt* (*alms tax*) and a per capita tax of 1 dinar on all adults in Egypt. On top of this, he also ordered a *taṣqī‘* imposed on all property in Cairo. The total revenue from these taxes is assessed by al-Nuwayrī at 600.000 dinars.¹⁵⁰ Quṭuz was murdered on his return from ‘Ayn al-Jalūt and replaced as sultan by Baybars, who abolished the tax programme immediately after his return to Cairo.

Baybars made a grand show of abolishing Quṭuz’s tax programme, which was proclaimed from minbars all over Egypt.¹⁵¹ However, in the 670s/1270s, he reverted back to the policies of his predecessor and began to levy large sums for military expeditions from the civilian populations of both Egypt and Syria. In 672/1274, he

¹⁵⁰ al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, vol. 14 pt. 30, 5. It is difficult to discern whether Quṭuz envisioned an annually recurring tax or a one-time levy, since he only ruled for a little under a year. For the same estimate, see also Abū Bakr ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmi‘ al-Ghurar 9 Vols.*, ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Cairo: Hans Robert Roemer, 1971), vol. 8, 63; Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā‘iz wa-al-I‘tibār fī Dhikr al-Khiṭṭat wa-al-Athār al-Ma‘rūf bi-Khiṭṭat al-Maqrīzī 2 Vols.*, (Cairo: Maktabat al-Thaqāfa al-Dīniyya, n.d.), vol. 1, 106 and Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk li-Ma‘rifat Duwal al-Mulūk 4 Vols.*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Qādir ‘Aṭā (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1997), vol. 1, 521.

¹⁵¹ al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, vol. 14 pt. 30, 5 and al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, 521.

imposed a tax aimed at bringing in 1.2 million dirhams divided into three annual instalments. The tax was supposed to pay for 1000 horsemen.¹⁵²

According to the chroniclers, this tax seems to have been abolished, but only two years later, in 675/1276–77, the sultan attempted to reintroduce military taxes specifically on Damascus when he passed through the city on his way north to fight in Armenian Cilicia.¹⁵³ The new tax was supposed to be a one-time levy, but later, while fighting the campaign, he raised the tax and extracted an additional 1 million dirhams.¹⁵⁴ Al-Malik al-Saʿīd (d. 678/1280), Baybars's son and brief successor, publicly revoked his father's taxes,¹⁵⁵ but the relief felt by the Damascenes was to be brief, since al-Saʿīd was deposed in 677/1279 and replaced by al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn. As we saw in the statement of Amir Ṭūghān, the *shadd al-dawāwīn* and former *wālī* of Damascus, similar tax measures were re-imposed again under the rule of Qalāwūn in the 680s/1280s.

All of this shows that the tax of 711/1311 was clearly not a new phenomenon, but rather the repetition of what seems like a pattern of sultanic tax policies found throughout the second half of the 7th/13th century. Despite official abolition of taxes and recurring statements of noble intentions, sultan after sultan apparently still resorted to shifting the fiscal burden of fighting the Mongols onto the civilian population. Even though we can find some information about the amount of the claims imposed on Damascus, the first instance of a mobilisation tax, which looks like a direct precursor to the tax of 711/1311, was the *Muqarrar al-Khiyāla* (the Cavalry Tax) of 699–700/1300.¹⁵⁶

ii. The *Muqarrar al-Khiyāla* of 699–700/1299–1300

This name does not refer to a single tax, rather it seems to have been introduced as an umbrella term covering various types of levies that were imposed in order to rebuild the

¹⁵² It is unclear whether the annual levy of 1.2 million was supposed to pay for 1000 horsemen, in which case the price per unit would be 1200 dirhams, or whether each instalment of 400.000 was supposed to pay for 1000 horsemen, in which case the price per unit would be 400 dirhams. ʿIzz al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥuṭayṭ (Wiesbaden: Frantz Steiner Verlag, 1983), 76.

¹⁵³ Louis Pouzet argues that Baybars tended to regard Damascus as a convenient resource for financing his military campaigns to the North, one that he could tap into without becoming unpopular in Cairo. See Pouzet, 1991, 276.

¹⁵⁴ al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* vol. 14 pt. 30, 233. According to al-Nuwayrī, Baybars set the heightened levy at 200.000 dirhams to be collected from the city, 300.000 from its hinterland, another 300.000 from its villages (*min qurrāhā*) and 200.000 from the tribal areas. Al-Nuwayrī remarks that this claim caused much grief in Damascus, and prompted people to wish for the end of his reign.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 14 pt. 30, 247.

¹⁵⁶ Subhi Labib argues that the term *Muqarrar al-Khiyāla* was introduced as early as 658/1260. I have not found any specific uses of this term in the sources he cites, and suspect that he is extrapolating the name from 1299/1300 to cover similar levies in past. See Labib, 1965, 248, n. 63 and 64.

Mamluk army after their defeat against the Mongol forces led by the Ilkhān Ghazān at Wādī Khazandār in Rabī‘ I 699/December 1299. The first installments of the Muqarrar al-Khiyāla were imposed in Egypt in order to cover *nafaqa* for the re-conquest of Syria. According to al-Nuwayrī, the owners of wealth and property in Cairo were first summoned and taxed according to their capacity; levies were imposed thereafter all over Egypt on both city dwellers and peasants, including a tax of one dinar on all adults, which is akin to the tax imposed by Qūṭuz forty years earlier.¹⁵⁷ According to Rabie, the per capita tax was combined with extra taxes on specific occupations, such as a tax on mercantile brokers and a tax on professional legal witnesses and notaries.¹⁵⁸

The Muqarrar al-Khiyāla hit Damascus in Muḥarram 700/September 1300, some five months after the Mamluk army had regained control of the city and Amir Aqūsh al-Afram (d. 720/1320) had been installed as governor. While the Ilkhānite armies had retreated across the Euphrates, they were expected to attempt a return and the taxation of Damascus was intended to repel such an attempt. As in 711/1311, the tax was collected via *taṣqī‘*; all property in Damascus including the *awqāf* was taxed the equivalent of four months’ rent, in addition to an extraordinary agricultural tax imposed on the hinterland.¹⁵⁹ At this point, Damascus was still reeling from the plundering and destruction caused by the occupation, and the levy seems to have provoked desperate reactions from the already war-weary inhabitants. We read of landowners cutting down their fruit trees and selling the wood in order to raise the requested sums, as well as a widespread flight to Egypt of people seeking to evade the tax.¹⁶⁰ The problem of tax evasion through flight soon became so critical that al-Afram banned people from leaving the city without his permission.¹⁶¹ Despite this problem, the governor could eventually report to Cairo that he had extracted 480.000 dirhams from the Damascenes, which he had spent on the *nafaqa* of 800 mercenary horsemen of Kurdish and Turcoman stock, each of whom received 600 dirhams.¹⁶² In the end, the revenue from Damascus seems to have been spent in vain; as soon as news arrived that Ghazān was launching another

¹⁵⁷ al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* vol. 14 pt. 30, 256.

¹⁵⁸ The brokerage fee was called *niṣf al-samsara*. It obliged the brokers to split their commission evenly with the treasury. The tax on witnesses and notaries consisted of a claim of 20 dinars on witnesses and 40 dinars on notaries in Cairo, but this tax was exempted thanks to the intervention of the Mālikī chief judge of Cairo. See Rabie, 1972, 104 and 112–113.

¹⁵⁹ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 454; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* vol. 14 pt. 31, 257.

¹⁶⁰ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 454; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 15, 633; al-Dawādārī, *Kanz* vol. 9, 44.

¹⁶¹ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 15, 633.

¹⁶² Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-‘Aynī, *‘Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān 5 Vols. (647–712 AH)*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathā’iq al-Qawmiyya, 2010), vol. 4, 126.

push across the Euphrates, the new mercenaries fled with their *nafaqa*. Meanwhile, the rest of the intake was allegedly lost through corruption.¹⁶³ To make the whole affair seem even more pointless, the Ilkhānite army was hit by rough weather outside Aleppo and retreated across the river, and as the threat of invasion diminished, the tax was abolished.¹⁶⁴

iii. 700 versus 711: comparing numbers and reactions

When describing the 711 tax, the Egyptian historian al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442) calls it by the same name, *muqarrar al-khiyāla*.¹⁶⁵ Al-Jazarī* uses the term *taqrīr al-khiyyal*, which is a close morphological variant.¹⁶⁶ Moreover, both the use of *taṣqīʿ* as the method of extraction and the division of the revenue into *nafaqa* portions of 600 dirhams corresponds roughly with the information we have on the tax of 711/1311 where each horseman would have received 500 dirhams. Thus, it would seem that the 711 tax was in fact a reactivation of a previous tax policy imposed a decade earlier.

Unlike the case of 711/1311, there is no reference in the accounts of the 700/1300 tax about an initial wealth tax on the fortunes of the Damascene elite; instead, general *taṣqīʿ* seems to have been imposed straightaway. This was likely because there was very little monetary wealth left in the city at this point. First, a large portion of well-to-do Damascenes had left the city for Cairo immediately after the Mamluk army withdrew from Wādī Khazandār. Second, apart from widespread plundering, the Mongol occupiers had imposed taxes on the remaining population, such as a wealth tax of up to 20 percent, taxes on markets ranging between 100.000 and 60.000 dirhams and specific claims on wealthy families, such as the Banū Qalānisī, which ran into the tens of thousands.¹⁶⁷

These differences might also explain why the 711 tax sparked a protest march, while the 700 tax apparently did not. First, the Damascenes of 700/1300 might have felt

¹⁶³ Unknown, *Beiträge Zur Geschichte Der Mamlükensultane in Den Jahren 690–741 Der Higrā Nach Arabischen Handschriften*, ed. Karl V. Zetterstéen (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1919), 83; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām wa-Wafayāt al-Mashāhīr wa-al-Aʿlām 15 Vols.*, ed. Bashshār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf, Šāliḥ Mahdī ʿAbbās, and Shuʿayb Arnaʿūt (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1988), vol. 15, 718.

¹⁶⁴ According to Ibn Kathīr, none of the extracted money was refunded, but all outstanding claims, e.g., those evaded by people who had disappeared from the city, were exempted. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, vol. 8 pt. 15, 634.

¹⁶⁵ al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk* vol. 2, 328.

¹⁶⁶ *Taqrīr al-khiyyal* is a variation on the same two roots as *Muqarrar al-Khiyāla*, i.e., *q r r* and *kh y l*. See al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1438. In the discussion of the protest, al-Nuwayrī also describes the tax as *mā qarrara ʿalayhim min istikhdām al-khiyāla*. See al-Nuwayrī *Nihāyat*, vol. 15 pt. 32, 136.

¹⁶⁷ al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh Islām*, vol. 15, 710.

that the Muqarrar al-Khiyāla was the lesser of two evils compared to the prospect of renewed Ilkhānite conquest, which would likely have meant a new round of plundering and taxation. By 711/1311, Damascus had not seen any conquests or intense house-to-house combat for more than a decade. Even though the conflict over the sultanate between the exiled al-Nāṣir and Baybars al-Jāshankīr in 710/1309 had rekindled the fear of war, no harm befell the city in connection with al-Nāṣir's return to the throne. Thus, after years of relative calm, the claim for a new mobilisation tax could have seemed less compelling in the eyes of the locals.

Second, the protest could have been motivated not by the tax itself but by the increase from the 480.000 dirhams for 800 troops that was extracted in 700/1300 and the 750.000 for 1500 troops, which was Karāy's initial claim in 711/1311. Third, the lack of a coordinated protest march in 700/1300 could stem from the fragmentation and weakening of local society caused by the destruction and flight that resulted from the Mongol occupation. When comparing these public reactions, we should note that tax evasion could also be understood as a form of protest. Unlike the petition march of 711/1311, however, all accounts suggest that those who fled in 700/1300 did so individually and not as part of the type of coordinated acts of resistance that we find in several cases from the 9th/15th century.¹⁶⁸

The Muqarrar al-Khiyāla also provides us the opportunity to compare reactions in Damascus and Cairo. Al-Maqrīzī and al-ʿAynī (d. 855/1453) report that the common population lost a great deal of respect for the vanquished army when it retreated from Syria in 699/1299 and that the demand for a new round of *nafaqa*-taxes immediately after their defeat led to tensions. With a long passage allegedly borrowed from the *Nuzhat al-Nāẓir fī Sirat al-Malik al-Nāṣir*, the chronicle of al-Nāṣir's rule written by the *ḥalqa* officer Mūsa Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Yaḥyā al-Yūsufī (d. after 1355/755), al-ʿAynī describes how Cairene commoners openly abused the sultan's soldiers in public:

It was said that the soldiers had no respect (*ḥurma*) left with the commoners. If one of them came to buy what he needed for soldiering, they would abuse him with rude words and say: Are you not ashamed for God's sake, today you talk and yesterday you fled, and now you want to play tricks on us? If one of them

¹⁶⁸ Resistance to taxation through collective flight of entire villages was a feature of Mamluk-peasant power relations in 9th/15th century Jordan. See Bethany J. Walker, 'The Role of Agriculture in Mamluk-Jordanian Power Relations', *Bulletin d'Etudes Orientales* 57 (2007): 79–99, 97–98. In addition to this, Amina Elbendary describes several instances from the 15th century where small-time market vendors evaded taxes. She asks whether such evasions can be interpreted as a form of negotiation, but does not give a conclusive answer. See Elbendary, 2016, 141–143.

approached one of the commoners with a whip in his hand, he [the commoner] would stand up and snatch it from his hand and say: Why didn't you assert your respect towards those who did this and that to you [i.e. Ghazān's army] instead of fleeing from them? [...]¹⁶⁹

These abuses apparently continued until the tax collectors allied themselves with an amir who had sufficient respect with the commoners and inspired awe (*hayba*) in them to the extent that none dared speak in his presence. At the same time, the soldiers' demand for respect was reinforced by a sultanic decree that prohibited civilians on pain of death and confiscation from any interaction with soldiers whatsoever.¹⁷⁰

It seems that the Cairene public in 699/1299 reacted to unpopular fiscal policies in a more scattered and disorganised fashion than what we find in Damascus in 711/1311. However, this might not necessarily be because they lacked the intent to protest, but because the stakes of protesting in Cairo were higher. Both Lapidus and Elbendary argue that the intensity of sultanic control over Cairo increased the risk of violent crackdowns, which made protesting a dangerous endeavour.¹⁷¹ This view would seem to be confirmed by the issuing of official death threats against potential troublemakers.

That said, the absence of organised protests during the preceding *nafaqa* conflicts does not mean that there was no resistance towards these policies whatsoever. The following section demonstrates that some similarities can be found when we turn from street protesting to the discussions between Islamic jurists and sultans or other holders of authority about these policies. These discussions outline the contours of an ongoing debate about the legitimacy of *nafaqa* tax claims from a legalistic sharia-based perspective. And while we have no evidence that the protesters of 711/1311 engaged in this debate verbally, their employment of key symbols of piety and political legitimacy, the Qur'ān, the sandal and the banners, can be interpreted as an extra-legal attempt to connect with the debate about the justice of taxation from a sharia-based perspective.

¹⁶⁹ al-'Aynī, *'Iqd*, vol. 4, 125. For a detailed discussion of the connection between al-'Aynī's *'Iqd* and al-Yūsufī's *Nuzha*, see, above, 32. and Donald P. Little, 'The Recovery of a Lost Source for Bahri Mamluk History: Al-Yūsufī's *Nuzhat Al-Nāzīr Fi Sīrat Al-Malik Al-Nāṣir*', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, no. 1 (1974): 42–55.

¹⁷⁰ al-'Aynī, *'Iqd* vol. 4, 124–125; al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, vol. 1, 327–328.

¹⁷¹ Ira M. Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1984), 148–149; Elbendary, 2016, 182.

V. Taxation and Legitimacy: Juridical Approaches

i. War taxes in Ibn Jamā‘a’s Tahrīr al-Aḥkām

When we turn to the long-term pattern of debates that surrounded *nafaqa* taxes, we see that they all revolve around the following question: how and under what circumstances is the ruler allowed to tax his subjects for defence purposes? Before looking at these discussions as represented in the contemporary sources, a short sketch of the juridical approach to this question is required. According to the contemporary sources, most of the scholars who engaged in the conflicts about *nafaqa* taxes were Shāfi‘īs. Therefore, I shall summarise for the purpose of discussion a Shāfi‘ī answer to the above question based on a contemporary Damascene source: The Shāfi‘ī jurist Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamā‘a (d. 733/1333), who was chief judge of Damascus (693–697/1294–1296 and 699–702/1300–1303) and later in Cairo (702–727/1303–1327).

Ibn Jamā‘a wrote a treatise on government titled *Tahrīr al-Aḥkām fī Tadbīr Ahl al-Islām*, which deals extensively with public finances including the correct way to finance a standing army. The second chapter of his treatise, which deals with the nature of the caliphate, the sultanate and their respective mandates, includes a list of ten rights (*ḥaqq pl. ḥuqūq*) that the caliph or sultan can claim from his subjects, and a list of ten rights that the subjects can claim from their ruler. We focus here on the 10th right of the ruler and the first right of the subjects:

The 10th right [of the ruler]:

Defence of him in word and deed, and with wealth, person and kinfolk (*bil-māl wa-al-naḥs wa-al-ahl*) in the disclosed and closed [manner], and secretly and publicly.¹⁷²

The first [right of the subjects]:

Protection and defence of the territory of Islam, either in all areas if he be the Caliph or in a designated district if he be an authorised delegate¹⁷³, [he is obliged to] perform *jihād* against the unbelievers and defend against enemies and rebels (*al-bāghīn*), lead the armies, enroll soldiers, fortify seaports with elements of hindrance and defence, inspect the training of all types of soldiers

¹⁷² Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Jamā‘a, *Tahrīr al-Aḥkām fī Tadbīr Ahl al-Islām* (Doha: Ri‘āsat al-Maḥākīm al-Shar‘iyya wal-Shu‘ūn al-Dīniyya, 1988), 64.

¹⁷³ The Arabic reads *Immā fī kull iqlīm in kāna khalīfatan aw fī al-qaṭr al-mukhtaṣ bihi in kāna mufawwaḍḍān ilayhi*, i.e., either the caliph or a sultan with delegated power over a designated area.

according to need and assess their fiefs (*iqṭā'ihim*), their salaries and the probity of their condition.¹⁷⁴

Now, we could interpret the constellation of these two rights to mean that the ruler has a right to demand his subjects' aid in terms of resources and manpower for defensive needs, while the subjects have the right to demand that their ruler organise and maintain the army. While this could be seen as opening the door for discretionary drafting and taxation for military purposes, Ibn Jamā'ā explains over the course of chapters 4–9 that the ruler has in fact very little right to demand the aid of his subjects for military purposes. Under normal circumstances, defence is the business of a standing army consisting of salaried soldiers, and payment for this standing army must come from the *bayt al-māl* (public treasury). The *bayt al-māl* is administered by the ruler according to *maṣlaḥa* (common interest of the community), and has six designated categories of income: *khums al-ghanīma* (1/5 of war booty), *kharāj* (landtax), property with heirs, lost property without owners, *jizya* (poll tax on dhimmis) and finally, tolls of 10% on non-Muslim merchants.¹⁷⁵ As we can see, none of these categories includes taxation of ordinary Muslims through practices such as *taṣqī'* or per capita taxes such as those imposed by Quṭuz. Furthermore, this is spelled out clearly in the following prohibition:

But as for what is taken of tolls (*min al-ḍarā'ib wa-al-u'shūr*) on the merchandise that Muslims transport from region to region and on all forms of property which is sold, these are forbidden according to sharia (*muḥarram shar'an*) and impermissible according to sharia and justice (*lā yubiḥuhu shar' wa-la yujīzuhu 'adl*), for they are a special form of illicit tax and flagrant tyranny (*mukūs mu'ayyina wa-ḡalāmāt bayyina*).¹⁷⁶

In the event that the public funds in the *bayt al-māl* are inadequate to meet the required expenses, it is instead incumbent first on the sultan and then on whomever is under him in command to cover the deficit.¹⁷⁷ Ibn Jamā'ā does not state who is next in line, but again the point is clear: normal civilians should not be forced to pay into the *bayt al-māl*, even when it is empty. Seen in this light, what are we to read into the 10th right of the ruler – the subjects' obligation to defend him in word and deed, and with property, wealth and kinfolk? Ibn Jamā'ā returns to this obligation in chapter 10, which discusses the rules of participation in military *jihād*. Here, he repeats that defence is a collective

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 65.

¹⁷⁵ See Ibid., 107 and 149–150.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 145.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 106 and 150–151.

responsibility (*farḍ kifāya*) carried by the ruler and his army, However, he adds that it becomes an individual responsibility (*farḍ ‘ayn*) incumbent on all Muslims only when a regular army is not present, i.e., when the army has either fled or broken down. Moreover, the moment a new army arrives, the obligation of defence immediately reverts from the individual to the collective.¹⁷⁸

To summarise Ibn Jamā‘a’s point on defence and taxation: as long as some form of organised defence force exists, the ruler has no sharia-based rights to demand money or manpower from his civilian subjects.

However, one relatively modest loophole that Ibn Jamā‘a presents involves using money collected from Muslims in the form of *zakāt*. Paying *zakāt* is a religious duty of all Muslims who own property above a certain level. *Zakāt* is designated to be distributed as *ṣadāqa* (alms) for a set of specific purposes identified in the Qur’ān (9:60):

Alms are for the poor and the needy and those employed to administer the (funds); for those whose hearts have (recently) been reconciled (to truth); for those in bondage and in debt; in the cause of God; and for the wayfarer [...]¹⁷⁹

In the present context, it is the words ‘in the cause of God’ (*fī sabīl illāh*) that are relevant. This is commonly taken by exegetes to mean those who fight for God’s cause, i.e., those who fight the *jihād*.¹⁸⁰ On the basis of this formulation, one could argue that the *zakāt* could be used for military purposes; as we shall see, this argument is made several times in the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries. However, Ibn Jamā‘a argues that because *zakāt* is already assigned to these eight specific purposes, it cannot be added to the *bayt al-māl* and used for the general purposes of securing *maṣlaḥa*.¹⁸¹ This means that even the 7th category of *zakāt* recipients—those who fight the *jihād*—comes to mean voluntary and unsalaried fighters and not professional soldiers who are paid from the *bayt al-māl*. Again, Ibn Jamā‘a makes sure that no claim for paying the upkeep of the army can be made against the civilians through sharia arguments.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 155–156.

¹⁷⁹ Qur’ān 9:60. Quote from the translation in *The Holy Quran – Text, Translation and Commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali* (Durban: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 1946), 458.

¹⁸⁰ Aron Zysow, ‘Zakāt’, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 11*, ed. P. J. Bearman et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2002), 416–417.

¹⁸¹ Ibn Jamā‘a, *Tahrīr*, 114. Here Ibn Jamā‘a directly prohibits giving out *zakāt* as *iqṭā‘*. On page 150 he repeats the prohibition.

ii. *Shāfi'ī jurists as tax critics 657/1259–700/1300*

While the practical negotiations of taxes in the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries did not follow the juridical literature to the letter, the debates that we can follow through the chronicles were often structured exactly around the two questions discussed by Ibn Jamā'a: whether a given situation was critical enough to make defence spending an individual obligation incumbent on all civilians, and whether a certain group of fighters were worthy of receiving *zakāt* as part of those who fight for God's cause.

The chronicles give the impression that the Mamluk sultans and their advisors tried repeatedly to obtain ratification of their fiscal policies from the '*ulamā*' by arguing that a tax on civilians was in fact the only option available to them, or that they were demanding money specifically for *jihād*. The jurists for the most part would refute these claims, or at least set down specific conditions before they gave their blessing.

In 657/1259, when the Mongol armies were approaching Syria, the Shāfi'ī jurist and *khaṭīb* 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn 'Abd al-Salām al-Sulamī (d. 660/1262) was summoned to the court in Cairo and asked for a fatwa that would allow for an extraordinary tax to finance the counter-campaign. Al-Sulamī was famous as a vocal critic of rulers, a quality that had forced him from Damascus and into exile in Egypt in the 640s/1240s.¹⁸² Once in Cairo, he became popular for his Friday sermons and Sultan al-Muẓaffar Qutuz and his generals were most likely hoping that an endorsement from such a prominent *shaykh* would help smooth the extraction process. According to Ibn Kathīr, al-Sulamī replied that the fatwa they wanted would be valid only when the well-established criteria would be fulfilled, i.e., once the sultan and his amirs had spent all their personal wealth along with that of their wives and their mamluks:

[...] to such an extent that the soldier has nothing more than the horse he rides on. At that point it is permissible for the ruler to seize some of the wealth of the people in order to push back the enemy, for if the enemy invades the country the people are obliged to defend it with their wealth and their person.¹⁸³

¹⁸² al-Sulamī fell from grace in Damascus by criticising the Ayyubid prince al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā'īl (d. 643/1245), who had made treaties with the Franks and allowed the sale of arms to King Frederic II of Jerusalem (d. 648/1250). Humphreys, 1977, 266–267. I return to this episode and al-Sulamī's sermons in Damascus below in Chapter 4.

¹⁸³ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 15, 342. For a variation of the same account, see Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk* vol. 1, 507 and al-'Aynī, *Iqd* vol. 1, 218.

As reflected in the writings of Ibn Jamā‘a, it is the determination of the circumstances under which defence becomes an individual responsibility that constitutes the crux of the argument: as long as the sultan has any wealth whatsoever, ordinary civilians cannot be called upon to contribute. Quṭuz might have partially heeded the *shaykh*’s words; at least, according to al-Maqrīzī, he began his 600.000 dinar tax campaign by confiscating wealth from prominent Mamluk amirs, including the jewellery belonging to their wives.¹⁸⁴

A similar discussion concerning the justification and hence legitimacy of extraordinary tax levies arose several times in the following 40 years. In these cases, the gauntlet was picked up by two of al-Sulamī’s former students, Muḥiyy al-Dīn al-Nawawī (d. 676/1277) and Ibn Daqīq al-‘Īd (d. 702/1302), both of whom follow the line of al-Sulamī with regard to taxation.

During the reign of Baybars, we see several contradictory attempts at legitimising and delegitimising taxes through reference to *jihād*. Ibn Shaddād (d. 684/1285), a Syrian chancery secretary who became a member of Baybars’s retinue and his semi-official biographer, deliberately framed the sultan’s 672 tax of 1.2 million dirhams per year not only as a legitimate demand for help in conducting holy war, but also as a potential blessing on the taxpayers. The preamble to his account of the tax reads as follows: ‘Our lord the sultan had deemed it proper that his subjects (*ra‘iyyatahu*) share with him the merit of the *jihād* (*thawwāb al-jihād*) [...]’.¹⁸⁵ To ‘share the merit’ is, of course, a euphemism for sharing the costs, and Baybars’s decision to tax the populace is thus cloaked as a sincere wish to give his subjects access to the divine reward of co-financing the *jihād*.

As far as we can tell, such religious arguments were not accepted by the Shāfi‘ī jurists of Damascus. The 9th/15th century Egyptian chronicler al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1515) presents a letter of refusal ascribed to the Shāfi‘ī jurist and *muḥaddith* al-Nawawī, who was headmaster of the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiyya from 665/1267 until his death. While the letter cannot be tied specifically to the 672 tax, it nevertheless turns directly against the notion that Baybars’s tax claims could be justified with reference to the individual

¹⁸⁴ al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk* vol. 1, 513. Al-Sulamī might have been thinking of the example set by the Ayyubid prince of Damascus al-Nāṣir Da‘ūd when he was besieged in Damascus in 625–626/1228–1229. Rather than financing his army through forced loans from local merchants, the prince ordered that the luxury items at his palace and the jewellery of his women be melted down and turned into coins. See Humphreys, 1977, 206 + n. 26.

¹⁸⁵ Ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, 76.

obligation to support *jihād* through wealth or personal participation. The individual obligation (*farḍ ayn*), al-Nawawī explains in this letter, cannot be evoked in order to pay for the army because *jihād* remains a collective obligation (*farḍ kifāya*), as long as there is a standing army and a treasury with the means to finance it:

If the *jihād* is fought by soldiers who receive a stipulated stipend, it is not permitted to take anything from the people, as long as the *bayt al-māl* has any money or goods or land or estates to sell or other [valuables] than this. The ‘*ulamā*’ in the land of the sultan, may god bless his victory, agree on this.¹⁸⁶

Thus, while al-Nawawī does not question the legitimacy of taxing the people as a last resort, he points out that the circumstances under which Baybars made his claim far from qualified for this solution. In 675/1276–77, Baybars’s specific tax claims on Damascus reignited this discussion, and again al-Nawawī stood up and criticised the tax.¹⁸⁷ According to al-Suyūṭī, this time Baybars had in fact secured a fatwa from the ‘*ulamā*’ of Egypt authorising the tax, but al-Nawawī challenged the applicability of the fatwa, just as al-Sulamī had done, by pointing out that the sultan’s mamluks and slave girls still wore splendid clothes and jewellery that should be sold before he could impose any tax on Damascus.¹⁸⁸

We should note here that al-Suyūṭī was describing this event from a 9th/15th century perspective, and that he was renowned as a staunch critic of rulers in his own time, a bias that could have coloured his report of al-Nawawī’s conflict with Baybars.¹⁸⁹ However, a report of the meeting is also presented in the *Nihāyat al-Arab* of al-Nuwayrī and the biographies of al-Nawawī written by his near contemporaries also portray him as a tireless opponent of injustice and illegal taxes.¹⁹⁰ Moreover, in the *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn wa-‘Umdat al-Muḥtāṭīn*, the fatwa collection ascribed to al-Nawawī, we find a fatwa that echoes his alleged critique of Baybars’s demands for *nafaqa* taxes during the 670s/1270s. In the section dealing with *zakāt*, al-Nawawī states that a salaried army cannot lay claim to *zakāt*, and that even in an emergency where the ruler has no funds

¹⁸⁶ Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, *Kitāb Ḥusn al-Muḥāḍara fī Akhbār Miṣr wa-al-Qāhira 2 Vols.*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo: ‘Isā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1967), vol. 2, 99–100. See also al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām* vol. 15, 330.

¹⁸⁷ For al-Nuwayrī’s account of al-Nawawī’s meeting with Baybars see al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* vol. 14 pt. 30, 233. For the portrayal of al-Nawawī as opponent of tyranny in the biographical literature, see e.g. al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 15, 330.

¹⁸⁸ al-Suyūṭī, *Ḥusn al-Muḥāḍara* vol. 2, 105.

¹⁸⁹ Elbendary says that al-Suyūṭī displayed an explicit dislike for associating with sultans such as Qāyṭbāy (d. 901/1496) and Qānṣūh al-Ghawrī (d. 922/1516), but suggests that this might have been partially a show of piety. See A. Elbendary, 2016, 111 and n. 155.

¹⁹⁰ See al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* vol. 14 pt. 30, 233.

with which to pay the army, it would be incumbent only on the wealthiest (*aghniyā* ' *al-muslimīn*) to support them financially.¹⁹¹ Note that al-Nawawī opens a narrow window for imposing taxes for defence purposes, but only when the ruler's funds are depleted and only on a small and specific section of the population.

Judging from these cases of negotiation, Mamluk rulers seem to have found the jurists' seal of approval a preferable but by no means mandatory basis for their fiscal claims. In the event that no legal approval could be obtained, they resorted to coercion, which can be seen in the fact that these disputed taxes were imposed regardless of the scholars' protests.

The mere cosmetic quality of legal approval is presented in a very matter of fact fashion in the case of the Muqarrar al-Khiyāla of 699–700/1299–1300. As noted above, one of the taxation methods on the table in these years was the reintroduction of the per capita tax of 1 dinar per adult that Quṭuz had introduced in 658/1260. During one meeting at the citadel, Ibn al-Khashshāb (d. 711/1311), the deputy *muḥtasib* (market inspector) of Cairo, produced what he claimed was a copy of al-Sulamī's 657 fatwa allowing the per capita tax. The document was brought to Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, who was at that time the Shāfiʿī chief judge of Egypt, for confirmation. As we could expect based on the previous cases, the judge refused to ratify the fatwa by arguing, as al-Nawawī had, that the fatwa was not applicable because neither the sultan nor the amirs had depleted their personal fortunes or sold the jewellery of their wives. However, Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd's response also included an element of pragmatism not found in the previous cases. According to al-ʿAynī, Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd stated that the amirs did not need a fatwa since they had the military power to push their policy through regardless of the jurists' opinion. This attitude is summed up in the following quote which al-ʿAynī ascribes to Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd: 'O amirs, there is no hindrance when you decide something and no one will object'.¹⁹² In this sense, Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd flatly acknowledged the fact that the Mamluk state had the power to impose the taxes it saw fit, while at the same time refusing to lend such policies the fig leaf of sharia-based legitimacy.

¹⁹¹ Muḥyī al-Dīn Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Rawḍat al-Ṭālibīn wa-ʿUmdat al-Muḥtāṣibīn* 8 Vols., ed. ʿĀdil A. ʿAbd al-Mawjūd and ʿAlī Muḥammad Maʿūḍ (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2003), vol. 3, 187–188.

¹⁹² al-ʿAynī, *Iqd* vol. 4, 73.

iii. Ibn Taymiyya's approach to the 700 and 711 taxes

Apart from this group of Shāfi'ī jurists, one other scholar, the Ḥanbalī jurist and theologian Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), is also reported to have interfered with two of the *nafaqa* tax campaigns of the early 8th/14th century, but with a different perspective than the one presented above. Ibn Taymiyya's socio-political role and his position vis-à-vis the scholarly community of Damascus in general will be revisited in Chapters 4 and 5. At present, we confine ourselves to taking a short look at his stance on military taxes in light of his legal and political writings.

According to al-Birzālī and Ibn Kathīr, this *shaykh* did not argue against the Muqarrar al-Khiyāla in 700/1300, as his Shāfi'ī colleagues had done when earlier sultans had asked the Damascenes for *nafaqa* funds.¹⁹³ Nor did he attempt to distance the sharia from this tax campaign, as Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd had done in Cairo a few months before. Instead, Ibn Taymiyya actively sought to legitimise the *taṣqī'* imposed on Damascus by the governor al-Afram. While people were fleeing Damascus in droves, desperate to avoid paying the tax, Ibn Kathīr and al-Birzālī report that Ibn Taymiyya publicly urged people to stay and pay the tax as a good deed for the cause of God (*fī sabīl illāh*).¹⁹⁴

Before going into further detail about Ibn Taymiyya's statement of support for the Muqarrar al-Khiyāla, we should note that this was but one example of his multi-faceted personal involvement in the struggle against the Ilkhānite Mongols as jurist, negotiator and combatant. During Ghazān's occupation of Damascus in 699/1299–1300, the *shaykh* had negotiated the release of Mamluk prisoners with both the Ilkhān and his generals, had personally tried to prevent Mongol troops from looting the suburb of al-Ṣālihiyya and had worked to broker a peace between the Ghazān's forces and the Mamluk garrison stationed in the citadel of Damascus.¹⁹⁵ In 702/1303, when the Mamluk and Ilkhānite armies clashed in a series of battles from which the former would emerge victorious, Ibn Taymiyya participated both as a combatant in the field and through his famous 'anti-

¹⁹³ As will be explained below in Chapter 5 both al-Birzālī, Ibn Kathīr and al-Dhahabī were connected to the circle of predominantly Ḥanbalī and Shāfi'ī traditionalists who gathered around the figure of Ibn Taymiyya in early 8th/14th century Damascus. See, below, 185-186.

¹⁹⁴ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 15, 633 and al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafī* vol. 3, 120.

¹⁹⁵ For a detailed overview of Ibn Taymiyya's diplomacy during the occupation in 699/1299–1300, see Reuven Amitai-Preiss, 'The Mongol Occupation of Damascus in 1300: A Study of Mamluk Loyalties', in *The Mamluks in Egyptian and Syrian Politics and Society*, ed. Amalia Levanoni and Michael Winther (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 2004), 21–40.

Mongol fatwas', which called to jihad against Ghazān and his forces even though they had formally converted to Islam.¹⁹⁶

In this light, we should keep in mind that Ibn Taymiyya's ratification of the Muqarrar al-Khiyāla was part of the *shaykh's* wider engagement in rescuing Damascus from the ravish of Ghazān's occupation of Syria and not simply a permissible stance towards discretionary taxes. However, we can also examine his endorsement of the tax from the perspective of *fiqh*, as an example of Ibn Taymiyya's pragmatic approach to combining sharia and *raison d'état*. Here we should remember that one of the *zakāt*-worthy categories listed in Qur'ān 9:60 is expenditure 'in God's cause' (*fi sabīl illāh*), which is interpreted as those who fight in the *jihād*, as we saw above. By using this particular formulation for justifying the Muqarrar al-Khiyāla, Ibn Taymiyya demonstrates that he regards the *taṣqī'* demanded by the governor as an obligation of all Damascenes based on sharia.

It could be argued that when al-Afram imposed his tax on Damascus, it was indeed an act of last resort that Ibn Jamā'a's *Tahrīr* would also have recognised. At this point, the Ilkhānite armies were returning to Damascus, and because the Mamluk army lacked the strength to defend the city, the Mamluk governor could legitimately demand that the Damascenes give up their possessions to aid the defence. On the other hand, we should also view Ibn Taymiyya's defence of the tax in light of his juridical writings on *zakāt*. First, there is the question of who can receive funds from the *zakāt*. Henri Laoust argues that Ibn Taymiyya's general interpretation of '*fi sabīl illāh*' was more flexible than that of his Shāfi'ī colleagues insofar as he viewed not only voluntary fighters but also the soldier of a standing salaried army as worthy recipients of *zakāt* money, which both Ibn Jamā'a and al-Nawawī denied.¹⁹⁷

Second, there is the question of what can be considered as *zakāt* and who is allowed to define it. In this respect, Ibn Taymiyya's willingness to declare al-Afram's *taṣqī'* a form of *zakāt* concurs with several of the *shaykh's* fatwas, which state that money taken by the sultan for an expenditure like defence can be considered as a form

¹⁹⁶ Denise Aigle, 'The Mongol Invasion of Bilād Al-Sham by Gāzān Khān and Ibn Taymīyah's Three "Anti-Mongol Fatwas"', *Mamlūke Studies Review* 11, no. 2 (2007): 89–120.

¹⁹⁷ Henri Laoust, *Essai Sur Les Doctrines Sociales et Politiques de Taḳī-D-Dīn Aḥmad B. Taimīya, Canoniste Ḥanbalite, Né À Harrān En 661/1262, Mort À Damas En 728/1328* (Cairo: l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale, 1939), 398.

of *zakāt*, provided that it is spent in the pursuit of *maṣlaḥa*.¹⁹⁸ In other words, Ibn Taymiyya seems to have been a proponent of a more pragmatic approach to *zakāt* than Ibn Jamā‘a, who, as we saw in the *Tahrīr al-Aḥkām*, demanded strict differentiation between *zakāt*, which he argued should be used in strict accordance with the Qur’anic stipulations, and the funds of the *bayt al-māl*, which he argued should be used for purposes that promoted general *maṣlaḥa* for example building an army.

In addition, Abdul Azim Islahi identifies another place in Ibn Taymiyya’s juridical writings that could explain why he would have been open to accepting methods of taxation such as the *taṣqī‘* of 700/1300.¹⁹⁹ Islahi mentions a fatwa by Ibn Taymiyya on what he calls *al-maẓālīm al-mushtaraka* (collective tyranny). This fatwa states that even though taxes on wealth and property, including fixed per capita taxes, were essentially tyrannical, they should be handled justly by the tax collectors, who should make sure to divide the burden evenly among the taxpayers. At the same time, the taxpayers themselves should pay what was required of them lest they inadvertently increase the burden on the rest of their community and become guilty of tyranny themselves.²⁰⁰ This point is especially relevant in relation to the Muqarrar al-Khiyāla because tax evasion through flight was indeed increasing the tax burden on the remaining population of Damascus. Ibn Taymiyya might then have interfered in order to prevent what he saw as tyranny not by the state, but by members of the Damascene community against their peers. As we saw above, Ibn Daqīq al-‘Īd accepted a politics of brute force, but refused to compromise the purity of the sharia by giving his blessing to the Muqarrar al-Khiyāla. In contrast, it seems that Ibn Taymiyya actively sought to make room for a sharia-based approach to taxation of civilians for military purposes, not only for the sake of making sharia seem relevant but also as a way to limit injustice in society.

However, in a further reference provided by Ibn Kathīr, we see that Ibn Taymiyya’s approval of the 700 tax was not without conditions, since he demanded that the money was spent according to the stated intent. When Egyptian forces left Syria and the reinforcement of the Damascene garrison failed to materialise, Ibn Taymiyya personally sought out the governor al-Afram and even proceeded to follow the Egyptian

¹⁹⁸ See, e.g., Taqī al-Dīn Ahmad ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm ibn Taymīyya, *Majmū‘ Fatāwā Shaykh al-Islām Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya 37 Vols.*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Bin Qāsim (Saudi Arabia: Wizārat al-shu‘ūn al-Islāmiyya wa-al-Awqāf wa-al-Da‘wa wa-al-Irshād, 2004), vol. 25, 81.

¹⁹⁹ Abdul Azim Islahi, *Economic Concepts of Ibn Taymiyyah* (Leicester, UK: The Islamic Foundation, 1988), 206.

²⁰⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū‘ Fatāwā* vol. 29, 337–355.

army until it reached Cairo, apparently in an attempt to hold the commanders accountable for the taxes they had collected. This insistence on accountability is also present in Ibn Taymiyya's theoretical writings on the relationship between rulers and their subjects. As Caterina Bori argues, Ibn Taymiyya's view of public finance in his politico-judicial treatise *al-Siyāsa al-Shar'īyya fī iṣlāḥ al-Rā'ī wa-al-Ra'īyya* is permeated by the idea of trusteeship (*amāna*). In the case of economic politics, public revenue does not become the property of those who collect it; rather, the collectors are to behave as agents or trustees and are responsible for spending it accordingly.²⁰¹ Ibn Taymiyya's approval of the extraction of the Muqarrar al-Khiyāla should be seen in the context of an equally important conviction that the governor and the Mamluk generals should live up to the responsibility that accompanied the funds they had been entrusted with.

When we turn from the Muqarrar al-Khiyāla in 700/1300 to the 711 tax, we get the impression that Ibn Taymiyya's willingness to allow rulers more flexibility in taxation had limits that he actively sought to impose. Ibn Taymiyya was in Cairo at the time of the protest. Between 707/1307 and 709/1310, he had been imprisoned in Alexandria because of complaints lodged against him by an Egyptian Sufi group. However, he was released in 709/1310 on the personal order of the sultan al-Nāṣir when the latter returned from his ten-month exile in Jordan and ousted the new sultan, al-Jāshankīr.²⁰² Ibn Taymiyya remained in Cairo until 712/1312; during this time, he corresponded with his relatives, friends and disciples in Damascus and also had some personal contact with the sultan.

According to Ibn Kathīr, Ibn Taymiyya was alerted by his connections to the situation in Damascus in the late summer of 711/1311, which led him to take up the case with the sultan:

It was said (*wa-qīla*) that the shaykh Taqī al-Dīn had heard about the matter [the taxes or Karāy's behaviour?] from the people Syria and had informed the sultan of it, and so he immediately send for him to be forcefully seized.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Caterina Bori, 'One or Two Versions of al-Siyāsa al-Shar'īyya of Ibn Taymiyya? And what do they tell us?', ASK Working Paper (Bonn, Annemarie Schimmel Kolleg, 2016).

²⁰² Donald P. Little, 'The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4, no. 3 (1973): 311–327, 312. Little further explains on page 325 that the sultan might have ordered the release of Ibn Taymiyya as means of striking back at some of the Egyptian 'ulamā', who had backed al-Jāshankīr's short-lived sultanate since many of them were also among the detractors of Ibn Taymiyya.

²⁰³ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 88.

I have found no other evidence of Ibn Taymiyya's involvement than this short notice. There is reason to be sceptical of it because it is reported only by Ibn Kathīr, and because he initiates it with the phrase *and it was said*, instead of simply writing it as a fact. Moreover, even if such an encounter did take place, there is reason to be sceptical of the direct connection that Ibn Kathīr makes between Ibn Taymiyya's advice to the sultan and the arrest of the governor. In chapter 5, we examine in closer detail how this report about Ibn Taymiyya fits with Ibn Kathīr's general portrayal of the *shaykh* and compare it with alternative portrayals crafted by other people who were part of his circles.²⁰⁴ However, if we regard this report in light of the discussion tied to the Muqarrar al-Khiyāla, it seems plausible that he would have intervened. As we saw above, Ibn Taymiyya sought to combine sharia law with the needs of the state without rendering the former irrelevant or constricting the latter through a more flexible interpretation of *maṣlaḥa* and the principle of trusteeship (*amāna*). Given that the situation in 711/1311 seems to have been much less dire than in 700/1300, it should not surprise us if Ibn Taymiyya felt that the 711 tax of 750.000 dirhams, a much higher sum than what had been demanded in earlier years, could not be defended as a necessary claim. Furthermore, the fact that Karāy chose to respond to the protest with dismissal, violence and arrests could certainly also be seen as a violation of his office, if we regard it through Ibn Taymiyya's eyes, as an entrusted mandate to promote the general welfare of the community.

VI. Conclusion: the Message and Effect of the 711 Protest

i. A moral economy of taxation?

As we have just seen, the legitimacy of *nafaqa* taxation was a contentious issue. On the one hand, successive Mamluk sultans attempted to secure stamps of sharia-ratification by seeking fatwas that supported their tax plans. While some jurists were apparently willing to sign such fatwas, at least three prominent Shāfi'īs, al-Sulamī, al-Nawawī and Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd, resisted. Meanwhile, Ibn Taymiyya adopted a more flexible approach, permitting *nafaqa* taxation when he regarded the purpose as sound, and resisting it when he did not. What emerges from these debates is the impression that the question of whether a tax was just cannot be answered unequivocally with reference to the sharia. Rather than resulting in a fixed answer, the appeal to sharia opens up a discursive field

²⁰⁴ See below, 184 - 190.

with contending positions. The question, then, is whether we can regard this discursive field as wide enough to include the largely non-verbal communication of the protesters on the 13th of Jumādā I/27th of September 1311.

In his article ‘Understanding Arab Protest Movements’ (1986), Edmund Burke III examines street protests in the Middle East and North Africa in the 18th–20th centuries as expressions of a wider set of Islamic notions of justice that he calls ‘the moral economy of Islam’.²⁰⁵ Under this conceptual heading, Burke groups Qur’ānic prohibitions on usury and non-canonically taxes together with injunctions on the ruler to govern justly, for example, by ensuring fair prices on foodstuffs, into ‘an Islamic social compact, which provided the moral basis of society’.²⁰⁶ Burke specifies that this moral economy was not a fixed code, but rather a set of symbols that could be employed by different parties, protesters as well as rulers, in accordance with their specific interests. Burke also specifies that while this moral economy was partially expressed in the legalistic language of the jurists, it could also be expressed ‘[...] in the language of Islamic notions of justice available to all [...]’.²⁰⁷

Burke’s concept is a fruitful prism for viewing the *nafaqa* conflicts of the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries. From the legal debates surveyed above, we get the clear impression that taxes were a moral issue, and that each contestant would present himself as the party defending justice. Furthermore, if we think about the sharia as a form of moral economy that is only partially expressed through *fiqh* (*jurisprudence*), we could see the fact that the 711 protesters chose to meet the governor with items evoking the purported period of just rule under the rightly-guided Caliphs, the figure of the prophet and the institution of the caliphate, as a non-legalistic appeal to an Islamic moral economy, presented either in lieu of or as a supplement to demands formulated in the language of *fiqh*. In other words, the protesters might have thought of these particular objects as embodying wider Islamic notions of justice that they felt were being violated by the 711 tax as a result of the tax in general and perhaps as the particular result of

²⁰⁵ Edmund Burke III, ‘Understanding Arab Protest Movements’, *Arab Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (1986): 333–345. As explained in Chapter 1, Burke borrows this concept from Edward P. Thompson, who used this concept to describe the agenda of city dwellers pillaging mills and grain-reserves. In Mamluk Studies, it has been used in this specific sense by Boaz Shoshan in his 1980 article on Cairene grain riots. However, since Burke broadens the concept of ‘the moral economy’ beyond the question of food security, I use his adaptation of the concept even though he uses it with respect to the 17th and 18th centuries. Boaz Shoshan, ‘Grain Riots and the “Moral Economy”’: Cairo, 1350–1517’, *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 10, no. 3 (1980): 459–478.

²⁰⁶ Burke, 1986, 335.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 343.

Karāy's decision to extend the tax to include the *awqāf*. In this light, the expression that al-Ṣafadī ascribes to the protesters, '*al-muṣḥaf mā yuradd*', could reveal a conviction that they were invoking a foundational Islamic notion of just taxation that they understood to be embodied in the special Qur'ān codex housed in the Umayyad Mosque.

The wielding of the banners, the Qur'ān and the sandal as non-verbal calls for Islamic justice, does not, however, exclude the possibility that they were also intended to bestow *baraka* on the protesters or to represent local Damascene patriotism in the face of Mamluk rule, as argued above. Rather, we should think of these items as endowed with multiple layers of meaning, all of which could have been put into play by the 711 protesters in order to bolster their claims against what they saw as excessive taxation.

ii. Did the 711 protest work?

Earlier in this chapter, we saw that the protest appears to be part of a wider process of negotiation. The question that has not yet been answered is how effective it was. Looking at the immediate aftermath, as described in the Damascene sources, the protest seems to have been very effective. Using a combination of negotiation, protest and more negotiation, the Damascenes apparently prompted Karāy to lower the claim from 750.000 to 200.000 dirhams and restrict the tax base to a smaller group of wealthy individuals.

However, as mentioned above, the case does not stop there. Ten days after the protest, on Thursday the 23rd of Jumādā I/7th of October, governor Karāy was deposed and arrested by Sayf al-Dīn Arghūn (d. 731/1330–31), the sultan's *dawādār* (inkwell-bearer, or master of ceremonies). The governor was brought in chains to exile at the Jordanian fortress of Karak where he remained for several years. Three weeks after the arrest, the 711 tax was officially abolished by a sultanic decree, which was read out in the Umayyad Mosque on Friday the 16th of Jumādā II/29th of October. According to al-Jazarī*, this declaration included the following words:

Verily when we [the sultan] learned of the weakening (*da'f*) of the city and of its people we forfeited what we had demanded, out of consideration and kindness towards them (*min al-ra'iyya wa-al-iḥsān ilayhim*) and out of objection against what had come from Sayf al-Dīn Karāy.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁸ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1440–1441.

In light of this decree, the protesters seem to have been successful not only in affecting tax policies on the local level, but also in their ability to affect politics on the imperial level, leading the sultan to arrest the governor and abolish the tax. It is exactly this image of a successful protest with imperial effect that several Damascene chroniclers strive to promote.²⁰⁹ However, before we buy into the conclusion of the local contemporary sources, it is necessary to take a brief look at the contextual information about the position of Sayf al-Dīn Karāy al-Manṣūrī in Mamluk politics around 711/1311.

As mentioned above, Karāy was part of a wider group of Manṣūrī amirs who had supported al-Nāṣir's return to the throne in 709/1310, and who had been rewarded accordingly with high positions. However, in the fall of 711/1311, parallel with the unfolding of the tax conflict in Damascus, al-Nāṣir initiated an arrest campaign among the higher echelons of the Mamluk establishment. This purge was concentrated around the Manṣūrī amirs he had promoted during the previous year. The official reason for the purge was that al-Nāṣir suspected an imminent coup. Whether or not his concerns were justified, the purge led to the deposition and imprisonment of the accused coup leader, the viceroy (*nā'ib al-salṭana*) of Egypt, Baktamur al-Jūkandār al-Manṣūrī (d. 711/1311). Al-Jūkandār's arrest was followed by the arrest of several Manṣūrī governors in Syria who, like Karāy, had originally come out in support of al-Nāṣir in 709/1310.

Looking at the wider political context beyond Damascus, it is very likely that Karāy had already been singled out for deportation as part of this purge, and that his arrest simply coincided with the tax conflict. In this light, we should perhaps ascribe only a partial role to the protesters in causing Karāy's downfall. The protest and especially Karāy's violent handling of it might then have betrayed his strained relations with the civilian population of Damascus, which could have made him an easier target for the sultan's arrest campaign.

As for the tax itself, cases from previous decades indicate that mobilisation taxes were malleable and frequently subject to renegotiations and exemptions when the political situation changed. For example, in 700/1300, property and agricultural taxes in Damascus were abolished once the imminent threat of invasion had abated.

Thus, we can speculate that the rumours of Ilkhānite troop movements reported by al-Nuwayrī had simply failed to materialise, and that the 711 tax was deemed

²⁰⁹ See below, 181-184.

unnecessary from a military perspective.²¹⁰ In this case, the lofty words of the sultanic decree that was read out on the 16th of Jumādā II 711 /29th of October 1311 could thus have been no more than a case of sultanic propaganda: an attempt to gloss over a pragmatic administrative decision to abolish the tax while at the same time heightening the sultan's local popularity at the expense of a governor, who had already been singled out as a political enemy and a candidate for deportation.

²¹⁰ al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* vol. 15 pt. 32, 136.

Chapter 3 – Taḥt al-Qal‘a: a medieval Islamic ceremonial space

I. Introduction

This chapter adds an additional facet to one of the main the arguments presented in Chapter 2: that the protest of 711/1311 was not a haphazard spontaneous incident, but a coordinated strategy of urban politics that connected with broader patterns of political culture. While the previous chapter explored the symbolic meanings associated with the objects used by the protesters, this chapter explores their choice of venue and through it the connection between political culture and urban space.

Three of the accounts of the 711 protest used in Chapter 2 identify the destination for the protest march as the extra-mural suburb of Taḥt al-Qal‘a (Below the Citadel), which was located north of the Barāda River across from the northern ramparts of the citadel. According to the three authors, al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333), al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363), and al-Jazarī* (d. 738/1338), the 711/1311 protesters left the walled city via Bāb al-Farraj and marched to Sūq al-Khayl, the horse market of Damascus, which was located in the centre of Taḥt al-Qal‘a. It was here that they met the governor and his entourage and here that the protest procession escalated into violence.²¹¹

I argue in this chapter that the choice of Sūq al-Khayl as the destination of the march was not coincidental but premediated and charged with symbolic meaning. As I demonstrate below, the history of this particular area between the 6th/12th and 8th/14th centuries shows that Taḥt al-Qal‘a had been the subject of the attention of local rulers since the emergence of the urban citadel as a political centre in the 6th/12th century. Lying just below the citadel walls, the Taḥt al-Qal‘a was gradually cultivated into a royal ceremonial zone designed to represent the power of the ruling prince or sultan. This made Taḥt al-Qal‘a a highly significant choice as protest venue for groups that sought to present their claims to the political order.

²¹¹ Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab 33 Pts. in 15 Vols.*, ed. Najīb M. Fawwāz and Hikmat K. Fawwāz (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2004), vol. 15 pt. 33, 137; Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *A ‘yān al-‘Asr wa-A ‘wān al-Naṣr 6 Vols.*, ed. ‘Alī Abū Zayd et al. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1998), vol. 4, 153; .Quṭb al-Dīn Mūsā ibn Muḥammad al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mir‘āt al-Zamān: Tārīkh al-Sanawāt m1312–1297/ h711 - 697*, ed. Ḥamza A. ‘Abbās (Abu Dhabi: Hay‘at Abū Zaby lil-Thaqāfa wa-al-Turāth, al-Majma‘ al-Thaqāfi, 2007), 1435. As explained in Chapter 1, I subscribe to Li Guo’s theory that the 697–702 section of the *Dhayl Mir‘āt al-Zamān* is al-Yūnīnī’s *synthesis* of al-Jazarī’s chronicle entries for this period, while the 702–711 section of the *Dhayl* is written by al-Jazarī* and misidentified by a later copyist as belonging to the *Dhayl*. In the maintext I identify the author of the 697–702 section as *al-Yūnīnī/al-Jazarī* while auhtor of the 702–711 section is identified as *al-Jazarī**. In footnotes, the *Dhayl* is referred to as *al-Yūnīnī, Dhayl, x* in keeping with the Abu Dhabi edition from 2007. See above, 25–27.

Earlier scholars of both Europe and the Islamic world have already established the argument that space mattered when medieval people staged official ceremonies, negotiations or even popular protests.²¹² This chapter draws particularly on Konrad Hirschler's 2007 article on protests and violence in the Mamluk period: 'Riten der Gewalt: Protest und Aufruhr in Kairo und Damaskus (13./7. bis 10./16. Jahrhundert)'. Hirschler's main argument is that protests in Damascus as well as Cairo followed consciously chosen patterns of behaviour, which he calls 'the rites of violence' (*Riten der Gewalt*).²¹³ An important part of these rites, he argues, was the patterned use of specific urban spaces: 'Protest processions followed geographical patterns that had developed on the basis of an awareness that certain spaces were suited for and worthy of protest'.²¹⁴ This chapter follows Hirschler's argument and seeks to explore the *protest worthiness* inherent in Taḥt al-Qal'a and Sūq al-Khayl.

However, the chapter will also contradict some of Hirschler's central conclusions about the geography of ceremonies and protests in Damascus. In Cairo, Hirschler argues, the geographic patterns of protest centred on the open space of the Cairene Sūq al-Khayl in al-Rumayla south of the citadel. In contrast, he states, the centre of the ceremonial geography of Damascus was the Umayyad Mosque. As for the surroundings of the citadel of Damascus, Hirschler looks only at the area within the walled city and concludes that this area was irrelevant for protests because it did not afford space for larger gatherings.²¹⁵

²¹² In one of many studies that have examined protests and urban topography in Medieval Europe, Joelle Rollo-Koster and Alizah Holstein have shown that the message of Roman protesters in the 14th century can be decoded by examining their choice of procession routes. See Joelle Rollo-Koster and Alizah Holstein, 'Anger and Spectacle in Late Medieval Rome: Gauging Emotion in Urban Topography', in *Cities, Texts, and Social Networks, 400–1500: Experiences and Perceptions of Medieval Urban Space*, ed. C. Goodson, A. E. Lester, and C. Symes (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 149–74.

For the Islamic context, I recommend E. G. Heilman, whose 1978 Ph.D. thesis *Popular Protest in Medieval Baghdad, 295–334* argues convincingly that protesting groups in Baghdad during 4th/10th and 5th/11th centuries carefully chose the venue of their assemblies according to the nature of their grievance. See Elizabeth G. Heilman, 'Popular Protest in Medieval Baghdad, 295–334 AH' (Princeton University, Princeton, 1978). Likewise, Nimrod Luz has demonstrated in *The Mamluk City in the Middle East – History, Culture and the Urban Landscape* that manipulating the venue of negotiations was an indispensable part of power struggles between different confessional groups in 8th/14th century Jerusalem. See Nimrod Luz, *The Mamluk City in the Middle East – History, Culture and the Urban Landscape* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

²¹³ Konrad Hirschler, 'Riten der Gewalt: Protest und Aufruhr in Kairo und Damaskus (7./13. Bis 10./16. Jahrhundert)', in *Islamwissenschaft Als Kulturwissenschaft; I: Historische Anthropologie. Ansätze Und Möglichkeiten*, ed. S. Conermann, S. and v. Hees (Schenefeld (Hamburg): EB-Verlag, 2007), 205–233.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 211. NB: My translation from the original German.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 212–213.

Hirschler is right to highlight the significance of the Umayyad Mosque. However, I argue that we cannot understand the 711 protest or the geography of Medieval Damascene politics in general without widening the scope of our examinations beyond the walled city to include the extra-mural area of Taḥt al-Qal‘a, the customary scene of military and religious parades, executions and consequently protests in the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries.

Examining this space also has implications for how we understand not only the 711 protest but also the strategies of self-representation employed by the Mamluk regime within Damascene urban space. This allows us to modify Michael Chamberlain’s description of Mamluk rule in Damascus as *an audience state*, where representatives of the sultan abstained from ceremonial stagings of their own power, preferring instead to appear as prominent spectators of traditional performances.²¹⁶ We return to Chamberlain’s statement at several points in this chapter to see how the Taḥt al-Qal‘a and the practices that were tied to this place reflect on the concept of an audience state.

II. Urban Citadels: a 6th/12th to 8th/14th Century Perspective

The overarching aim of this section is to show that the *protest worthiness* of Damascus’s Taḥt al-Qal‘a was not based solely on the ceremonial practices that the Mamluk rulers staged in the area in the 8th/14th century. Rather, our examination needs to begin with a longer historical perspective extending from the 6th/12th century onward that relates how the surroundings of the citadel, hereunder the area that became known as Taḥt al-Qal‘a, emerged as part of a ‘royal space’ cultivated by successive rulers. Because this process of cultivation was not unique to Damascus but rather a part of a general reorientation of urban space in the cities under Zangid and Ayyubid rule from the 6th/12th century onwards, this section adopts a regional rather than a local perspective.

Nasser Rabbat mentions building activities on citadels in Aleppo, Homs, Hama, Baalbek and Damascus under Nūr al-Dīn Zangī (d. 569/1174), the most prominent examples besides Damascus being Cairo and Aleppo.²¹⁷ By the 8th/14th century, each of the three cities had a specific zone designated as Taḥt al-Qal‘a, which were the settings of similar ceremonial practices. The three cities illustrate that the emergence of a particular ceremonial space known as Taḥt al-Qal‘a has its roots in the rise of the citadel

²¹⁶ Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 48–49.

²¹⁷ Nasser O. Rabbat, *The Citadel of Cairo* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 1989), 14.

and its surroundings as the actual and symbolic centre of ruling power on a regional level. By comparing the development of these citadels and their surroundings, we can see that the ceremonial geography of Damascus was less exceptional and less dominated by the Mosque than we would immediately think. Moreover, its development resembles that of Cairo and Aleppo even though the pre-existing built environment of Damascus and the natural features of the landscape imposed specific limitations on urban development that made its ceremonial geography less coherent than in the other two cities.

i. Damascus, Aleppo, Cairo: three cities, three citadels

As the term *Taht al-Qal'a* implies, this space owes its importance first to the fact that it was an area that lay *below* the citadel. Both the Zangid and especially the early Ayyubid rulers initiated major development projects aimed at making the citadel the active political and administrative centre of their respective cities. The Citadel of Damascus (see Figure 1) lies at the north-western corner of the walled city, and its northern and western fortifications form an integral part of the course of the city wall. It was originally constructed in the 4th/10th century as a small defensive structure on the ruins of an ancient Roman *castrum*, but during the later 5th/11th and early 6th/12th century, it was gradually converted into a political and administrative centre, first by the Saljuq ruler Ṭurṭūsh I (d. 487-88/1095) and later by members of the Burid dynasty.²¹⁸ When Nūr al-Dīn conquered Damascus and ousted the Burids in 549/1154, he began a major urban development project aimed at making the city the capital of his realm; one of the major foci of this effort was the conversion of the Saljuq citadel into an abode suitable for a ruler. Without changing the original size, he fortified the walls and fitted the inner courtyard with a small palace and other amenities such as a *ḥammām*, a congregational mosque and a market. Nūr al-Dīn also added two gates to the city wall next to the citadel: Bāb al-Faraj at its north-eastern corner and Bāb al-Naṣr at its south-western corner. With Nūr al-Dīn's project, the citadel of Damascus effectively became a small city within the city.²¹⁹

²¹⁸ R. Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols – The Ayyubids of Damascus 1193–1260*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), 148.

²¹⁹ Its self-sustainability was further increased by the fact that the Baniyas stream, which brought water to the walled city, entered via the citadel, thus making it possible to control the water resources from within its walls. For general information on the citadel, see Ross Burns, *Damascus. A History* (London: Routledge, 2005), 164. For particular information on the water resource, see Sophie Berthier, 'La Citadelle de Damas: Les Apports D'une Étude Archéologique', in *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria – From the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 2006), 151–64, 158.

However, the citadel of the Mamluk period owes little to Nūr al-Dīn's design. It was instead the result of a protracted reformation of the citadel initiated in 604/1207–8 by the Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-ʿĀdil (d. 615/1218), who was the younger brother of the famous Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Ayyūbī (d. 589/1193). In 598/1202, al-ʿĀdil had definitively out-manoeuvred his nephews, the sons of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn, in the struggle for the title of sultan of the Ayyubid federation.²²⁰ Although he appointed his son al-Muʿazzam ʿIsā (d. 624/1227) as amir of Damascus, al-ʿĀdil personally took up residence in the city for a number of years and embarked on several major construction and renovation projects that included the citadel, the Umayyad Mosque and the open-air prayer grounds of al-Muṣallā south of the walled city.²²¹ Al-ʿĀdil's changes to the citadel were extensive: the ground plan was expanded to its present 220 x 150 metres and the walls were razed and built anew. Furthermore, 11 imposing towers more than 30 metres high were built along its perimeter. The entire construction was finished in 613–14/1217.²²²

Like its Damascene counterpart, the citadel of Aleppo (See Figure 2) is an older fortified position on the edge of the medieval city, which was turned into an impressive palatial and administrative stronghold in the late 6th/12th and early 7th/13th century. As in Damascus, the citadel of Aleppo was not the geographical centre of the Ayyubid city. It lay instead on a natural hill formation east of the city centre, and constituted an elevated interruption of the course of the city wall.²²³ A palatial structure was built on the site by the Mirdasid dynasty in the 5th/11th century, and Nūr al-Dīn added fortifications to the hill after he inherited the city in 541/1146.²²⁴

²²⁰ The title 'sultan' in this period did not connote the centralised power of the Mamluk period. The Ayyubid sultan should rather be regarded as the head of a federation of princedoms with varying degrees of independence. For a detailed account of these struggles, see chapter 3 in Humphreys, 1977.

²²¹ Lorenz Korn argues that even though Cairo was the capital of the federation, Damascus remained its symbolic centre. As an example, he points to the fact that many Ayyubid princes built both representative palaces and family mausoleums here, even though they were based in other cities. See Lorenz Korn, 'Ayyubidische Architektur in Ägypten Und Syrien – Bautätigkeit Im Kontext von Politik Und Gesellschaft 564–658/1169–1260' (University of Tübingen, Tübingen, 1999), 153.

²²² Jean Sauvaget, 'La Citadelle de Damas', *Syria* 1 (1930): 59–90, 79–80.

²²³ The Ayyubid walls were destroyed by the Mongols in 658/1260. When they were rebuilt in the 790s/1390s, the wall was extended east around the citadel, thus adding the suburban areas behind the citadel to the walled city. See Jean Sauvaget, *Alep: Essai Sur Le Développement D'une Grande Ville Syrienne, Des Origines Au Milieu Du XIXe Siècle. Texte* (Paris: Geuthner, P., 1941), 166–167; Anne-Marie Eddé, 'Alep', in *Grandes Villes Méditerranéennes Du Monde Musulman Medieval*, ed. J.C. Garcin (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 2000), 157–175, 166.

²²⁴ Julia Gonella, 'The Citadel of Aleppo: Recent Studies', in *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria – From the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 2006), 165–75, 168–169 and Heinz Gaube and Eugen Wirth, *Aleppo: Historische Und Geographische Beiträge Zur Baulichen Gestaltung, Zur Sozialen Organisation Und Zur Wirtschaftlichen Dynamik Einer vorderasiatischen Fernhandelsmetropole*, (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert, 1984), 172.

It was, however, during the rule of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn's eldest son al-Zāhir Ghāzī (d. 613/1216) that the major development took place. Al-Zāhir Ghāzī ruled Aleppo from 581–82/1186 until his death; during this time, he invested immense sums in the renovation of the citadel. On top of the hill he built a new palatial structure known as Dār al-ʿIzz (The House of Honor/Power), and in order to highlight the way the complex towered over the city, he had the sides of the hill covered in white limestone slabs. However, his most monumental contribution was the construction of a majestic access ramp that rose above the hillside and ended in an imposing portal tower at the top. The palace, portal tower and access ramp of al-Zāhir Ghāzī became part of an east–west axis that connected the citadel with the city as a new processional road starting at the Dār al-ʿIzz and leading through the portal to the foot of the citadel, past Aleppo's Umayyad Mosque at the city center and ending at the western city gate of Bāb Anṭākiā.²²⁵

The case of the citadel of Cairo (See Figure 3) differs from that of Damascus and Aleppo in so far as there was no pre-Zangid citadel to transform. Its construction was initiated *ex nihilo* by Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn in the 570s/1170s as part of his effort to unify and integrate the old Fatimid palatial city of al-Qāhira with the popular quarters of al-Fuṣṭāṭ. As part of this unification project, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn began building a long city wall that would encompass both al-Qāhira and al-Fuṣṭāṭ, the latter of which had no previous fortifications. As in Damascus and Aleppo, the citadel was erected as an 'interruption' of the course of the city wall. It was located on the eastern flank in between the two former city centres on a natural hill formation known as al-Muqaṭṭam. Henceforth, the areas west of this hill would be the centre of the Ayyubid and Mamluk city of Cairo. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn did not live to see his wall and citadel finished; it was al-Malik al-Kāmil (d. 635/1238), al-ʿĀdil's son and successor, who completed it in the 2nd decade of the 7th/13th century. It appears that the ambitious, all-encompassing wall project was dropped after the death of Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn; his successors concentrated on fortifying the citadel and developing the surrounding areas.²²⁶

The citadels, which towered over the Ayyubid cities of the 7th/13th century, fulfilled more than a defensive or administrative function. As Rabbat puts it, the princes who inhabited them regarded them as:

²²⁵Gaube and Wirth, 1984, 172 and 162.

²²⁶Rabbat, 1989, 75–76.

[...] the physical manifestation of their power and dominion which was emphasized by the trappings of sovereignty such as the royal insignia and the gilded titulatures carved or inscribed on their surfaces or the banners and flags hanging from their ramparts and towers.²²⁷

Jere L. Bacharach and Yasser Tabbaa have developed this argument further by arguing that the citadel can be interpreted as a way to cultivate a ruling culture in the 5th/11th–6th/12th centuries based on the visible but demarcated presence of the ruler within the urban sphere. Whereas earlier ruling groups distanced themselves horizontally from their subjects in secluded palatial complexes, the new citadels signalled that the new ruling house was at the same time an integrated part of the urban fabric and vertically raised above it.²²⁸ When we discuss the ceremonial zones called Taḥt al-Qal‘a that emerged immediately below the walls of all these citadels during the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries, we should understand them essentially as extensions of these symbols of the ruler’s presence within the urban fabric.

Before turning our focus to Taḥt al-Qal‘a, we should note the following shift in the status of citadels. The end of the Ayyubid period and the beginning of the Mamluk period brought a shift from a federation of princedoms towards a centralised sultanate, which was also reflected in the changing functions of the urban citadels. The citadel of Cairo remained the palace of the Mamluk sultan until the beginning of the 10th/16th century, and as such retained both its administrative functions and symbolic position as the seat of sultanic power. Meanwhile, the role of the citadels of Damascus and Aleppo changed drastically, as these cities were reduced to mere provincial capitals.

When Sultan Baybars (d. 676/1277) consolidated Egyptian control over Syria after the defeat of the Ilkhānite Mongols in 658/1260, he introduced a division of power in Damascus and Aleppo between the two military officers: the *nā’ib al-salṭana*, the governor of the city and the surrounding province, and the *nā’ib al-qal‘a*, the commander of the citadel, who was given complete authority over the citadel and its resident garrison. In practical terms, the citadels of Damascus and Aleppo became independent entities isolated from the local urban fabric and outside the control of the

²²⁷ Ibid., 83.

²²⁸ Jere L. Bacharach, 'Administrative Complexes, Palaces and Citadels: Changes in the Loci of Medieval Muslim Rule', in *The Ottoman City and Its Parts – Urban Structure and Social Order*, ed. Irene A Bierman, A. Abou-El-Haj Rifa’at, and Donald Preziosi (New York: New Rochelle, 1991), 111–128; Yasser Tabbaa, 'Defending Ayyubid Aleppo: The Fortifications of Al-Zāhir Ghāzī (1186–1216)', in *Muslim Military Architecture in Greater Syria – From the Coming of Islam to the Ottoman Period*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 2006), 176–183.

governor. They were intended as advanced bases of sultanic power able to withstand a local rebellion or hostile takeover of the surrounding city. In symbolic terms, they ceased to represent the power of a local independent ruler, and became instead a symbol of the authority of the remote Mamluk sultan of Cairo.²²⁹

The new role of the citadel as symbol of sultanic power becomes visible in descriptions of the ceremonies that played out around it. On certain occasions, both the governors of Damascus and Aleppo would march to a specific gate of the respective citadels to signify their submission and loyalty to the sultan.²³⁰ However, these gates were just one element in an increasingly complex network of ceremonial spaces that came to surround the urban citadel.

ii. The surroundings of the citadel and their ceremonial function

The imposing structure of the citadel alone provided a strong manifestation of the ruler's power in the city, be he an independent local prince or a remote sultan. However, as Yasser Tabbaa argues, we also need to consider the symbolic significance of the citadel's surroundings from the Zangid period onward:

[...] though impregnable and separate from the city, these citadels had to be linked with it through various physical and ceremonial ways. This linkage was quite often manifested in public squares beneath the citadel.²³¹

In Aleppo as well as in Damascus and Cairo, Nūr al-Dīn and his successors did indeed cultivate the areas adjacent to the citadel and made them flourish as zones of interaction. Between the 6th/12th and 8th/14th centuries, the areas south and east of the citadel of Damascus became dotted with a hospital, numerous madrasas and *ḥadīth*-colleges, as well as mausoleums endowed by the rulers. In Aleppo, several madrasas were also

²²⁹ Sauvaget, 1941, 167; Gaube and Wirth, 1984, 172. In the case of Damascus, a temporary division had already been introduced in 643/1245 when the Ayyubid Sultan in Cairo al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb (d. 647/1249) took control of the city and divided the power over Damascus between a *wālī al-madīna* (the commander of the city) and a *wālī al-qal'a* (the commander of the citadel). This division of power was suspended in 649/1250 when al-Nāṣir Yūsuf (d. ?), the prince of Aleppo, exploited the turmoil in Egypt that followed al-Ṣāliḥ Ayyūb's death in order to take over Damascus. He held the city for a decade until the arrival of the Mongols. See Humphreys, 1977, 290 and Cyril Yovitchitch, *Fortresses Du Proche-Orient – L'architecture Militaire Des Ayyoubides* (Paris: Presse de l'université Paris-Sorbonne, 2011), 63.

²³⁰ For Aleppo, see Sauvaget, 1941, 169. For Damascus, see, e.g., Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Abū Bakr al-Jazarī, *Tārīkh Ḥawādith al-Zamān wa-Anbā'ihī wa-Wafayāt al-Akābir wa-al-A'yān min Abnā'ihī 3 Vols.*, ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmūrī (Ṣaydā - Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, 1998), vol. 2, 463. Henri Sauvaire, 'Description de Damas: 'Oyūn et-Tawārīkh (Les Sources Des Chroniques) Par Moḥammad Ebn Chāker / Toḥfat El Anām fī Fadāil Ch-Chām Par Chams Ed-Dīn Aboul 'Abbās Aḥmad Ebn Moḥammad El Bosrāwy', *Journal Asiatique* 7, no. Mai-Juin (1896): 369–459, 426.

²³¹ Tabbaa, 2006, 178.

constructed on the western and southern side of the citadel, which gave the area a clear politico-religious character.²³² The *maydān* (hippodrome) also became an early important feature of the citadels' surroundings, where rulers could demonstrate their military might through polo games and military parades.

In particular, the image of the ruler as the just arbiter and punisher of wrongs also found its expression near the citadels with the so-called *Dār al-ʿAdl* (House of Justice). Structures bearing this name were built south of the citadel in Damascus, and in Aleppo and Cairo between 544–45/1150 and 658/1260, and were designed as the seat of the weekly or twice-weekly *mazālim* (grievances) court, where the ruler or a trusted deputy reviewed the grievances of the subject population outside the normal framework of the sharia courts of the judge (*qāḍī*). While the actual observance of the *mazālim* tradition differed from ruler to ruler, the physical presence of the *Dār al-ʿAdl* marked and identified an area adjacent to the citadel as an intermediate zone where the justice of the ruler was available to his subjects.²³³ After Baybars's division of power in Aleppo and Damascus in 658/1260, the *Dār al-ʿAdl* was renamed *Dār al-Saʿāda* (the House of Felicity) and became the palatial seat of the governor of the city and province. The buildings continued to be used for *mazālim* sessions with the governor acting as deputised arbiter.

iii. The formation of the Taḥt al-Qalʿa

When examining the ceremonial importance of the 8th/14th century areas known as *Taḥt al-Qalʿa*, it is important to keep in mind that they were partially the product of a long-term process of creating a spatial representation of the authority, benevolence, piety and military power of the ruling sovereign in connection to the citadels, which began with the founding of the citadels themselves.

a. Aleppo and Cairo

Because the zones in both Aleppo and Cairo where the *maydāns* and the *Dār al-ʿAdl* were located were part of what became *Taḥt al-Qalʿa*, we can speak of the development of a coherent ceremonial space for the manifestation of the ruler's authority in these two

²³² Edde, 2000, 162.

²³³ Nasser O. Rabbat, 'The Ideological Significance of The Dar Al-Adl in The Medieval Islamic Orient', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 27, no. 1 (1995): 3–28. The *mazālim* phenomenon can be traced back in Islamic political culture at least to the 8th century. However, the designation of independent physical structures as the House of Justice is an innovation of the 6th/12th century. *Ibid.*, 6.

cities. The area identified as Taḥt al-Qal‘a in Aleppo was the stretch of land that extended between the citadel’s main gate and the middle of its southern ramparts (See Figure 4). As early as the 540s/1140s, Nūr al-Dīn constructed a *maydān* at the southern foot of the Aleppo citadel immediately beyond the eastern city wall. But the ceremonial development of this area really picked up speed under Al-Zāhir Ghāzī, who singled out the area around Nūr al-Dīn’s *maydān* to create a special zone of interaction between the citadel and the city. The two main structures that made up this zone were the joint Shāfi‘ī/Ḥanafī madrasa, Madrasat al-Sultāniyya (perhaps a statement of Al-Zāhir Ghāzī’s ambition to head the Ayyubid federation) and the Dār al-‘Adl. Al-Zāhir Ghāzī also added a second wall behind the Dār al-‘Adl, which together with the city wall and the southern flank of the citadel created a closed-off pocket as a form of appendix to the citadel.²³⁴ In this way, Al-Zāhir Ghāzī had created a smaller controlled zone of interaction beneath the citadel that would become the centre of the Aleppan Taḥt al-Qal‘a.

However, the establishment of a wider open space that included facilities for the army beneath the citadel did not happen before the Mongol assault on the city in 658/1260 and the subsequent establishment of Mamluk rule. The Mongols razed the city walls, destroying al-Ghāzī’s confined zone of interaction, and burned down both the Madrasat al-Sultāniyya and the Dār al-‘Adl. The Mamluks quickly rebuilt the Dār al-‘Adl and renamed it Dār al-Sa‘āda, making it, as previously noted, the seat of the local governor.²³⁵ At some point between 658/1260 and 710/1310, Sūq al-Khayl (the Horse Market), was moved from the south-western suburb of al-Ḥāḍir to the area between the main citadel gate and the Dār al-Sa‘āda.²³⁶

Over the course of the following century, the Dār al-Sa‘āda, the Sūq al-Khayl and the main gate of the citadel of Aleppo made up the ceremonial setting for the local Mamluk governor’s twice-weekly inspection parades. During these parades, the governor would muster his troops in Sūq al-Khayl and march them to the gate of the citadel as a sign of respect for the sultan, after which the troops would return to the Dār

²³⁴ Yasser Tabbaa, 'Circles of Power: Palace, Citadel, and City in Ayyubid Aleppo', *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 181–200. The access from the city to this pocket was facilitated via a gate called Bāb al-Saghīr; from the citadel, a covered walkway reserved for the ruler led down the southern ramparts, which allowed him to observe without being seen or appear without warning. Tabbaa, 1993, 183 and Rabbat, 1995, 9–10.

²³⁵ Sauvaget, 1941, 169.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 170; Glaube and Wirth, 1984, 96; Julien Loiseau, *Les Mamelouks – XIIIe–XVIe Siecle* (Paris: Editions du SEUIL, 2014), 222.

al-Sa‘āda where the governor would hold the *maẓālim* court.²³⁷ By the end of the 8th/14th century, the ceremonial importance of this zone was further heightened with the construction of the Congregational Mosque of Aqbughā Utrush (d. 806/1404), which was built on the southern edge of the Sūq al-Khayl around the end of the 8th/14th century. Henceforth, this mosque became the official ceremonial setting for the inauguration of new governors as well as the site where the governor would celebrate the two annual eids.²³⁸

The development of a ceremonial area called Taḥt al-Qal‘a in Cairo can also be traced back to the beginning of the 7th/13th century, but it followed a different pattern. As in Aleppo, the name came to cover an area immediately south of the citadel near the main entrance, but in Cairo, the maydān and Sūq al-Khayl came first. In 609–10/1213, al-Kāmil had the Sūq al-Khayl moved to the southern foot of the citadel east of the main gate to a square called al-Rumayla, which was henceforth known as both Sūq al-Khayl and al-Rumayla.²³⁹ South of al-Rumayla, he founded the maydān, which would become the site for, among other things, the annual celebration of the pilgrimage departure to Mecca (See Figure 5).²⁴⁰ From the time of al-Kāmil, but especially during the rule of Baybars, stables for the army were built around the Sūq al-Khayl, and later in 730s/1330s, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (d. 741/1341) erected several palaces for his trusted amirs in the area. These were called ‘stables’ even though they were palatial complexes attached to stables.

According to Loiseau, the names Sūq al-Khayl, al-Rumayla and Taḥt al-Qal‘a were used interchangeably in the late 7th/13th and early 8th/14th centuries, whereas the use of Taḥt al-Qal‘a became more frequent as amirs began to settle there.²⁴¹ A dār al-‘adl was not constructed in this area before 660/1262, when Baybars ordered an existing structure close to the main citadel gate renovated for the use of the *maẓālim* court.²⁴² This became known as Dār al-‘Adl al-Zāhirī and functioned as a courthouse until Baybars’s death. During the rule of his successor, Sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn (d.

²³⁷ Sauvaget, 1941, 169.

²³⁸ Loiseau, 2014, 222.

²³⁹ Rabbat, 1989, 76.

²⁴⁰ Doris Behrens-Abouseif et al. 'Le Caire', in *Grandes Villes Méditerranéennes Du Monde Musulman Medieval*, ed. J.C. Garcin (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 2000), 177–203, 201.

²⁴¹ Loiseau, 2014, 219–220.

²⁴² Some sources identify an older building in the northern enclosure of the citadel as Dār al-‘Adl al-Kāmilī, but Rabbat argues that no judicial procedures took place here, at least not before the 640s/1240s. See Rabbat, 1995, 11.

689/1290), it fell into disuse and the public royal receptions were moved into a new grand *iwān* (vaulted hall) in the southern enclosure of the citadel.

Later, al-Nāṣir Muḥammad built a similar *iwān* in the same place for use as a *dār al-‘adl*.²⁴³ However, even though the *maḏālim* court was now separated from the Taḥt al-Qal‘a, both the *iwān* of Qalāwūn and that of his son were constructed so that they had visual contact with the Sūq al-Khayl, thus retaining the sense of a coherent ceremonial space on the southern side of the citadel.

To summarise, we can say that in both Cairo and Aleppo the area that became known as Taḥt al-Qal‘a was the area at the southern foot of the citadel that had been developed since the early Ayyubid period. In both cities, it was here that the Dār al-‘Adl as well as the *maydāns* and the Sūq al-Khayl were built, albeit in a different order, which created a coherent zone that fulfilled practical purposes for the army and a space for representation of the ruler’s justice as well as his military might.

b. Damascus

In the case of Damascus, we can see that it lacks such a coherent zone. The southern and eastern flanks of the citadel of Damascus (See Figure 6), which faced the historical urban center, simply did not have space for all the institutions present in the Taḥt al-Qal‘a of Cairo and Aleppo. The area was too urbanised and the confines of the walled city too restrictive to allow the construction of a wider parade and manoeuvre grounds that could constitute a coherent zone of power and interaction. Instead, the same institutions found in the other two cities were separated and dispersed in a wider and more fragmented ceremonial space inside and outside the city walls. In the 550s/1150s, Nūr al-Dīn built two *maydāns* in Damascus, but placed them at some distance from the city walls: the al-Maydān al-Akhḍar (the Green Hippodrome) was located west of the walled city below the Barāda River and the Maydān al-Ḥāsa (the Gravel Hippodrome) was placed south of the city along the road that led to Jordan and the Hijaz.

Al-Maydān al-Akhḍar was encircled by a wall; in the Mamluk period, it seems to have been a space for equestrian exercises of the military closed to the general public. The Maydān al-Ḥāsa, on the other hand, was a larger open area used for citywide celebrations such as the departure of the annual Hajj caravan. The Dār al-‘Adl of Damascus was built by Nūr al-Dīn in the 550s/1160s across from the south-western

²⁴³ Ibid., 12–13.

section of the citadel and separated from it only by the road leading to the adjacent Bāb al-Jinān, Nūr al-Dīn's new western city gate, which Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn eventually rebuilt as Bāb al-Naṣr.

In the 'post-al-Ādil' citadel, a small gate named Bāb al-Sirr (literally, 'the secret gate') was placed in the southern citadel wall right across from the Dār al-Ādl, thus facilitating immediate access between the two structures.²⁴⁴ The Dār al-Ādl functioned as a *mazālim* court from the rule of Nūr al-Dīn until the early 7th/13th century, but at some point, the original building merged with the bigger private palace and the joint structure was renamed Dār al-Sa'āda.

As Rabbat explains, the details of the Dār al-Ādl's physical transformation and ownership during the Ayyubid period are very vague; all we can say is that it became the palace of the governor of Damascus at the beginning of the Mamluk period when it resumed its function as the seat of the *mazālim* court.²⁴⁵ Both the Dār al-Sa'āda and the Bāb al-Sirr became significant elements in the Mamluk topography of official ceremonies, which also included Taḥt al-Qal'a and especially Sūq al-Khayl (Part Two of this chapter provides more detail about this development.). The area northwest of the citadel, which came to be known as the Taḥt al-Qal'a of Damascus, is only vaguely described in the sources before the beginning of the 8th/14th century, but it seems to have been an open meadow until the first quarter of the 7th/13th century. The chronicler Ibn al-Qalānisī (d. 555/1160) calls the area Marj Bāb al-Ḥadīd (the meadow of the Iron Gate). The name indicates that the area bordered the gate called Bāb al-Ḥadīd (the Iron Gate), which was located at the middle of the Northern wall of the 'pre- al-Ādil' citadel, and served as its main exit.

It is clear that the *marj* already at this point was closely tied to the citadel and the needs of its masters: Ibn al-Qalānisī describes several occasions when military commanders set up camp in the area when they reached Damascus so as to be in immediate contact with the citadel.²⁴⁶ After al-Ādil's reconstruction of the citadel, we get the impression that the area came to function as a regular military manoeuvre and parade ground, a function that it retained into the Mamluk period. Its use for such activities is suggested by the tradition of constructing *ṭārimas* (covered wooden

²⁴⁴ I have not been able to establish whether this gate was also a feature of Nūr al-Dīn's original citadel. In addition to Rabbat, see also Figure 1 in Berthier, 2006.

²⁴⁵ Rabbat, 1995, 7.

²⁴⁶ See, e.g., Ḥamza Ibn Asad ibn al-Qalānisī, *Tārīkh Dimashq : 360–555 AH* (Damascus: Dār Ḥassān lil-Ṭibā'a wa-al-Naṣr, 1983), 158.

pavilions) on top of the towers overlooking the north-western flank of the citadel (See Figure 7).

The first such *ṭārīma* was built on top of the tower of Bāb al-Ḥadīd in the 2nd decade of the 7th/13th century by al-Mu‘azzam ‘Isā (d. 624/1227).²⁴⁷ From descriptions by the contemporary Damascene chronicler Abū Shāma al-Maḡdisī (d. 665/1267), we get the distinct impression that this *ṭārīma* was related to parade activities in Taḥt al-Qal‘a, which were also attended by the wider public. In the 618 entry of his diary-like chronicle known as the *Dhayl ‘alā al-Rawḍatayn*, Abū Shāma describes how he witnessed a parade staged by the prince and his brother al-Ashraf Mūsā (d. 635/1237) before a campaign against the crusaders:

The armies paraded below the citadel of Damascus while he [al-Ashraf] and his brother al-Mu‘azzam were in the *ṭayyāra*²⁴⁸ of the citadel and they went to Egypt on the first day of Jumādā II [July 22nd 1221]. I said: I was present below the citadel while these armies passed by amir after amir and people implored them and pronounced blessings for their victory. The strength of the Muslims was solidified and they were assured of victory.²⁴⁹

The building of similar *ṭārīmas* was repeated several times during the later 7th/13th and early 8th/14th centuries. In 658/1260, all towers of the citadel suffered heavily during the Mongol siege of the city. After capturing the city, the Mongols had the upper part of the towers dismantled in order to prevent any resisting groups from staging a rebellion from within the citadel.²⁵⁰ In the same year, after the Mongols had been driven from Syria, Sultan Baybars entered the city and ordered a restoration of the citadel, which included building a new large *ṭārīma*. Unlike that of al-Mu‘azzam, Baybars’s pavilion was built on the corner tower (*burj al-zāwiyya*), which as the chancery secretary Ibn Shaddād (d. 684/1285), his court chronicler, describes in his chronicle of Baybars’ rule, the *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ‘had an overview of both Sūq al-Khayl and the *maydāns*’.²⁵¹ On the

²⁴⁷ Korn, 1999 vol. 2, 153. William Brinner suggests an alternative placement of the *ṭārīma* on the northeastern tower of the citadel. *Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ṣaṣrā, A Chronicle of Damascus 1389–1397 by Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Ṣaṣrā – The Unique Bodleian Library Manuscript of Al-Durra Al-Muḍī‘a fī Al-Dawlā Al-Zāhiriyya 2 Vols.* Translated, edited and annotated by William Brinner. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), vol. 1, 63 n. 384.

²⁴⁸ According to Sauvaget, this term is used as a synonym for the *ṭārīma*. See Sauvaget, 1930, 80 n. 4.

²⁴⁹ Shihāb al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ismā‘īl Abū Shāma al-Maḡdisī, *Tarājīm Rijāl al-Qarnayn al-Sādis wa-al-Sābi‘ al-Ma‘rūf Bil-Dhayl ‘alā al-Rawḍatayn*, ed. Ibrahīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2002), 195. See also Humphreys, 1977, 168–169 for the reasons behind this mobilisation.

²⁵⁰ Burns, 2005, 197.

²⁵¹ Izz al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī ibn Shaddād, *Tārīkh al-Malik al-Zāhir*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥuṭayṭ (Wiesbaden: Frantz Steiner Verlag, 1983), 354. The use of the plural *al-maydān* implies that the *ṭārīma* afforded a view of both Maydān al-Akhḍar to the West and the old Greek Hippodrome, remnants of which could still be

basis of this reference, we can conclude that some form of marked location known as Sūq al-Khayl must have emerged in Taḥt al-Qal‘a before the arrival of Baybars, and that it already at this point enjoyed some measure of ceremonial importance.

In the 8th/14th century, there are several references to sultans appearing at the *ṭārīma* to observe events that took place in Taḥt al-Qal‘a. We can note as an example that according to Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), Sultan al-Malik al-Ṣāliḥ (d. 746/1345) sat there when he oversaw the execution of seven amirs in Taḥt al-Qal‘a on Monday 3rd of Shawwāl 745/7th of February 1345.²⁵² We can conclude that successive rulers of Damascus since the early 7th/13th century had consolidated the status of Taḥt al-Qal‘a as part of the ceremonial space that surrounded the citadel by ensuring the ruler a privileged panoramic view of what took place there. However, Baybars’s relocation of the *ṭārīma* also testifies to his wider interest in the developing the stretch of land extending westward from the citadel along the Barāda and the Banias. During his rule, he initiated a number of other building projects in Taḥt al-Qal‘a and further west.

Information on some of these projects is scattered over several pages of Ibn Shaddād’s chronicle. The following is a list the most important developments: between the Barāda and Banias rivers, Baybars converted an older mansion into his private palace, Qaṣr al-Ablaq (the Checkered Palace). The eastern gate of this palace opened up to the hippodrome built by Nūr al-Dīn, al-Maydān al-Akhḍar, around which Baybars erected a wall. He also connected al-Maydān al-Akhḍar to the northern bank of the Barāda with a wooden bridge fitted with shops. According to Ibn Shaddād, this bridge stretched from the northern gate of al-Maydān al-Akhḍar toward Sūq al-Khayl. Baybars, it seems, was very interested in developing the connection between his palace, the Maydān and the Sūq al-Khayl.²⁵³ In between these places, on the northern bank of the Barāda, he renovated three stable-complexes and around the Suq al-Khayl, he added a number of guesthouses, stables and storage facilities designated for envoys and Mongol warrior immigrants (*al-wāfidiyya*).²⁵⁴

seen to the north of *Taḥt al-Qal‘a*. Later, this tower was simply called *Burj al-Ṭārīma*. For the construction of this pavilion, see also Henri Sauvaire, 'Description de Damas: Chapitre 3 Sur Les Madrased (Collèges) Des Châfē'ites', *Journal Asiatique* 2, no. Mai-Juin (1894): 385–501, 428 n. 241 and Burns, 2005, 203.

²⁵² Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Umar Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya fī al-Tārīkh 20 pts. in 11 Vols.*, (Damascus: Dar Ibn Kathīr, 2010), vol. 8 pt. 16, 368–369. For two similar cases in the 790s/1390s, see Ibn Ṣaṣrā, *A Chronicle of Damascus*, vol. 1, 130 and 141.

²⁵³ Ibn Shaddād uses the expression ‘*al-ākhadh min bāb al-maydān ilā sūq al-khayl*’. One could not have crossed directly from al-Maydān al-Akhḍar to Sūq al-Khayl, since it lay at least some way to the east, but the intention seems to have been to facilitate traffic between these two places. Ibn Shaddād, 354.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 355.

Modern examinations of the area have shown that the building activity noted by Ibn Shaddād also coincided with a wider relocation of workshops and markets that catered specifically to the army, markets for leatherwork, weapons and provisions. These were henceforth also centred around Sūq al-Khayl.²⁵⁵ We get the clear impression that Baybars sought to continue and intensify the cultivation of Taḥt al-Qal‘a to form a practical military zone, but also a zone of sultanic representation. From the northern foot of the citadel through Taḥt al-Qal‘a and westward, the banks of the rivers were dotted with buildings bearing the sultan’s architectural fingerprints. Moreover, Ibn Shaddād also informs us that Baybars made sure to include references around this area to his son and heir, Muḥammad Baraka Khān (d. 678/1280), who succeeded him as sultan for a short period between 676 and 677/1277 and 1279 under the regnal title al-Malik al-Sa‘īd. The author states that Baybars erected a palatial complex and a *ḥammām* dedicated to his son outside the Bāb al-Ḥadīd and built another *ḥammām* further south outside Bāb al-Naṣr that was likewise dedicated to his son.²⁵⁶

However, when we move beyond the reign of Baybars, we see that the Taḥt al-Qal‘a and its surroundings was not simply a space where sultans created their own buildings side-by-side with those of their predecessors. The fact that Mamluk sultans did not constitute one dynasty but rather a succession of rulers from competing households is reflected by their alterations of urban space that often aimed to erase the legacy of earlier rulers or at least foregrounding that of their own household.²⁵⁷

With regard to the Taḥt al-Qal‘a of Damascus, we see this exemplified in 690/1291, when the sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl (d. 693/1293) initiated a campaign apparently aimed at clearing away parts of Baybars’s architectural legacy in the area. Al-Ashraf had been appointed sultan after the death of his father, al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn, in the fall of 689/1290. In the following spring, the new sultan undertook his first official visit to Damascus, and with him he brought the new governor of the city, the Amir ‘Alam al-Dīn al-Shujā‘ī (d. 694/1294). Al-Shujā‘ī had held influential posts, such as vizier and treasurer, during the rule of Qalāwūn, and had also accumulated extensive experience as leader of large-scale building projects such as Qalāwūn’s burial complex in Cairo.²⁵⁸ In

²⁵⁵ Nicola A. Ziadeh, *Urban Life in Syria under the Early Mamluks* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 80.

²⁵⁶ Ibn Shaddād gives the location of the palatial structure as ‘*fī-mā bayna al-jisr wa-bāb al-ḥadīd*’, indicating a placement on the banks of the river beneath the northern gate of the citadel. Ibn Shaddād, 354.

²⁵⁷ Rabbat mentions destruction by Qalāwūn of at least one building commissioned by Baybars in the name of his son in the Sūq al-Khayl area of Cairo. See Rabbat, 1989, 40–41.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 148–149.

Damascus, this experience was put to good use in 690/1292 when on the order of the sultan, al-Shujā'ī started a far-reaching process of demolition and renovation within and around Taḥt al-Qal'a. This process was described as follows in the chronicler al-Jazarī's account of the year 690/1291–92:

On the third of Shawwāl [September 28th 1291] the governor 'Alam al-Dīn al-Shujā'ī ordered the destruction of the Bridge of al-Zalābiyya²⁵⁹ and the stores that were on it as well as the destruction of what was built on the Banias river and the diverted creek beginning from Taḥt al-Qal'a until the borders of Bāb al-Maydān al-Akhḍar [...].²⁶⁰

Listing the buildings destroyed in the process, al-Jazarī goes on to include:

[...] dwellings, shops, three bazaars and two *khāns* and guesthouses, and the *ḥammām* built for al-Malik al-Sa'īd which had no equal in Damascus or on its outskirts. And the value of what they destroyed equaled 500.000 dirhams [...].²⁶¹

Al-Jazarī also records that al-Shujā'ī began demolishing and expanding the wall surrounding al-Maydān al-Akhḍar. Meanwhile, Ibn Kathīr reports that in the same period, a project of developing the citadel, which included building a new a *ḥārīma*, was also undertaken.²⁶²

What the chroniclers describe here seems like a concerted and far-reaching sultanic effort to clear the entire north-western flank of the citadel. Moreover, it seems this effort was at least partially designed to eradicate much of Baybars's legacy from Taḥt al-Qal'a. Some of the structures that were torn down, such as the *ḥammām* of al-Malik al-Sa'īd and the wall around al-Maydān al-Akhḍar, can be traced directly back to Baybars, while others, such as the guesthouses and khans, could also be identical to those referred to decades earlier by Ibn Shaddād. Neither Ibn Kathīr nor al-Jazarī tell us specifically what al-Shujā'ī built or intended to build in the cleared space, but one reference from the end of the 8th/14th century indicates that 100 years later, he was still associated with buildings around the Taḥt al-Qal'a. The Damascene chronicler Muḥammad Ibn Muḥammad Ibn

²⁵⁹ The Bridge of Zalābiyya spanned the Barāda River. It was rebuilt and is frequently identified in later sources as part of Taḥt al-Qal'a, but it is not possible to determine exactly where it stood or whether it was the bridge built by Baybars. See, e.g., Ibn Ṣaṣrā, *A Chronicle of Damascus* vol. 1, 45 + n. 278, 84, 142.

²⁶⁰ al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith* vol. 1, 59–60. According to Loiseau, this is the first time Taḥt al-Qal'a appears as a regular toponym. See Loiseau, 2014, 223.

²⁶¹ al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith* vol. 1, 59–60.

²⁶² Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 15, 551.

Şaşrā (d. after 801/1399) states that al-Shujā'ī was '[...] he who built those buildings above Burj al-Ṭarīma in the days of al-Malik al-Ashraf Khalīl'.²⁶³

The 690s/1290s were a politically tumultuous decade for the Mamluk Empire. In this period, further large-scale development projects in Damascus were prevented by internal struggles for power among former members of the Manşūrī corps.²⁶⁴ Moreover, the decade ended with the occupation of Syria by the Mongol Ilkhān Ghazān (699/1299–1300). Despite the brevity of this occupation, the destruction in Damascus was extensive: the intra-mural quarter around the citadel was badly damaged and the northern suburb of al-'Uqayba was almost completely destroyed.²⁶⁵

Apart from the immediate damage to the city, the political situation in Syria remained unstable for the better part of the following decade: little building activity is recorded in this period as we approach 711/1311. This changed under the third reign of al-Nāşir Muḥammad, especially between 712/1312 and 738/1338, when the governorship in Damascus was in the hands of an ambitious urban planner, the amir Sayf al-Dīn Tankiz (d. 740/1340), a favourite confidant of sultan (until the sultan had him incarcerated and killed on conspiracy charges). Tankiz's personal impact on the urban landscape in Damascus was significant: it included large monuments, such as the Jāmi' Tankiz – a Friday Mosque located between Bāb al-Naşr and Maydān al-Akhḍar.

Ellen Kenney has examined Tankiz's urban development programmes in detail and has demonstrated his interest in also improving the road network of Damascus.²⁶⁶ Kenney shows that in the years 730–32/1330–32, Tankiz's development projects focused on clearing and expanding the major roads in the extra-mural quarters and creating a 'ring road' leading around the city.²⁶⁷ This project included clearing away shops in the area between Bāb Jābiyya and Bāb al-Naşr and further north to Sūq al-Khayl. A wide avenue was created that connected Sūq al-Khayl with the processional road leading south from Bāb Jābiyya through the suburb of al-Muşallā and past the Maydān al-Ḥāsa. This avenue was called al-Ṭarīq al-'Uẓmā (the grand road); at Sūq al-

²⁶³ Ibn Şaşrā, *A Chronicle of Damascus* vol. 1, 239.

²⁶⁴ For details on this struggle, see above, 39-41.

²⁶⁵ Mamoun Fansa, *Damaskus-Aleppo: 5000 Jahre Stadtentwicklung in Syrien; [Begleitschrift Zur Sonderausstellung Damaskus-Aleppo. 5000 Jahre Stadtentwicklung in Syrien]* (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp Zabern, 2000), 119. .

²⁶⁶ Ellen Kenney, 'Power and Patronage in Mamluk Syria: The Architecture and Urban Works of Tankiz Al-Nasiri, 1312–1340' (New York University, New York, 2004); Ellen Kenney, *Power and Patronage in Medieval Syria: The Architecture and Urban Works of Tankiz Al-Nasiri, Chicago Studies on the Middle East* (Chicago: Middle East Documentation Center, University of Chicago, 2009).

²⁶⁷ Kenney, 2004, 115.

Khayl; it met with al-Ṭarīq al-Sulṭānī, another main traffic artery that Tankiz built at the same time.²⁶⁸ This second road ran along the northern wall of the city and connected Taḥt al-Qal‘a with the areas east of Bāb al-Faradīs. The project also included renovating the facades which faced the avenues: in Ṣafar 732/November of 1331, all facades from Sūq al-Khayl to Bāb al-Faradīs were whitewashed, and later in Sha‘bān 732/April-May of 1332, the same was done to the facades between Sūq al-Khayl and al-Muṣallā.²⁶⁹ Upon completion, al-Ṭarīq al-‘Uzmā and al-Ṭarīq al-Sulṭānī created a wide road system that connected the north-eastern outskirts of the city with the citadel area and led south to al-Muṣallā, where the two annual eid ceremonies took place, and further along, the departure route of the annual pilgrimage caravan. At the critical intersection between the two roads lay Taḥt al-Qal‘a.²⁷⁰

Over the further course of the 8th/14th century, Taḥt al-Qal‘a continued to receive the attention of patron builders. In 746/1346, Sayf al-Dīn Yalbughā al-Yaḥyawī (d. 648/1347), the governor of Damascus, commissioned a Friday Mosque known as Jāmi‘ Yalbughā. This was a square mosque with a north-facing courtyard placed immediately west of Sūq al-Khayl.²⁷¹ Further east, Yalbughā commissioned a bazaar complex that also bore his name.²⁷² Toward the end of the 8th/14th century, the area sustained several rounds of heavy damage that seems to have affected its character as a military/royal space. During the civil war between the rebellious amir Miṭāsh (d. 795/1393) and Sultan Barqūq (d. 801/1399), a large area west of Yalbughā’s mosque was apparently razed as a consequence of fighting, and further damage was inflicted during Tīmūr’s siege of the citadel in 803/1400 – 01.²⁷³

As the city recouped from these wars and the suburbs were rebuilt in the early 9th/15th century, Taḥt al-Qal‘a seems to have lost much of military character. A new Sūq al-Khayl was moved to the southern suburbs: in the *Ṣubḥ al-A‘shā fī Kitābat al-Inshā’*, al-Qalqashandī’s (d. 821/1418) manual on the art of the secretaries that also describes Mamluk provincial protocol, we read that by the end of the 8th/14th century, parades had ceased to be held in the old Sūq al-Khayl of Damascus, save for special occasions such

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 113.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 113; al-Jazarī, *Hawādith* vol. 2, 517 and 525. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 244. Ibn Kathīr reports that the whitewashing was continued southward all the way to Maydān al-Ḥāsa.

²⁷⁰ Fansa, 2000, 122.

²⁷¹ Burns, 2005, and C. Watzinger and K. Wulzinger, *Damaskus: Die Islamische Stadt* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1924), 52.

²⁷² Loiseau, 2014, 223.

²⁷³ Gerard Degeorge, *Damas: Des Origines Aux Mamluks* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1994), 274.

as visits by foreign dignitaries.²⁷⁴ The same impression of a normal, busy but by no means distinctly military suburb can be found in the description of Taḥt al-Qal‘a provided by the litterateur Taqī al-Dīn al-Badrī (d. 894/1489). In his laudatory topography of Damascus, *Kitāb Nuzhat al-Anām fī Maḥāsin al-Shām*, al-Badrī describes this area as place for socialising, which was open into the night and filled with so many vendors, entertainers and shoppers that it was impossible to see the ground.²⁷⁵

To summarise, we can say that between the 620s and 730s/1220s and 1330s, the area of Taḥt al-Qal‘a in Damascus had experienced successive development projects that tied it closer to the citadel and integrated it with the rest of the city. Furthermore, what happened in Damascus was part of a wider tendency in urban development in the Ayyubid and early Mamluk periods that resulted in the emergence of ceremonial spaces in close proximity to the citadels of Cairo, Aleppo and Damascus. We have also seen that Mamluk use of these areas for ceremonial purposes was in fact a partial continuation of the practices of the Ayyubids, whose development projects had already designated the Taḥt al-Qal‘a as a political space.

We now shift from the brick and mortar aspect of Taḥt al-Qal‘a in order to focus on the ceremonial activities that took place here, especially within the smaller designated space of Sūq al-Khayl. While the previous section of this chapter underlines the strict connection between Taḥt al-Qal‘a and representations of rulership, the following sections also examine how other social groups used this space. We shall see that exactly because this area was cultivated as a space for the representation of sultanic power, it became at the same time a key space for protests by local groups. These groups would include relatively peaceful protesters like those of 711/1311, who simply intended to present a complaint to the governor, but also more violent groups, who intended to challenge the Mamluk monopoly on punitive violence that was also tied to this area.

III. The Ceremonial Uses of the Taḥt al-Qal‘a in Damascus

The place of Taḥt al-Qal‘a within the ceremonial topography of Mamluk Damascus must be understood in relation to the wider zone located north, west and south of the citadel, including the governor’s palace. The Sūq al-Khayl constituted an important ‘node’

²⁷⁴ Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A‘shā fī Kitābat al-Inshā’ 14 Vols.*, (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1914), vol. 4, 195.

²⁷⁵ Abū al-Baqā’ ‘Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Badrī, *Nuzhat al-Anām fī Maḥāsin al-Shām* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Arabiyya, 1980), 36–37.

within a multitude of ceremonial practices that played out in this area. Many of the examples of ceremonies presented here are from the long third reign of al-Nāṣir between 709 and 741/1310 and 1341, and feature governor Tankiz as the procession leader. This is because the chronicler al-Jazarī, who was very active in this period, shows a unique tendency in his writing to describe these ceremonies, the participants and the routes that were followed. In addition, the concentration of ceremonies in and around Sūq al-Khayl in this period might also betray a particular emphasis on manifestations of power through parades during the rule of this sultan and his closely connected governor.

i. Honorific processions

From the chronicle of al-Jazarī, we have descriptions of a number of annual military parades led by Tankiz between 730 and 736/1330 and 1336. We start with these parades in particular because they provide a clear example of how Sūq al-Khayl was integrated in the larger citadel zone. Every year during this period, the Sultan bestowed *khil'a* (honorific robes or gifts) on Tankiz, including items such as a richly embroidered hat and a pearl-studded sword.²⁷⁶ The chronicler al-Jazarī notes that the arrival of the sultanic gift was followed each year by a special procession in which Tankiz would wear his newly acquired treasures. For example, on Saturday the 4th of Rajab 731/12th of April 1331, al-Jazarī records the following procession:

On the morning of Saturday the 4th he [Tankiz] dressed in the sultanic *khil'a* and went out from Dār al-Sa'āda and the amirs and the *hujjāb* (chamberlains) and the *muqaddamīn* (officers and the soldiers) walked to the gate of the citadel. The bridge of Bāb al-Sirr (basāṭ Bāb al-sirr) was lowered for him and he kissed the sultanic threshold (al-'utba al-sultāniyya). Then he rode to Sūq al-Khayl and the amirs rode with him, then he returned to Dār al-Sa'āda, and the amirs dismounted as was the custom. It was a an amazing and awesome procession.²⁷⁷

The order of this ritual is repeated exactly in 733,²⁷⁸ while in other years the sequence of places differed. Despite the changes, however, the visits to Sūq al-Khayl are explicitly

²⁷⁶ See, e.g., al-Jazarī, *Hawādith* vol. 2, 379. According to al-Jazarī, Tankiz went to Cairo and returned with the sultan's gifts in the years 730/1329, 731/1331, 732/1332 and 734/1334. In the years 733/1332, 735/1334 and 736/1335, he did not visit Cairo and similar sets of honorific items were sent to Damascus by courier instead.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 463.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 590.

mentioned in four out of seven of these parades.²⁷⁹ The processions connected Sūq al-Khayl with the two most important centres of Mamluk power in Damascus: the Dār al-Sa‘āda and the Citadel. As explained above, the former was the seat of the governor, while the latter was under separate command and represented the power of the sultan himself. During Tankiz’s processions, this hierarchy of power is marked by his kissing of the threshold of the Bāb al-Sirr known as the *al-‘utba al-sulṭāniyya* (The Sultanic Threshold).²⁸⁰ A further aspect of this ritual, which can be said to hold ‘submissive’ connotations, is the fact that the bridge that gave Tankiz access to Bāb al-Sirr seems to have been lowered from inside the citadel. This meant that the governor, whose authority extended over all matters pertaining to the city, could not approach the gate without the permission of the commander of the citadel. This is also suggested in a description of a similar ritual provided by the aforementioned al-Badrī, who mentions a custom according to which every new governor appointed to Damascus would pray outside Bāb al-sirr:

Towards the end of the reign of the son of Qalāwūn [i. e. al-Nāṣir Muḥammad] it was the custom that whoever was appointed to the governorship of Damascus would pray at this gate performing two *rak‘as* facing the *qibla* so that the gate was on his left. The soldiers of the citadel and the office holders (*arbāb al-wazā‘if*) and the Turks would stand in their usual place carrying weapons until he was done with his prayers and blessings (*du‘ā’s*). If he was wished harm (*in urīda bihi sharr*) he would be seized and they would take him out through this gate and block the bridge between him and his people, for it is a drawbridge²⁸¹ which separates them. If he was wished well they would ride in his honour and the elites of the state (*wujūh al-dawla*) would be in his service until he descended at the Dār al-‘Adl of the late martyr Nūr al-Dīn. This is what is today called Dār al-Sa‘āda.²⁸²

²⁷⁹ These four are 731, 733, 735 and 736. Judging from al-Jazarī’s description of the 730 parade, Sūq al-Khayl does not seem to be included in this year. With regard to 732 and 734, the descriptions are too sparse to determine whether it included Sūq al-Khayl.

²⁸⁰ It is common to find examples in Medieval Islamic chronicles of subjects who kissed the ground between the ruler’s hands as a sign of submission and loyalty. The Arabic expression frequently used to describe this practice is *wa-qaballa al-arḍ bayna yadayhi* (he kissed the ground between his hands, i.e., in front of him). Furthermore, the Bāb al-Sirr seems to have been reserved for the use of sultans. According to Ibn Ṣaṣrā, the Sultan Barqūq (d. 801/1399) entered the citadel via Bāb al-Sirr in two processions, which marked his return to the city in 1391/793 and 1394/796. See Ibn Ṣaṣrā, *A Chronicle of Damascus* vol. 1, 128 and 213.

²⁸¹ The Arabic text refers to *jisr bi-lawālib* (a bridge with axles).

²⁸² al-Badrī, *Nuzhat*, 18.

Al-Badrī does not state his source for this ritual, but his description implies that by crossing the bridge of Bāb al-Sirr, the governor was essentially temporarily at the mercy of the commander and garrison of the citadel, who answered directly to Cairo.²⁸³ To these considerations about the use of spaces and their hierarchical connotations, we should add that the honorific objects that Tankiz displayed on these occasions not only underlined his own importance, but also underlined his allegiance and submission to al-Nāṣir. As Jo Van Steenbergen has shown, al-Nāṣir's efforts to consolidate his power by tying high-ranking amirs to him consisted of an extensive distribution of honorific items such as robes, helmets and caps bearing his name, regal titles and emblems.²⁸⁴

Returning to al-Jazarī's descriptions and the subject of space, we should note that the honorific parades of the 730s/1330s took place around the area most heavily affected by Tankiz's extra-mural road clearings that occurred around 730/1330. As with his urban planning projects, Tankiz's parade practices integrated the Sūq al-Khayl within the topography of Mamluk power. These parades afford a striking example of how rulers' efforts to change the built environment with new patterns of movement connecting specific spaces coincided and interlocked with a specific pattern of ceremonial practices aimed at consolidating these patterns.

Moreover, the same ritual was imitated by other members of the Mamluk elite both before and after Tankiz's death. Tankiz's own son 'Alā' al-Dīn (d. ?) made the same processional tour in 732/1332 after having received the title of amir;²⁸⁵ in the following year, the amirs arriving from Egypt marked their arrival in Damascus by walking to Bāb al-Sirr and proceeding to ride to Sūq al-Khayl.²⁸⁶ Later, in 763/1363–64, Sayf al-Dīn

²⁸³ There is some confusion with regard to the location of the Bāb al-Sirr, which suggests that over time there might have been more than one gate bearing this name. In the plan of Damascus presented by Brinner and reproduced by Ira M. Lapidus, the Bāb al-Sirr is located in the southern wall of the citadel opposite the Dār al-Sa'āda. In contrast, the Bāb al-Sirr mentioned by al-Badrī and al-Jazarī must have been located in the western or northern wall of the citadel. Al-Badrī states that the Bāb al-Sirr where this ritual took place was located west of the Bāb al-Ḥadīd, and that it was given this name '[...] because the Turks used it to exit and enter secretly [...]'. Moreover, the presence of a drawbridge suspended over a moat also excludes the southern Bāb al-Sirr from consideration. See al-Badrī, *Nuzhat*, 18 and compare with the map in Ibn Ṣaṣrā, *A Chronicle of Damascus*, 345 and the map in Ira Lapidus, *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1984), 47.

²⁸⁴ Willem Flinterman and Jo Van Steenbergen, 'Al-Nasir Muhammad and the Formation of the Qalawunid State', in *Pearls on a String: Art in the Age of Great Islamic Empires*, ed. A. Landau (Washington, DC: The Walters Art Museum and University of Washington Press, 2015), 87–113.

²⁸⁵ al-Jazarī, *Hawādith* vol. 2, 528.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.* vol. 3, 596.

Qashtamur (d. 783/1381–82), the newly appointed governor of Damascus, also initiated his period in office by repeating this pattern.²⁸⁷

These honorific parades between 730/1329 and 763/1363–64 were but one of the multiple ceremonies in and around Taḥt al-Qal‘a described by al-Jazarī. Another annual ceremony, which began in Sūq al-Khayl, was the preparatory ceremony leading up to the departure of the annual caravan of the Hajj. The Hajj was surrounded by a cluster of rituals intended to highlight the protective power offered by the Mamluk sultan and his army towards those who undertook the strenuous pilgrimage journey to the Hijaz. Here again, we can see Sūq al-Khayl at the center of a ritual manifestation of sultanic power.

ii. The maḥmal presentation parade

Hajj, the 5th pillar of Sunni Islam, is a ritual tied to the religious duty of the individual Muslim to perform pilgrimage (or provide financial aid to help others perform it). However, it is evident from Hajj processions described by al-Jazarī and similar processions in Cairo described by the 9th/15th century secretary Khalīl al-Zāhirī (d. 871–72/1467–68) that the phenomenon of Hajj in the Mamluk period also revolved around the display of the power of the sultan as protector of Muslims and patron of Islamic religious practice.²⁸⁸ This section discusses the processions in Damascus that centred on Taḥt al-Qal‘a and Sūq al-Khayl in particular and testify to the intrinsic connection between these spaces and public manifestation of sultanic power. First, it should be noted that Taḥt al-Qal‘a was also tied to Hajj for practical reasons: its stables as well as many of its markets catered directly to the needs of travelers. Furthermore, at least by the end of the 8th/14th century, the authorities had also erected a special watering tank (*sabīl*) in Taḥt al-Qal‘a, presumably in order to provide water for the pilgrims who came to Damascus from Northern Syria and Anatolia to join the caravan heading south from Damascus.²⁸⁹

Taḥt al-Qal‘a played a central role in one of the ceremonies that led up to the departure of the caravan. The annual departure of the pilgrims was a momentous event; because it was a huge logistics operation encompassing at times several thousand individuals, certain ceremonies were required to see it off. On the day of departure, the

²⁸⁷ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 434. This could be an example of the inauguration ceremony described in al-Badrī, *Nuzhat*, 18.

²⁸⁸ Ghars al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Shāhīn al-Zāhirī, *Zubdat Kashf al-Mamālik wa-Bayān al-Ṭuruq wa-al-Masālik*, ed. Paul Ravaisse (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1894), 87.

²⁸⁹ Ibn Ṣaṣrā, *A Chronicle of Damascus* vol. 1, 98–99.

caravan would begin to move south along Ṭarīq al-‘Uzmā to Bāb al-Muṣallā. Here, a special sermon was held and at times, some of the inhabitants who were not embarking on the full journey would escort the pilgrims south for several days before turning back to Damascus.²⁹⁰

However, during the month of Rajab (approximately four months before the actual departure of the pilgrims), Sūq al-Khayl served as a rallying point for a ceremony focused on the presentation of the most iconic element of the caravan, *al-maḥmal al-sultānī* (the sultanic litter), a richly embroidered camel litter that was dispatched along with the pilgrims.²⁹¹ Throughout the Mamluk period, two *maḥmals* were sent to the Hijaz, one from Cairo and one from Damascus. Both were made from embroidered yellow silk, the official colour of the Mamluk sultanate.²⁹² Although some Medieval European observers believed that the *maḥmal* contained a copy of the Qur’ān, it was by all accounts empty, serving as a purely symbolic expression of the Sultan’s power.²⁹³ In a sense, the *maḥmal* represented the sultān *in absentia* on a par with the threshold of Bāb al-Sirr and the empty throne in the Dār al-Sa‘āda, which are discussed below.

When it was not in use, the *maḥmal* of Damascus was stored in the citadel, but in the first half of Rajab, either on a Monday or Thursday, according to al-Jazarī, it was placed on display in Sūq al-Khayl as part of a ceremony that also included the official appointment of *amīr al-hajj*, the military commander in charge of the security detachment of that year’s caravan. The presentation of the *maḥmal* was followed by a grand procession that included the governor and his guard as well as the four chief judges and other civilian office holders. In al-Jazarī’s chronicle entries for the 720s/1320s and 730s/1330s, the *maḥmal* presentation ceremonies in Sūq al-Khayl are presented as very pompous events with a clear focus on the display of military power. Al-Jazarī presents the following description of the ceremony on the 12th of Rajab 730/1st of May 1330:

²⁹⁰ See, e.g., al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith* vol. 3, 873.

²⁹¹ The choice of Rajab, the seventh month in the Islamic calendar, for this ceremony should be seen in the context of its status as a month of religious celebration. In pre-Islamic Arabia, Rajab was the holy month of peace and sacrifices. While some Islamic scholars found celebrations during Rajab reprehensible, it was held to be a month replete with God’s grace, which people sought through fasting and prayer ceremonies such as the *raghā’ib* (wishes) prayers on the first Friday of Rajab. Meir J. Kister, 'Radjab', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 8*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 373–75. For jurists’ views of the *raghā’ib* prayers, see Marion H. Katz, *Prayer in Islamic Thought and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 160–162.

²⁹² Doris Behrens-Abouseif, 'The Mahmal Legend and the Pilgrimage of the Ladies of the Mamluk Court', *Mamluk Studies Review* 1, (1997): 87–96, 89.

²⁹³ DeGeorge, 1994, 276 n. 197.

The *maḥmal* was taken out from the citadel to Sūq al-Khayl and this was overseen by the governor and the judges and the master (*al-ṣāhib*)[?] and prominent men of the state (*a 'yān al-dawla*) and the imams and the readers and the muezzins and who else used to attend. The judges and those who we have mentioned went in front of the noble *maḥmal* and most of the army went behind it. The wālī of the town and his men had been requested and the wālī of the province (*al-birr*) and his soldiers and followers and he had boys who played with naft [flammable oil substance] and thrustured with spears [...]²⁹⁴

Al-Jazarī describes at least eight ceremonies of this kind during the 730s/1330s, though not always with the same amount of detail.

That the Hajj ceremonies in Sūq al-Khayl were connected to the displays of the power of the Mamluk sultanate is even more clearly reflected later in the 8th/14th century through the descriptions that Ibn Ṣaṣrā provides of the Hajj preparations in Damascus in 792/1390. This was in the middle of the civil war between Sultan Barqūq and the amir Miṭāsh; at this point Miṭāsh and his partisans had just fled Damascus, while Barqūq's rule of the city was in the process of being restored. Ibn Ṣaṣrā reports that the situation in Syria was so unstable at this time that no water tank had been erected in Taḥt al-Qal'a and no *amīr al-hajj* was appointed. Furthermore, when the *maḥmal* was finally presented it seems to have been a sorry sight:

Then on Thursday the 19th of the month [September 29th], the *maḥmal* went out as though it were the funeral procession of a stranger; no one went behind it or before it, nor was there any provision train or banner of the sultan, only the *maḥmal* and a few people. An enlisted trooper went as amir of the caravan, and they set out, relying on God the Exalted.²⁹⁵

Ibn Ṣaṣrā's account of the Hajj ceremony is interesting because it is included in a general description of the political situation, perhaps to emphasise the feeling of uncertainty at the time. There is no sultanic banner, no procession and the appointed *amīr al-hajj*, a title that would usually be bestowed upon an important amir, is given to a low-ranking soldier. The description of the pitiful sight of the *maḥmal* in Sūq al-Khayl becomes a symbol of how fragile Barqūq's hold of Damascus and Syria still was. In the chronicles of Ibn Ṣaṣrā and al-Jazarī, the *maḥmal* ceremony is thus presented as a 'political

²⁹⁴ al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith* vol. 2, 391. A similar display is described in *Ibid.*, vol. 3, 597. Less detailed *maḥmal* parades are described in *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 74–75 and 464 and *Ibid.* vol. 3, 765 and 933.

²⁹⁵ Ibn Ṣaṣrā, *A Chronicle of Damascus*, vol. 1, 98–99. A similar situation is described with regard to the year 796/1394 where reports of the approach of the armies of Tīmūr (d. 807/1405) are blamed for a shrinking turnout for the procession. See *ibid.*, 210.

barometer' that indicates the strength of the state and the security level that it can extend to its subjects. In the 10th/16th century, the patronage of the Hajj was taken over by the Ottomans for geo-political considerations, but also as a strategy for displaying their legitimacy as Muslim rulers. Moreover, the Ottomans continued to display their connection with the Hajj through the tradition of presenting a sultanic *maḥmal* in Damascus's Sūq al-Khayl.²⁹⁶

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, when Michael Chamberlain describes the Mamluk state as an 'audience state', it is with specific reference to these Hajj ceremonies. In his view, the Mamluk rulers of Damascus fit themselves into what he calls:

[...] its existing ceremonial geography and ritual idioms. They made appearances at the major religious festivals, especially the *maḥmal*, the inauguration of religious foundations and the funerals of scholars and Sufis.²⁹⁷

What we see from al-Jazarī's descriptions in particular is that with regard to the Hajj ceremonies, the governor and his troops were clearly not merely a visiting audience to a traditional local performance. Rather, the heavy use of military symbols clearly shows that this was a customary show of sultanic presence and a direct framing of the Mamluk sultanate as *the* provider of regional security. The military 'air' of this ceremony is also underscored by the fact that it took place within a specific section of the urban landscape that had long since been cultivated by Tankiz, in particular, as space for the representation of power.

We should also note that Tankiz's patron, the sultan al-Nāṣir, displayed a particular interest in tying the Hajj to his own representation of power. Apart from sponsoring the caravan and *maḥmal*-ceremonies in Cairo, he undertook the pilgrimage himself no less than three times, in 712/1312, 720/1320 and 732/1332. As Steenbergen explains, there was a message in these endeavours directed at both the Ilkhānites of Iraq and potential internal enemies. The sultan was effectively stating that his hold of the reins of power was so strong as to permit his absence from his realm for months at a time.²⁹⁸ Thus, the

²⁹⁶ Lutz Berger, *Gesellschaft Und Individuum in Damaskus, 1550–1791* (Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2007), 74. Andrew Petersen, 'The Ottoman Hajj Route in Jordan: Motivation and Ideology', *Bulletin D'études Orientales* no. 2 (2008): 31–50.

²⁹⁷ Chamberlain, 1994, 48.

²⁹⁸ Flinterman and Steenbergen, 2015, 95.

Damascene *maḥmal* parades charged with military splendour could be seen as a particularly important element of political communication in this specific period.

iii. The Mamluk governor's weekly parades

We now turn our attention away from the splendid and towards more mundane versions of these parades to demonstrate that the ceremonial uses of Taḥt al-Qal‘a did not only mark special occasions. Parades were also part of the normal rhythm of urban life and thus a frequently recurring opportunity for local groups to approach their governor. The most common form of parade was the twice-weekly inspection parades, and as mentioned in the introduction, it was this type of parade that the protesters of 711/1311 interrupted.

Al-Qalqashandī writes that Sūq al-Khayl in Damascus used to be the scene of two weekly military parades. These took place on Mondays and Thursdays at daybreak, the same days as the annual *maḥmal* parade, which might then have been simply a particularly splendid version of a routine parade. We can find several references in the local chronicles from the 8th/14th century that suggest that the governor of Damascus did in fact hold army inspections in Sūq al-Khayl on a weekly or twice-weekly basis. The exact regularity of these ceremonies is hard to determine since the chronicles usually only refer to this sort of routine event when something extraordinary happened. Some of these extraordinary cases will be examined below, but we start by looking at al-Qalqashandī's description of this procession:

It was the custom of the governor there [Damascus] to ride in a procession consisting of the amirs and the officers and soldiers of the *ḥalqa* (non-Mamluk auxiliary forces) every Monday and Thursday. They would ride out to Sūq al-Khayl below the citadel and run their horses, and the horses on sale would be presented to them as well as other things such as weapons and the like, and the properties (*al-‘aqār*) such as houses, landed estates and other forms of property would be declared among them. They would not ride further than to Sūq al-Khayl.²⁹⁹

With regard to the proclamations of property described in this statement, it seems al-Qalqashandī is referring to proclamations of the *iqṭā‘*'s held by the attending amirs and soldiers. The whole affair seems like a combination of a military inspection of horses

²⁹⁹ al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vol. 4, 195.

and equipment, an arms bazaar and a salary overview.³⁰⁰ In addition to the activities in Sūq al-Khayl, the return to Dār al-Sa‘āda seems to have had a special symbolic function. Al-Qalqashandī informs us that on some occasions the parade was followed by a banquet (*samāʿt*), and so the amirs would follow the governor back to the Dār al-Sa‘āda. The ordinary soldiers would dismount and walk from Sūq al-Khayl, while the amirs would gradually dismount according to their rank so that only the most prominent amirs rode all the way to the governor’s palace. When the procession reached the outer gate of Dār al-Sa‘āda, the last amirs would dismount, and only the governor himself entered the palace on horseback. The procession would end in a grand hall of the palace where an empty throne stood draped in yellow silk, the signature colour of the Mamluk sultan. This throne had a sword resting on its seat *in lieu* of the monarch himself.³⁰¹ When arriving here, everyone, even the governor, would have dismounted, thus ending the inspection parade that manifested internal military hierarchies, with a gesture of collective submission to the sultan. Apart from the plurality of occasional ceremonies, which passed by the area around the western and northern side of the citadel on special celebratory occasions, the flank of the citadel including Sūq al-Khayl was a space where the local garrison could stage a twice-weekly performance of the power structure of the army.

iv. Popular interventions in the governor’s parade: 711/1311 and beyond

At a first glance, the weekly ceremonies seem to be an intra-Mamluk affair that dealt solely with the concerns of the military. However, the contemporary chronicles indicate that these inspection parades could also become an occasion for confrontations between the governor and groups of civilian plaintiffs.

Let us begin by considering once again the 711 protest. As mentioned above, several contemporary authors note that the protest happened on a Monday while the governor, his *ḥājib al-ḥujjāb* (master chamberlain) and other amirs were present in Sūq

³⁰⁰ After this description, al-Qalqashandī adds that in his own time (the late 8th/14th and early 9th/15th centuries), these processions no longer took place in Sūq al-Khayl, but in other locations further afield. The Sūq al-Khayl was still used on special occasions such as the arrival of foreign embassies. Even so, the more recent parades would also pass by the gates of the citadel (most likely the Bab al-Ḥadīd), where the proclamation of properties would be made. *Ibid.*, 195–96. This fits somewhat with Loiseau’s argument that the Taht al-Qal‘a of Damascus was slowly demilitarised and turned in to a regular suburb in the 9th/15th century. It also shows that even though the Sūq al-Khayl was decommissioned, the areas around the gates of the citadel retained their role as a ceremonial assembly point. See Loiseau, 2014, 225.

³⁰¹ al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vol. 4, 195.

al-Khayl.³⁰² Even though these authors do not clearly say so, the concordance between al-Qalqashandī's description and the circumstances pertaining to the 711 protest suggests that protesters, led by the *khaṭīb* (Friday preacher) Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338), intended specifically to make their case at the governor's Monday inspection parade. This assumption can be further confirmed from three cases that occurred in subsequent decades. In Rajab, 743/December 1342 a group of commoners (*tā'ifa min al-`amma*) approached the governor during the Monday parade and asked him not to change the *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque despite his having received instructions from Cairo to do so. According to Ibn Kathīr, the governor ignored the plea and did not even turn towards the supplicants.³⁰³

A few years later, another case following the same pattern is reported. Here, the plaintiffs received a direct response from the governor, although not the one they had hoped for. According to the Shāfi'ī jurist and chronicler Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba (d. 851/1448), when the beneficiaries of a local madrasa³⁰⁴ did not receive their ration of wheat in Jumādā II 749/August–September 1348, a large group of them sought out the governor in Taḥt al-Qal'a to complain about this mistake. As in 711/1311, the governor responded by having them all beaten severely in Sūq al-Khayl.³⁰⁵

The case with the most striking similarities to the march of 711/1311, however, is from 754/1353; it concerns the transformation of a neighbourhood mosque (*masjid*) into a congregational mosque (*masjid jāmi'*). On 28th of Rabī' I 754/Friday the 3rd of May 1353, the first Friday service was held in a mosque known as al-Mazāz in the southern suburb of al-Shaghūr. This caused some quarrels in the city about whether the mosque had status as an officially designated Friday Mosque. The following is Ibn Kathīr's description of the locals' response to the situation:

The matter reached the point where people of the quarter went to Sūq al-Khayl on the day of his procession³⁰⁶. They carried the Caliphal banners from

³⁰² al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* vol. 15 pt. 33, 181; al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān*, vol. 4, 153; al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1435.

³⁰³ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 314. The group unsuccessfully campaigned for the *khaṭīb* Tāj al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī (d. 749/1350). Tāj al-Dīn was the son of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338), the leader of the 711 protest. This case will be discussed briefly in Chapter 4. See below, 151.

³⁰⁴ Madrasat Abī 'Umar / al-Madrasa al-'Umariyya - a Ḥanbalī madrasa in the suburb of al-Ṣālihiyya. See 'Abd al-Qādir ibn Muḥammad al-Nu'aymī, *al-Dāris fī Tārīkh al-Madāris 2 Vols.*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, n.d.), vol. 2, 77.

³⁰⁵ Taqī al-Dīn Abī Bakr ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Qāḍī Shuhba al-Asadī al-Dimashqī, *Tārīkh Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba 4 Vols.*, ed. 'Adnān Darwīsh (Damascus: Ma'had al-Faransī lil-Dirāsāt al-'Arabiyya, 1994), vol. 1, 548.

³⁰⁶ The Arabic text says *yawm mawkibihi*. It is unclear who *-hi*, the possessive suffix (3rd pers. m. sing.) refers to, but it is most likely the governor.

their mosque (*min jāmi'ihim*) and Qur'āns and they gathered around the governor and asked him to allow their *khuṭba* to be continued [...]³⁰⁷

We are not told whether this petition had any effect, but simply that the Ḥanbalī Judge subsequently ruled that the *khuṭba* (Friday sermon) be continued at al-Mazāz. In this case, it is not only the time and place that correspond with the 711/1311 protest, the protesters also carried the Caliphal banners and Qur'āns, the very same type of items as in 711/1311.

These coincidences in terms of time, place and mode of expression suggest that appearing at the weekly inspection parades in Sūq al-Khayl was a premeditated strategy of civilian plaintiffs who were willing to interrupt the military inspection process to present their case to governor even if it meant running the risk of violence. The obvious practical reason for choosing this venue is that they could be sure of the governor's presence, and the fact that the parade happened in an open space where they would not be barred from getting at least visual contact with the governor. Such an informed and strategic use of space and time is perhaps characteristic of protesting at any given time and space, but in the case of Damascus, there are several examples from the 9th/15th century where protesters also went specifically for parade days in order to address or even attack the governor in the open.³⁰⁸

In addition to the approachability of the governors (which seems involuntary), there is at least one more practical factor that might have informed the choice of protesters to choose the weekly parade days for making their claim. Al-Qalqashandī notes that the weekly inspection parades could be followed by a *mazālim* session held at the Dār al-Sa'āda upon the return of the procession. For these sessions, the chief judges of the four law schools sat beside the governor while the petitions were read out and the governor's verdict was written down.³⁰⁹ But before a specific case was handed to the governor, a number of intermediary clerks would screen the individual petitions. It might be that civilian groups used the preceding inspection parade as an option for lodging a

³⁰⁷ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 371. See also a shorter version of this account in Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Tārīkh* vol. 2, 46. However, according to al-Nu'aymī, a man named Taqī al-Dīn al-Jawkhī (d. 833/1429–30), who was born in 749/1349, headed the conversion of al-Mazāz from *masjid* to *masjid jāmi'*. This does not fit with the previous two accounts. See al-Nu'aymī, *al-Dāris* vol. 2, 325.

³⁰⁸ Amina A. Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans: Urban Protests in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2016), 145–146 and 154.

³⁰⁹ al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* vol. 4, 196.

complaint directly to the governor, circumventing the formal procedure of the *mazālim* court that took place on the same days.³¹⁰

Apart from considerations of timing and visibility, the specific choice of intervening in Sūq al-khayl on parade days must however also be regarded as a highly significant symbolic statement in itself. As we have seen, this particular space was integrated neatly into what we might call the ‘spatial repertoire’ for performances of sultanic power. Entering this area in an overtly assertive fashion wielding banners and props was also a way of co-opting its forms of expression. Remember that Taḥt al-Qal‘a and Sūq al-Khayl were developed as zones of interaction between ruler and ruled and for the manifestation of the rulers’ power through numerous parades and displays of weapons and manpower. The 711 protesters not only interrupted official Mamluk protocol, they did so by staging their own parade laden with symbolic objects referencing the religious and historical identity of Damascus in the space which the Mamluk state and its predecessors regarded and cultivated as the official stage for manifestations of their power. Apart from its being a pragmatic decision based on approachability, the choice of confronting the governor in Sūq al-Khayl should be read as a challenge or critique directed towards the political system which this space represented.

We now turn to a discussion of how spectacles of punitive violence, another manifestation of Mamluk power that took place in Sūq al-Khayl, also lent themselves to forms of co-option if not occupation through which local groups expressed either disappointment with or downright hostility towards the sultanic order.

IV. Taḥt al-Qal‘a and the Mamluk Monopoly on Violence

As seen above, the Mamluk sultans and their deputies eagerly asserted their claims of protecting society from outside threats through military power in Taḥt al-Qal‘a. This section demonstrates that they were equally eager to promote themselves as protectors against *inside threats* through the exercise of punitive power. Max Weber argues that once it asserts itself as a state, the modern political community reserves for itself the exclusive right to create rules along with ‘[...] the monopoly of power to compel by physical coercion respect for those rules’.³¹¹ In the case of pre-modern polities like the

³¹⁰ With regard to 9th/15th century Cairo, Elbendary mentions a somewhat similar case in which a group of protesters positioned themselves on a specific hill from where they were sure to be seen by the sultan, who was hosting a *mazālim* session at the citadel. Elbendary, 2016, 134–135.

³¹¹ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), vol. 2, 904.

Mamluk sultanate, the concept of a monopoly of physical coercion or violence must be regarded as an aspiration that was realised temporarily and unevenly through specific relations of power, rather than as a permanent omnipresent state of affairs. Just as foreign invasions, internal schisms or marauding bedouins threatened the monopoly of military power, the right to exercise punitive violence was also subject to constant negotiation between different actors. The performances of punishment must therefore also be understood as a practice of political communication similar to parades and honorary ceremonies.

i. Official executions in Sūq al-Khayl

The chronicles convey numerous descriptions of gruesome physical punishments carried out in Sūq al-Khayl and occasionally elsewhere, such as on the bridge of al-Zalābiyya in Taḥt Qal‘a.³¹² The use of Sūq al-Khayl for executions was a feature well known in Cairo, Aleppo and in Damascus during the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries.³¹³ Places such as the square of al-Kharāb south of the Umayyad Mosque, which Konrad Hirschler has identified, as an official execution place in the 9th/15th century, was apparently not used for this purpose in the previous century.³¹⁴

There are examples of executions taking place in Taḥt al-Qal‘a since the early decades of the 7th/13th century. The chronicler Abū Shāma reports executions taking place to the north of the citadel and around Bāb al-Faraj as far back as the end of the 6th/12th century. One example is a description of the crucifixion of a Mamluk accused of killing an amir in 646/1248. Abū Shāma describes that the condemned was crucified on the bank of the Barāda River below the citadel on the edge of the Sūq al-Dawwāb (market for pack animals).³¹⁵ The cases reported by Abū Shāma refer to the same general area, but the exact locations differ from report to report. These cases might be precursors of the more fixed institutionalised practice of executing people in Sūq al-Khayl specifically, which we see later in the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries.

³¹² Ibn Ṣaṣrā, *A Chronicle of Damascus*, vol. 1, 139–140.

³¹³ For the 14th/8th century, I have found 20 cases where executions and severe physical punishment were carried out in Sūq al-Khayl/Taḥt al-Qal‘a. In addition to these cases, there are a few examples where a criminal was executed and displayed at the scene of his/her crime. There are a few cases where the site of the execution is not mentioned by the author. What I have not found is any references to officially designated execution sites other than Sūq al-Khayl/Taḥt al-Qal‘a. For executions at the scene of the crime, see, e.g., al-Jazarī, *Hawādith* vol. 2, 386 and vol. 3, 939.

³¹⁴ See Hirschler, 2007, 213.

³¹⁵ Abū Shāma al-Maqdisī, *Tarājim*, 278–279. For similar reports, see Abū Shāma al-Maqdisī, *Tarājim*, 25, 329 and 338.

As for Sūq al-Khayl proper, it appears as the designated execution square as early as 680/1281–1282. In this year a sultanic decree ordered all Christians and Jews working in the administration to convert to Islam on pain of death, and according to Ibn Kathīr, several Damascenes who refused were executed in Sūq al-Khayl.³¹⁶ According to the same author, some years later, in 687/1288, a Christian man was caught drinking wine with a Muslim woman during Ramaḍān. As a punishment for this offence, the governor had the man burned alive in Sūq al-Khayl while the woman was flogged.³¹⁷ This case is highly unusual, since execution by fire was a form of punishment that the Mamluk state normally only imposed on rebellious Bedouins, not on criminals from within the urban setting.³¹⁸ However, the fact that the perpetrator was Christian and that his crime could be viewed as a religious offence (drinking and corrupting a Muslim woman during the month of Ramaḍān) could suggest a connection between this case and several cases from the 8th/14th century when the bodies of Christians/apostates were burned by angry lynch mobs after their execution. These cases are discussed below.

Over the course of the 8th/14th century, Sūq al-Khayl was used for executions of high-ranking Mamluk amirs, soldiers and ordinary civilians. Of the Mamluk amirs, the majority was accused of conspiring to overthrow or kill either the sultan or the governor. The governor decided these cases and the punishment was usually to be cut in half (*tawṣīṭ*), sometimes after being crucified, and paraded around the area (*tasmīr*). Heresy is the most frequently cited crime of civilians that resulted in execution in Sūq al-Khayl. A judge decided these cases and the usual verdict was decapitation.³¹⁹ The most frequent type of crimes for which the same form of punishments was imposed was theft combined with murder. This crime could result in both Mamluk soldiers and civilians being cut in half in Sūq al-Khayl.³²⁰

The high frequency of reports about executions in Sūq al-Khayl presents the question of whether these were spectacles designed for a wider audience such as Hajj ceremonies. The chronicles suggest some connection between executions and the twice-weekly parades of the governor and his troops. Seven of the executions I have found

³¹⁶ See Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 15, 492.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 8 pt. 15, 529.

³¹⁸ Hirschler, 2007, 224.

³¹⁹ In heresy cases, the verdict of a judge seems to have been sufficient for the sentence to be imposed. However, in one case from 725/1325 the scholars disagreed as to whether the accused was a heretic. The final decision to implement the death penalty was taken by the governor. See al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith* vol. 2, 106.

³²⁰ See, e.g., Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, 451 and vol. 3, 614; al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith*, vol. 2, 275.

take place on a Monday, more than on any other single weekday.³²¹ The clearest example of such a connection is found in a report that describes a large number of convicts who were brought to Sūq al-Khayl and punished as part of the governor's procession. According to Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, this happened in 779/1377. On a Thursday night, a group of commoners had stoned a detachment of Mamluk soldiers on the suspicion that they were attempting to rape a local woman (according to the author, they in fact were censoring her for improper conduct). The culprits were apprehended and brought out as part of the governor's morning parade the following day. Initially, they were to have their hands cut off, but thanks to an intervention by a group of amirs, the sentence was reduced to flogging, which was carried out in Sūq al-Khayl.³²²

Cases like this suggest that the ceremonies in Sūq al-Khayl were connected and flexible enough to allow the incorporation of an execution into the weekly inspection parades of the military. In some cases, the public nature of executions in Sūq al-Khayl is emphasised by the fact that the punishment was accompanied by the proclamation of the crime. In the case of two Mamluks who were cut in half for conspiring against the sultan in 741/1340, the following announcement was given while the punishment was carried out: 'this is the lot of anyone who rise against the sultan'.³²³

This type of executions was clearly meant to be witnessed by people other than those responsible for implementing the punishment, and we can infer that Sūq al-Khayl in its function as execution place was open to spectators. However, at times these spectators might also attempt to co-opt the punitive performance. In these cases, angry mobs usually identified by the chroniclers as *al-ʿawāmm* (the commoners) swarmed Sūq al-Khayl and took control of an execution.

ii. Interventions and lynchings in Sūq al-Khayl

Al-Jazarī reports that in Shawwāl 730/August of 1330, a Christian man entered the Umayyad Mosque during the Friday ceremony and proclaimed that he wished to convert

³²¹ By comparison, one execution took place on a Saturday, one on a Sunday, three on a Tuesday, three on a Wednesday, one took place on a Friday and four took place on unspecified days.

³²² Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Tārīkh* vol. 2, 550. According to Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba the stoning incident happened on a Thursday which means that the morning parade the following day would have taken place on a Friday and not on a Thursday as usual, that is unless Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba really means to say that the group was kept in jail until Monday morning.

³²³ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 118. See also *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 128 for the proclamation used in connection with the killing of a heretic.

to Islam with the blessing of the *khaṭīb*.³²⁴ As the *khaṭīb* approached him, he changed his mind and refused to convert. The people present in the mosque considered his initial statement as a binding conversion and argued that his retraction equaled apostasy. This indictment was confirmed by a judge and the man was taken to Sūq al-Khayl and decapitated the following Wednesday. Some members of the audience, whom al-Jazarī describes as *al-‘awāmm*, were not satisfied with the verdict. They seized the corpse and burned it in Sūq al-Khayl and threw the ashes into the Barāda River. Al-Jazarī notes that he himself was walking through Sūq al-Khayl on this day, and that it was nearly impossible to get through because of the number of people who had gathered for the burning.³²⁵

In 756/1356-57, the exact same fate befell a man from a village near Baalbek. He had been convicted by a local judge in Ba‘lbak of insulting the Prophet Muhammad and was subsequently sent to Damascus where the Mālikī chief judge sentenced him to death.³²⁶ As in the case of the repentant Christian 26 years earlier, the spectators seized and burned his body after the sentence had been carried out.

What both of these cases show is that parts of the local civilian population were sometimes prepared to take matters into their own hands in cases where the crime constituted an affront to Islam. In this light, we can speculate that the burning of the wine drinking (and womanising?) Christian during Ramaḍān in 686/1288 was meant to prevent uncontrollable violence from a similar group of lynchers.

There are other examples from the Mamluk period of civilian groups ‘expanding’ the official punishment by seizing and burning the corpse of the condemned, which indicate that this did not only occur in heresy and apostasy cases.

Hirschler mentions the example of a 8th/14th century amir whose remains were burned by angry Cairenes after his execution and an early 10th/16th century case in which a Mamluk soldier convicted of banditry in Damascus was seized and burned alive by the

³²⁴ al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith* vol. 2, 400. Al-Jazarī also reports a similar case of a repentant convert who mocked Islam in the Mosque and was executed. See *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 108. For reports of sincere as well as mock ‘Friday conversions’ from Mamluk Cairo, see Linda G. Jones, ‘Islam Al-Kafir Fi Hal Al-Khutba: Concerning the Conversion of "Infidels" to Islam during the Muslim Friday Sermon in Mamluk Egypt’, *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 42, no. 1 (2012): 53–75. Tamer el-Leithy has examined numerous cases from the 8th/14th century of Egyptian Copts seeking martyrdom through mock conversion in what he calls a ‘movement of symbolic resistance against Mamluk regulation’. His cases also include the use of Friday Prayer as backdrop for mock conversions. See Tamer El-Leithy, ‘Coptic Culture and Conversion in Medieval Cairo, 1293–1524 A . D .’ (Princeton University, Princeton, 2005), 111.

³²⁵ al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith* vol. 2, 400.

³²⁶ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 387.

mob after the official executioner had cut off his arm and leg.³²⁷ In the case of the Mamluk bandit, the mob also chose to carry out the burning in a space designated for official executions, the square of al-Kharāb, exactly like the mobs of 730/1330 and 756/1354 chose Sūq al-Khayl.

In both of Hirschler's cases, the mob's actions were punished severely, whereas the cases from 730/1330 and 756/1356 include no repercussions following the lynching. This discrepancy might be explained by two factors. First, the two cases described by Hirschler concerned the execution of two individuals from the Mamluk military class, while the two cases examined above involved one provincial village dweller and one local Christian, both of whom were declared apostates. It is possible that the authorities were somewhat indifferent to the treatment of individuals of such a marginal status, as opposed to people from within their own ranks. Second, in the two cases described by Hirschler, the mob infringed directly on the state's privilege to condemn and execute, while in the cases described above, the victims had been condemned by a judge. Given this background, we could also speculate that the Mamluk power holders may have felt less challenged by mob burnings of heretics/apostates, since these cases were usually decided by the judge and not the governor. Interfering in the execution of these punishments was therefore perhaps not seen as a challenge to the governor. Whether or not such cases caused retaliation, they give us clear examples of the fact that popular groups made conscious use of urban space in political communication. Moreover, by occupying Sūq al-Khayl or any other location associated with public executions, they effectively challenged the state by infringing on its monopoly on violence.

There is, however, one case from the end of the 8th/14th century where the term *infringement* does not seem to cover what happened in Sūq al-Khayl. This case regards the 799/1397 stoning, decapitation and burning of the prominent grain merchant, Muḥammad Ibn Nashū.

iii. Some spatial considerations regarding murder of Ibn Nashū

Ibn Nashū had recently been awarded the exclusive title of amir, despite being of modest civilian and even Christian background. He can be regarded as an early example of the civilian 'upstarts' who rose through patronage and purchased titles to assume offices

³²⁷ Hirschler, 2007, 226 and 214.

hitherto reserved for Mamluk officers.³²⁸ For years, Ibn Nashū had been despised by the common population of Damascus for exploiting his monopoly on grain import in order to set prices at his own discretion. On several occasions, he narrowly escaped being stoned by angry crowds, but on 24th of Jumādā II 799/Saturday the 24th of March 1397 he was killed while attending a rain prayer ceremony. Afterwards his estate was looted and his body burned.³²⁹

Brinner has already given a thoroughly detailed account of the social dynamics behind the rise and fall of Ibn Nashū, and Hirschler has examined the burning as a violent ritual.³³⁰ In this light, there is not much to add about the *why* or *how* of Ibn Nashū's murder. Nevertheless, *where* the killing and desecration took place remains an unexplored issue. It turns out that Taḥt al-Qal'a also plays a central role in this case, something that Brinner but not Hirschler mentions in passing.³³¹ According to both Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba and Ibn Ṣaṣrā, the mob did not simply burn Ibn Nashū's corpse where they killed him, they paraded his corpse around, ending up in Taḥt al-Qal'a.³³² Moreover, according to Ibn Ṣaṣrā, each member of the crowd brought wood for the fire from Ibn Nashū's plundered house in the suburb of al-Nayrāb, located several kilometers west of Taḥt al-Qal'a, thus adding another spatial twist to the murder.

As much as the murder of Ibn Nashū reflects a premeditated choice of method, it also shows a conscious choice of venue in order to emphasise that the killing was meant as a challenge to the authorities. Furthermore, the reaction of the authorities to this case signals that this message was understood, and we could say, answered accordingly. According to Ibn Ṣaṣrā, no Mamluk amir intervened to save Ibn Nashū during the lynching, but on Wednesday the 19th of Rajab/17th of April, around 20 people who had been charged with participating in the murder of Ibn Nashū were crucified and later cut

³²⁸ Elbendary, 2016, 57–60.

³²⁹ The case is covered in detail in William Brinner, 'The Murder of Ibn An-Naṣū: Social Tensions in Fourteenth-Century Damascus', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 77, no. 3 (1957): 207–210. The case is also mentioned in Hirschler, 2007, 225. With regard to sources, the case is mentioned by several 8th/14th–9th/15th century chronicles. I have primarily consulted Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, 614 and 640–641 and Ibn Ṣaṣrā, *A Chronicle of Damascus* vol. 1, 273–276.

³³⁰ Hirschler argues that the burning of Ibn Nashū's corpse was a *symbolic negation as a form of protest*: rather than imitating the usual punishments meted out by the state, the burning of Ibn Nashū, an amir and wealthy businessman, was meant as a direct criticism of the state for failing to handle the food shortage. See Hirschler, 2007, 225.

³³¹ Brinner, 1957, 210.

³³² Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, 640 and Ibn Ṣaṣrā, *A Chronicle of Damascus* vol. 1, 275.

in half in Taḥt al-Qal‘a.³³³ In the end, the state took serious measures in an attempt to reassert its monopoly on exercising violence in the space that since the 6th/12th century had come to represent the official zone for the manifestation of sultanic power emanating from the urban citadel.

V. Conclusion

In conclusion, let us first return briefly to Chamberlain’s concept of the *audience state*. This is the inverse version of the concept of the *theatre state* coined by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz to describe the royal ceremonies of 19th century Bali. In Bali, Geertz argues, sacred ceremonies and dramas centred around the king did not simply represent politics, they were politics in so far as the *sacred theatre* was the primary means of defining and imposing political order.³³⁴ Chamberlain is certainly correct to note that the Mamluk sultans did not create a single centralised and continuous sacred drama around their own person. In addition to this, there is evidence to support his claim that sultans and their deputies inserted themselves within an existing ceremonial geography. (The following chapter illustrates this in a discussion of the Umayyad Mosque).

Nevertheless, this chapter has argued that it is a mistake to disregard Mamluk attempts at asserting their own power in more independent terms. It has shown that once we move beyond concepts of a particular Damascene ceremonial geography determined and confined by the dense built environment inside the walls, as presented by Hirschler, we can look at Mamluk ceremonial practices in a new light.

First, the example of the Taḥt al-Qal‘a, and the Sūq al-Khayl in particular clearly indicates that some Mamluk sultans and their deputies in the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries were actively involved in creating ceremonial geography that was detached from the sacred geography of the city centred around the Umayyad Mosque. Second, by examining the practices that took place within the framework of this extra-mural ceremonial geography, we can see that the Mamluk governors of Damascus did engage in performances centred around themselves and what they saw as the foundations of the sultanic political/military prowess and punitive authority as well as the protection of pilgrimage and travel. Furthermore, we have also seen how the power relationship

³³³ Ibn Ṣaṣrā, *A Chronicle of Damascus* vol. 1, 294; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhba, *Tārīkh* vol. 3, 614. According to Ibn Ṣaṣrā, some of the convicts were instead killed outside the shop of Ibn Nashū in near Bāb Jābiyya, which had seen most of the looting and destruction during the lynching.

³³⁴ See, e.g., Clifford Geertz, *Negara: The Theatre State in 19th Century Bali* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), Chapter 4.

internal to the sultanic order found repeated expression within Taḥt al-Qal‘a, for example, through the performance of internal hierarchies within the resident armed forces, especially the power-relations between the city, citadel and capital.

However, this chapter has also shown us that while Mamluk rulers continuously developed the Taḥt al-Qal‘a and the Sūq al-Khayl, they did so as an intensification of pre-existing Zangid and Ayyubid practices of cultivating the citadel and its surroundings as symbols of power bordered by zones of interaction. While a more or less uniform protocol for Sūq al-Khayl ceremonies across Damascus, Aleppo and other provincial cities was certainly a product of Mamluk rule, the very ceremonial forms through which the rulers of this polity staged their power were adopted from their predecessors.

Last, the exploration of the formation and use of Taḥt al-Qal‘a in the two centuries leading up to the 711 protest yielded further proof of the strategic nature of this and later protests. Taḥt al-Qal‘a and the Sūq al-Khayl afforded the opportunity for explicit representations of sultanic power, but as such they also, by default, opened up the opportunity for resistance against it. By intervening within this area, any group could explicitly show that their grievance was directed against the ruling order. Moreover, the interventions within this space could range from a complaint or an attempt to engage in negotiation over occupations as a way of expressing disappointment all the way to openly defiant acts such as lynchings of regime loyalists in times of particular tension. The reception that many of these unwelcome interventions were met with demonstrates that the agents of the ruler were intent upon maintaining their claim of control over this particular space to such a degree that opposition would be answered with violence if need be.

Chapter 4 – The Mosque as Political Space, the *Khaṭīb* as Political Figure

I. Introduction

The previous chapter argued that when the 711 protesters interrupted the governor's parade in Sūq al-Khayl, they confronted the Mamluk state on its own turf—a parade square that was intrinsically linked to the citadel and the governor's palace by way of ceremonial processions and served as the stage for repeated performances of power through the display of military splendour and, occasionally, violence. The present chapter explores what is arguably the other primary political space in 8th/14th century Damascus: the Umayyad Mosque.

The first argument presented in this chapter is that even though the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus did not provide a determining physical frame for the 711 protest, it was permeated by symbolic references to the mosque, the Friday communal prayer ceremony (*ṣalāt al-jum'a*, hereafter referred to as the *Friday Ceremony*) and the other devotional and socio-political practices that were tied to this spatiotemporal setting. The symbolic references to the mosque consisted of the use of objects, which belonged there such as the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān and the caliphal banners. It was also conjured up by the fact that the protest leader Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338) was the leading imam³³⁵ and *khaṭīb* (Friday Preacher) of the Umayyad Mosque (hereafter he is referred to by name or simply as the *khaṭīb*).

The chapter begins by explaining the symbolic role of the Umayyad Mosque complex in local and regional political culture, both before and during the Mamluk period. Hereafter we move to examining a number of cases from the early Mamluk period demonstrating that the Friday Ceremony constituted a primary public forum not only for collective worship, but also for socio-political activity around the time of the protest.

Since the idea of viewing the mosque as a socio-political space is not new, we discuss several studies of the medieval uses of mosques, the Umayyad Mosque in

³³⁵ The Moroccan traveller Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. 768–9/1368), who visited Damascus in 726/1326 and met Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī, reports that a total of thirteen imams were attached to the Umayyad Mosque, al-Qazwīnī being the most prominent among them and the one charged with leading prayer as part of the Friday Ceremony. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥlat Ibn Baṭṭūṭa – Tuḥfat al-Nuḏār fī Gharā'ib Al-Amṣār wa- 'Ajā'ib al-Asfār*, ed. M. 'Abd al-Mun'im al-'Aryān (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-'Ulūm, 1987), 109.

particular.³³⁶ However, this chapter does more than simply affirm the existing scholarly consensus about the socio-political importance of congregational mosques. It shows how specific agendas were promoted and specific political problems were negotiated within the Umayyad Mosque, including the negotiations that followed the 711 protest. It also shows how these practices were imbedded within the liturgy and tied to specific subsections of the mosque. Based on this examination, I argue that both the symbolic and practical political roles of the Umayyad Mosque must be taken into consideration when explaining why the protest of 711 featured both recognisable objects and leading liturgical personnel from the mosque.

The specific discussion of the *khaṭīb* as a symbolic figure leads into the second main argument of this chapter, which is that Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī was not only a symbolic figure, but also a living person who acted *through* his office within a dynamic socio-political field. In order to avoid essentialising the role of the *khaṭīb* as a purely symbolic figure, his actions must therefore also be understood as a complicated interplay between the official mandate and symbolic heritage of the institution of *khiṭāba*, personal agency and local politics.

The examination of the figure of the *khaṭīb* is motivated, of course, by Jalāl al-Dīn's involvement in the 711 protest. It is also motivated by the fact that the *khaṭīb* in Medieval Islamic history has attracted little attention from modern scholars despite his liturgical and socio-political centrality.³³⁷ *Khaṭībs* of large congregational mosques were some of the highest-ranking office holders among the 'ulamā' in terms of prestige and salary; moreover, their weekly performances in the Friday Ceremony were a pivotal practice of symbolic communication within the wider political culture of Medieval Islam. The 711 protest allows us to discuss this important yet understudied office in

³³⁶Linda Jones discusses how individual audience members used the 'the *prime-time* of the Friday *khuṭba*' for making public statements. See Linda G. Jones, 'Islam Al-Kafir Fi Hal Al-Khutba: Concerning the Conversion Of "Infidels" to Islam during the Muslim Friday Sermon in Mamluk Egypt', *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* 42, no. 1 (2012a): 53–75, 65. With direct reference to Syria, Yeshoua Frenkel calls congregational mosques the '*common loci for public encounters with rulers*'. Yehoshua Frenkel, 'Public Projection of Power in Mamluk Bilad Al-Sham', *Mamluk Studies Review* 11 (2007): 40–53, 50.

³³⁷The most extensive treatment of the medieval *khaṭīb* to date can be found in Linda G. Jones's *The Power of Oratory in the Medieval Muslim World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012b). Besides Jones, other scholars have devoted shorter chapters to discussions of the *khaṭīb* within wider studies of Medieval Islamic prayer practices and religious culture. From among these, I refer primarily to Marion H. Katz, *Prayer in Islamic Thought and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), Chapter 4 and Daniella Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria: Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons Under the Zangids and Ayyūbids (1146–1260)* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 2007), Chapter 3.

general terms in an attempt to discern what being *khaṭīb* meant in terms of socio-political agency and status, especially in the eyes of the Damascenes.

II. The Umayyad Mosque and its Ceremonies

i. The Umayyad Mosque in local and imperial culture

The term *mosque* is derived from the Arabic term *masjid* (place of prostration or prayer). Medieval Islamic cities typically had two types of mosques, the *masjid* and the *masjid jāmi* (congregational mosque). *Masjid* refers to the local mosque that was found in every quarter and used its inhabitants for their daily prayers. *Masjid jāmi* refers to the large congregational mosque where larger sections of a city's population would gather for the Friday Ceremony. Unlike the quarter mosque, the congregational mosque was considered a public space. It was regarded as belonging to the domain of the sultan, who decided when to confer the title of *masjid jāmi* onto a mosque, although medieval jurists disagreed about how present the sultan should be in weekly ceremonies.³³⁸ At the beginning of the 7th/13th century, congregational mosques had emerged in several of Damascus's extra-mural suburbs, which had their own *khaṭībs*, but the Umayyad Mosque remained the primary site of congregational worship.³³⁹

For the most part, this chapter focuses on the ceremonies that took place in the Umayyad Mosque and the people charged with leading them. However, this should not lead us to regard the building simply as a neutral frame for religious and socio-political life in Mamluk Damascus. This section begins with a brief overview of the history of the mosque complex and its role in local Damascene and imperial Mamluk culture.

The Umayyad Mosque complex was regarded as one of the artistic wonders of the Muslim world, one of the most important places of Islamic worship, a physical connection to the early Islamic past and a key site in Islamic eschatology. The mosque complex covers some 16.000 m² of the north-western sector of the walled city of Damascus. It consists of a domed prayer hall, a large north-facing courtyard and a number of smaller shrines (*mashhad*, pl. *mashāhid*) that are built into the walls that surround the courtyard. Three minarets rise from the northern, eastern and western

³³⁸ For a discussion of these disagreements, see, e.g., Norman Calder, 'Friday Prayer and the Juristic Theory of Government: Sarakhsī, Shīrāzī, Māwardī', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 49, no. 1 (1986): 35–47.

³³⁹ According to Abdelkadir al-Rihawi, four congregational mosques had been built in the suburbs during the Zangid and Ayyubid periods, while another 17 were built during the Mamluk period. See Abdelkadir Rihawi, *Damascus: Its History, Development and Artistic Heritage* (Damascus: Dar al-Bashar, 1977), plan 9 and legend.

corners of the complex, and in the western section of the courtyard stands the treasury of the mosque, a small octagonal structure raised on eight columns.³⁴⁰ The outer walls of the complex line up with the antique *themenos* (temple area) that previously enclosed the Byzantine Basilica of St. John that was built at the end of the 4th century.³⁴¹

When the Arab Muslim forces conquered Damascus in 14/635, a portion of the Basilica was initially converted into a place for Muslim prayer. But at the beginning of the 2nd/8th century, it was razed to make way for the mosque commissioned by the Umayyad Caliph al-Walīd I (d. 96/715).

The new structure was finished around 96–97/715.³⁴² With its gilded mosaic friezes, marble-clad interior and its towering leaded dome called the Qubbat al-Naṣr (Dome of victory), al-Walīd's mosque won fame for its size and beauty across the Islamic world. But aside from being recognised as an architectural gem, the mosque would also come to constitute a symbol of the victories won by the early Muslim armies and the spread of Islam. The site where the mosque stands today is inextricably linked to the conquest of Damascus in 14/635. This connection is represented in stories of how the legendary Muslim general Khālīd Ibn al-Walīd (d. 21/641), who participated in the conquest of Damascus, performed his first post-victory prayer where the eastern *miḥrāb* of the Mosque stands today.³⁴³

The Umayyad Mosque also stands as the strongest architectural reminder of Damascus's heyday as capital of the Umayyad Caliphate. However, when the seat of power was moved to Iraq by the Abbasid Caliphs in the 130s/150s, the imperial rulers lost interest in Damascus and the Umayyad Mosque. Until the emergence of independent princedoms in Syria in the 5th/11th century, the mosque was primarily a space used by the local civilian population. On the basis of a number of chronicle entries between the 3rd/9th and the 5th/11th centuries, Thierry Bianquis demonstrates that the Umayyad Mosque functioned in this period as the communal space *par excellence* in the public life of Damascus. Apart from its being the central site of worship, Bianquis analysis also shows it to be the primary venue for encounters with and even opposition to regional rulers, a site of local identification (*lieu de identification*) and a space of refuge in

³⁴⁰ Ross Burns, *Damascus. A History* (London: Routledge, 2005), 131.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 111–116.

³⁴³ Finbarr B. Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus: Studies on the Makings of an Umayyad Visual Culture* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 2001), 169.

troubled times.³⁴⁴ Bianquis ends his examination of the role of the mosque by stating that it lost its place as a privileged communal space in the late 5th/11th century when the first madrasas were built in Damascus.³⁴⁵ The emergence of multiple venues of teaching and worship intra- and extra-muros between the 5th/11th and 7th/13th centuries afforded the Damascenes many new spaces of interaction and loci for identification along law school or quarter lines. As discussed in Chapter 2, the 711 protesters' use of the holy sandal from the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiyya testifies to local attachment and identification with such institutes and the culture of worship and teaching that took place there.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to say that the Umayyad Mosque lost its importance entirely. Admittedly, the fact that the protesters in 711/1311 combined artefacts from the Dār al-Ḥadīth and the mosque seems to indicate that these places shared the position of primary loci of local identification.³⁴⁶ Moreover, an example of the continued status of the Umayyad Mosque as a communal site of identification can be seen in the biographical dictionary of Damascus, *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, written by the Damascene historian Ibn 'Asākir (d. 571/1176).

Ibn 'Asākir devotes several chapters of the topographical introduction to the Umayyad Mosque, its history and status within Islam. These chapters tell stories of al-Walīd's efforts to finance the project and the struggle to obtain building materials such as the lead for the Qubbat al-Naṣr that was collected throughout Syria. Ibn 'Asākir also sheds light on the sacredness of the Mosque. He declares that the mosque will stand 40 years after judgement day and that one prayer in the Umayyad Mosque is worth 30.000 prayers performed in private, and reports that the eminent jurist al-Shāfi'ī (d. 204/820) declared the mosque the 4th wonder of the world. Ibn 'Asākir also recounts a number of marvellous stories connected to the founding of the mosque, including that the pre-Islamic *themenos* was originally built by the prophet Hūd, that the builders hired by al-Walīd found an ancient clay tablet in the southern wall of the *themenos* that traced back

³⁴⁴ T Bianquis, 'Derrière Qui Prieras-Tu, Vendredi? Reflexions Sur Les Espaces Publics et Privés, Dans La Ville Arabe Médiévale', *Bulletin D'études Orientales* 37/38: (1985–1986): 7–21.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 19–20.

³⁴⁶ To this we should also add that the Umayyad Mosque never ceased to function as a venue of teaching and study, despite the emergence of the madrasa and the Dār al-Ḥadīth. Both the main prayer hall and the *mashāhid* that surrounded the courtyard housed teaching circles in the 8th/14th century.

to King David and that al-Walīd encountered the mythical being *al-Khiḍr* praying in the mosque one night.³⁴⁷

Ibn ‘Asākir’s ‘biography’ of the Umayyad Mosque relies on a wealth of oral and written sources that attest to the fact that the mosque was still very much at the centre of local Damascene imagination about their city and its past in the 6th/12th century. Furthermore, from the following century the mosque became once again an object of patronage for local rulers. The Ayyubid sultan al-Malik al-‘Ādil (d. 615/1218), who was the driving force behind the reconstruction of the citadel, also ordered several major renovations of the mosque between 602 and 614/1205–6 and 1216–17. Al-‘Ādil even tried to highlight the solemnity of the Friday sermon by reducing noisy traffic around the mosque.³⁴⁸ The rulers’ focus on the mosque increased significantly with the advent of the Mamluk sultans, who used the Umayyad Mosque as a cornerstone of their ruling ideology.

By tracing stylistic elements from the Umayyad Mosque in early Mamluk architecture across the empire, Finbarr B. Flood has shown that the Mamluk sultans from Baybars (d. 776/1277) to al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (d. 741/1341) adopted the aesthetics of the Umayyad Mosque and integrated it into their own building projects in an attempt to create a connection between their own rule and early Islamic history.³⁴⁹

Bethany Walker continues Flood’s line of argument, but with a stronger focus on the restoration projects that these sultans commissioned within the mosque itself.³⁵⁰ She also provides more detail than Flood about the ideological programme behind these efforts. She argues in particular that it was the link between the Umayyad Mosque and the 1st/7th century *jihād* against the Byzantines and the conquest of Syria that made the Mosque a potent symbol for the Mamluk sultans, who asserted their claim to power

³⁴⁷ See Chapter 2 in ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Hibat Allāh ibn ‘Asākir, *La Description De Damas*, ed. Nikita Elisséef (Damascus: Institut Francais de Damas, 1959). *al-Khiḍr* is also called *al-Khaḍir* – the green (man). He is a mythical being who is the subject of many Islamic legends and stories. He is sometimes identified as a prophet, sometimes as a saint (*wālī*) and is often associated with the ‘Spring of Life’. See Arent J. Wensinck, ‘Al-Khaḍir’, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 4*, ed. E. van Donzel et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 902–905.

³⁴⁸ R. Stephen Humphreys, *From Saladin to the Mongols – The Ayyubids of Damascus 1193–1260* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977), 148–149.

³⁴⁹ Finbarr B. Flood, ‘Umayyad Survivals and Mamluk Revivals’, *Muqarnas* 14 (1997): 57–79.

³⁵⁰ Bethany J. Walker, ‘Mememorating the Sacred Spaces of the Past: The Mamluks and the Umayyad Mosque at Damascus’, *Near Eastern Archeology* 67, no. 1 (2004): 26–39, 34–36. Walker highlights Baybars’s restorations of the marbles and mosaics, Qalāwūn’s restorations of the glass mosaics, al-Nāṣir’s reconstruction of the *qibla*-wall and his long-term governor Tankiz’s work on the *qibla*-wall and replacement of the tiles in the main prayer hall. For Governor Tankiz’s work on the mosque, see also Ellen Kenney, ‘Power and Patronage in Mamluk Syria: The Architecture and Urban Works of Tankiz Al-Nasiri, 1312–1340’ (New York University, New York, 2004), 121–145 and 378–387.

through reference to their military victories first over the crusaders and subsequently the Ilkhānite Mongols.³⁵¹ Walker also suggests that the cultivation of the mosque was meant to appeal to popular religious sentiment in Damascus as well as a way to cultivate a space for Sufi-worship.³⁵²

These recurrent restoration projects and transpositions of stylistic features show that by the Mamluk period, the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus had become a symbol within sultanic strategies of legitimisation directed towards both the population of Damascus and the population of their empire at large. If we add to this the importance of the mosque as a communal space that had been cultivated over centuries, we can see that this building complex was in fact a central symbolic site to both the local civilian population as well as their rulers, unlike the Taḥt al-Qal‘a and the Sūq al-Khayl, which were primarily used for military representations of state power.

In the previous chapter, we concluded that Michael Chamberlain’s concept of the *audience state* of Mamluk Damascus is an inadequate explanation for the emergence of the Taḥt al-Qal‘a and its associated rituals.³⁵³ When we consider the Mamluk restorations of the Umayyad Mosque, it certainly makes more sense to say, as Chamberlain does, ‘that the rulers of the city fit themselves into its existing ceremonial geography’.³⁵⁴ However, if we follow Flood’s and Walker’s argument that the interest of these sultans in the Umayyad Mosque was not only a gesture of benevolence towards the Damascenes but also a way to consolidate their own ruling ideology on an imperial scale, we can again argue that Chamberlain underestimates the degree to which Mamluk sultans and amirs invested themselves in spaces like the Umayyad Mosque. Transposing its symbols onto one’s own mausoleum or personally participating in its restoration, as Governor Sayf al-Dīn Tankiz (d. 740/1340) did in 740/1340, certainly goes beyond simply ‘observing, supporting and applauding the others’ performances’.³⁵⁵

Both the successive restoration efforts and the custom of transposing the iconography of the mosque onto other buildings seems to have ended with the death of al-Nāṣir. But the space of the mosque continued to be regarded by later Mamluk sultans as a prime location for communication well into the 9th/15th century. This is indicated by

³⁵¹ Walker, 2004, 34.

³⁵² Ibid., 37–38.

³⁵³ See above, 118–119. For Chamberlain’s discussion of the *audience state*, see Michael Chamberlain, *Knowledge and Social Practice in Medieval Damascus, 1190–1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 48–49.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 48.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 49. Tankiz’s involvement in restoration works is noted by Ellen Kenney. See Kenney, 2004, 379.

the wealth of decrees engraved on the columns of the courtyard during the late Mamluk period. These inscriptions relate to matters of government – especially the abolition of vices and non-sharia taxes – that typically followed the ascension of a new sultan in the later Mamluk period.³⁵⁶

One inscription that explicitly underlines the importance of the mosque was commissioned by Sultan al-Malik al-Zāhir Khushqadam (d. 871/1467) in 868/1464 and placed on a column at the entrance to the prayer hall. Khushqadam's inscription contains a decree that orders a ban on alcohol and prostitution and the abolition of illegal taxes demanded by the *muhtasib* (market inspector). These demands are nothing out of the ordinary in and of themselves: similar injunctions can be found in other places in Damascus and in Syria in general. However, what is remarkable about the 868 inscription is that the text itself contains a specific instruction about where it should be placed:

[...] what it [the decree] stipulates shall be inscribed on a marble slab at the door of the *ḥājib al-ḥujjāb*³⁵⁷ and carried with courier (*bil-barīdiyya*) to the Umayyad Mosque and plastered onto one of its columns in order for this to prevent all remaining illegal taxes (*mukūs*) in Islam and in order for this good deed (*ḥusna*) to be present in the noble registers (*al-ṣaḥā'if al-sharīfa*) for eternity [...]³⁵⁸

The wording of this instruction clearly shows that the placement of the inscription in the Umayyad Mosque had a dual purpose. First, the choice of location seems to be motivated by a wish to ensure that the decree would receive maximum exposure within Damascus and attests to an awareness of the centrality of the Umayyad Mosque as a communal space among the staff of the Mamluk Chancery in Cairo. Second, Jean Sauvaget has argued that the 'noble registers' (*al-ṣaḥā'if al-sharīfa*) must refer 'to the registres that

³⁵⁶ While this intriguing corpus of inscriptions lies beyond the scope of this thesis, their emergence towards the close of the 8th/14th century could be explained as an aspect of what Amina Elbendary has called the 'social and political transformation of the long 15th century in the Mamluk Empire'. Elbendary argues that the economic and consequent socio-political changes of this century brought on by, among other factors, the plague of the 750s/1350s fostered a new and more dynamic culture of communication between sultans and their ordinary urban subjects. Amina A. Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans: Urban Protests in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2016). See especially chapter 5.

³⁵⁷ 'Master chamberlain': an officer of the Mamluk establishment whose function was to regulate access to the governor, organise ceremonies and judge disputes among soldiers. From the middle of the 8th/14th century, his judicial mandate was extended to civil cases. Unknown, 'Ḥādġib Iv. – Egypt and Syria', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 3*, ed. B. Lewis et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 48–49.

³⁵⁸ #10349 in *Thesaurus d'Epigraphie Islamique* (<http://www.epigraphie-islamique.org>) (last accessed 30-05-2017). See also Jean Sauvaget, 'Decrets Mamelouks de Syrie (Troisieme Article)', *Bulletin D'études Orientales*, 12 (n.d.): 5–60, 18–24.

record all the acts of men and which will be presented to them on Judgement Day'.³⁵⁹ The decree thus suggests that placing proof of the sultan's good deed (*husna*) within the mosque complex will not only aid its earthly but also its transcendental visibility. In other words, the Umayyad Mosque is identified as both a primary platform for political communication and a sacred space where the connection with the divine powers is particularly strong, no doubt with reference to its history and sacredness.

While there are no similar inscriptions dating back to the early 8th/14th century, the mosque also played significant role in framing the communication between ruler and subjects and the publication of sultanic decrees during the early Mamluk Period. The available evidence in the chronicles, however, suggests that this was done through the spoken rather than the written word, and primarily in connection with the Friday Ceremony. The next step in trying to understand how the Umayyad Mosque functioned as a pivotal space in political culture requires us to examine how Mamluk rulers as well as local civilian actors used this ceremony for specific purposes. We begin with the customary political reference found in the weekly sermon of the *khaṭīb*.

ii. Politics from the minbar: the uses of al-du'ā' lil-sulṭān

The Friday Ceremony was an institutionalised break from the toil and chores of daily life and offered a space for communal introspection and piety. However, this space also lent itself to a variety of forms of communication between rulers, *khaṭībs* and ordinary worshippers. We begin with exploring how Mamluk sultans and their deputies made use of the Friday Ceremony in Damascus. As Yeshohua Frenkel puts it, congregational mosques and the Umayyad Mosque in particular, served as a 'common loci for public encounters with rulers'.³⁶⁰ Occasionally, these encounters took the shape of direct contact, as when governors or visiting sultans received supplications after the ceremony or demonstrated their benevolence by having coins distributed to the attending crowds.³⁶¹

However, the most common form of encounter was the indirect contact created between the congregation and an absent ruler through *al-du'ā' lil-sulṭān* (the blessing of the ruler), a formulaic blessing of the reigning sultan that acknowledged his right to rule,

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 23. NB: Sauvaget translates the original Arabic text into French. I have translated it from French into English.

³⁶⁰ Frenkel, 2007, 50.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 50–51 and James Grehan, 'Street Violence and Social Imagination in Late-Mamluk and Ottoman Damascus', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 35 (2003): 215–236, 217–218.

which was pronounced by the *khaṭīb*. As the title implies, the primary function of the *khaṭīb* was to preach the *khuṭbat al-jum‘a* (Friday sermon) from the *minbar* (pulpit), which stood at the *qibla* wall of the mosque immediately to the left of the central *mihrāb* (prayer niche). The sermon usually consisted of one long, and one short sermon divided by the performance of the collective prayer. *Al-du‘ā’ lil-sultān* was customarily pronounced as part of the second and final sermon.

In the political culture of the medieval Islamic world, *al-du‘ā’ lil-sultān* was one of the two primary markers of rulership, on a par with *sikka* (minting), a term that referred to the ruler’s right to have his name and regal titles struck on coins.³⁶² While the custom of blessing the ruler seems to have roots in the 1st/7th or 2nd/8th century, there is no direct justification for it within the Qur’ān or *ḥadīths*. The only partial exceptions are two disputed *ḥadīths* that instruct worshippers not to curse rulers in their prayers but to pray for their righteousness.³⁶³ As Marion H. Katz explains, these two *ḥadīths* do not command the *khaṭīb* to praise rulers in flowery terms, but rather suggest that one should ‘assume the likelihood of tyranny, and encourage prayer for the reform of the ruler, rather than the endorsement of his rule’.³⁶⁴ As Katz argues, medieval jurists were well aware of the disjuncture between the instruction to pray for the justice of rulers in the optative sense and the medieval practice of *al-du‘ā’ lil-sultān*. As a compromise, they agreed for the most part to accept *al-du‘ā’ lil-sultān* (if only to avoid incurring the wrath of rulers and causing *fitna*), but disallowed the use of unnecessary salutary titles and superfluous praise.³⁶⁵

Despite its ambiguous justifications and the reservations of jurists, the blessing became an omnipresent institutionalised form of political communication in the medieval Islamic world, and changes in the blessing reflected real political change. The Mamluk sultans and their contemporaries were no exception to this rule. According to the Damascene chronicler Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), the *du‘ā’* in Damascus changed four

³⁶² It should be mentioned here that *al-du‘ā’ lil-sultān* originally did not refer to an individual bearing the personal title *sultān*. Originally, it was meant as blessing of the Caliph as the person who *held sultān meaning*, i.e., ‘power’ in the abstract sense. As for the introduction of *sultān* as the title of a military ruler whose power was (theoretically) delegated to him from the Caliph, this development took place in the 4th/10th century. J. H. Kramer and C. E. Bosworth, ‘Sultān’, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 9*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 849–851.

³⁶³ Katz, 2013, 132.

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 133.

times during 658/1260 as a result of the shift from Ayyubid to Mongol rule, from Mongol rule to Mamluk vassalage and finally to direct rule by Baybars.³⁶⁶

During longer periods of stable rule, where we can assume that the *du 'ā' lil-sultān* remained a relatively neutral formal announcement, the chroniclers usually do not comment on it. However, in uncertain times of transition and political crisis, the chronicles show us how this customary blessing became an important ritualised method of negotiating the power relations that governed cities, provinces and the Mamluk polity at large. This becomes especially clear in periods of conflict and frequent regime changes such as the 690s/1290s. This decade was marked by recurrent internal disputes within the Mamluk military elite and ended with the temporary Mongol occupation of Syria in 699/1299–1300. With regard to the local situation in Damascus, the Damascene chronicler al-Jazarī (d. 738/1338) provides vivid descriptions of how the *du 'ā' lil-sultān* was used to manage these frequent changes of power beginning with the shifts that followed the assassination of sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl Ibn al-Qalāwūn in 693/1293. Al-Jazarī reports that when al-Ashraf was assassinated outside Cairo in Muḥarram 693/December of 1293, the Damascenes were not immediately informed of what had happened. Instead, on Friday 24th of Muḥarram/ 24th of December, a courier arrived from Cairo with a fabricated letter from al-Ashraf, who was already dead at this point. The letter declared that the sultan had appointed his eight-year old brother al-Nāṣir Muḥammad as his heir apparent (*wālī al-'ahd*). It also ordered the *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque to incorporate al-Nāṣir into the Friday sermon, but *only* as the heir to al-Ashraf's throne.³⁶⁷

According to al-Jazarī's chronicle, news of al-Ashraf's death spread on the following day, but he continued to be blessed as sultan in the Friday sermon for nearly two months, until al-Nāṣir was finally blessed independently as sultan on Friday the 21st

³⁶⁶ See, e.g., Ibn Kathīr's use of *al-du 'ā' lil-sultān* as a trope in his description of Damascus's transition from Ayyubid to Mongol and then Mamluk rule in 658/1260. Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya fī al-Tārīkh 20 Pts. in 11 Vols.* (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2010), vol. 8 pt. 15, 358.

³⁶⁷ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Abū Bakr al-Jazarī, *Tārīkh Ḥawādith al-Zamān wa-Anbā' ihī wa-Wafayāt al-Akābir wa-al-A'yān min Abnā' ihī 3 Vols.*, ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmurī (Ṣaydā – Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, 1998), vol. 1, 195–196. See also Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab 33 Pts. in 15 Vols.*, ed. Najīb M. Fawwāz and Hikmat K. Fawwāz (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2004), vol. 14, pt. 31, 169.

The Damascene chronicler al-Birzālī (d. 738/1338) does not mention the letter, but does mention that the *khaṭīb* was given instructions to continue mentioning al-Nāṣir as heir to al-Ashraf for two months. See 'Alam al-Dīn al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Birzālī, *Muqtafi 'alā al-Rawḍatayn al-Ma'rūf bi-Tārīkh al-Birzālī 4 Vols.*, ed. 'Umar A. S. Tadmurī (Ṣaydā - Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, 2006), vol. 2, 347.

of Rabī' I 693/18th of February 1294.³⁶⁸ On that day, the *khaṭīb* also acknowledged the death of al-Ashraf by moving his name to the posthumous mercy prayer (*al-taraḥḥum*), which also included the name of their father the sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn, who died in 689/1290.³⁶⁹

Al-Jazarī states that the forged letter from al-Ashraf had been written on the advice of al-Shujā'ī (d. 693/1294), a Mamluk amir who acted as vizier to the child sultan. Al-Shujā'ī and two other amirs, Kitbughā (d. 702/1302) and Baybars al-Jāshankīr (d. 710/1310), made up the shadow cabinet which held the *de facto* reins of power after al-Ashraf's death. The forged letter suggests that this group took personal charge of regulating the *du'ā' lil-sultān* in Damascus in order to promote an official narrative that excluded the details al-Ashraf's murder and made the pro-forma instalment of al-Nāṣir as sultan look like a planned transition of power along the Qalāwūnid line. Al-Jazarī goes on to describe how the same *manoeuvre* was repeated shortly thereafter to pave the way for the deposition of al-Nāṣir and the appointment of one member of the shadow cabinet, Amir Kitbughā, as sultan. Kitbughā's sultanate was declared in Muḥarram 694/December of 1294, but six months earlier, in Rajab 693/June 1294, a decree arrived in Damascus that ordered the amirs of Syria to reaffirm their allegiance to al-Nāṣir with a new oath, which included Amir Kitbughā as his peer and heir apparent. Moreover, on the following Friday, Kitbughā was mentioned after al-Nāṣir in the blessing exactly as al-Nāṣir had been added to the blessing of his brother al-Ashraf the year before.³⁷⁰ When Kitbughā's sultanate was finally declared in Muḥarram/December, he was thus already attached to the Qalāwūnid house, even though the young al-Nāṣir was not dead but merely deposed.

According to al-Jazarī, the Qalāwūnid connection was even further emphasised after the sermon when the congregation blessed Kitbughā and 'proceeded as usual to the aforementioned prayer for mercy on the sultan al-Malik al-Manṣūr and his two sons, al-Ashraf and al-Ṣāliḥ'.³⁷¹ Kitbughā ruled for two years until he was overthrown by supporters of another amir, Ḥusām al-Dīn Lājīn (d. 698/1299) in 696/1296. Lājīn died in 698/1299, at which point al-Nāṣir was reinstalled as sultan. The descriptions of al-Jazarī suggest that in 693–94/1294, *al-du'ā' lil-sultān* was not simply a statement of

³⁶⁸ al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith* vol. 1, 200.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 200–202.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 248.

political facts formulated by the local *khaṭīb* according to the situation. Rather, it was a tool of governance, a form of political communication through which the power holders in Cairo could intervene locally from a distance and re-frame a tumultuous political process as a pre-conceived and legitimate continuation of Qalāwūnid rule.

It was, however, not only direct orders from Cairo that could cause the *khaṭīb* to change *al-du‘ā’ lil-sultān*. In some situations, changes could also reflect pragmatic decisions by local civilian elites seeking to steer the city safely through war and/or occupation. An example of this can be found in connection with the three-month occupation of Damascus five years later in 699/1299–1300 by the armies of the Mongol Ilkhān Ghazān (d. 703/1304).

In the chronicle *Dhayl Mir‘āt al-Zamān*³⁷² by Quṭb al-Dīn al-Yūnīnī (d. 726/1325–26), we are presented with a detailed account of the occupation that is by all accounts borrowed and adapted from his colleague al-Jazarī.³⁷³ In Rabī‘ II 699/December 1299, the Mamluk army suffered a crushing defeat by Ghazān’s forces at Wādī Khazandār near Ḥoms and began retreating toward Egypt. When hearing this news, the military and civilian elite of Damascus packed up and headed for Egypt in anticipation of the Mongol advance on their city. This group included the city’s governor, treasurer and market inspector, and their exodus left Damascus without any formal Mamluk leadership. Only the commander of the citadel, Amir Sanjar Arjwāsh al-Manṣūrī (d. 701/1301–02), had remained, and now prepared to defend his stronghold against the Mongols. Arjwāsh ordered the town criers to declare to the townspeople that al-Nāṣir was still their sultan. But despite this, the population quickly prepared to surrender to the advancing Mongol armies and negotiations were initiated on Friday the 7th Rabī‘ II 699/1st of January 1300 when a small group of envoys arrived in Damascus.³⁷⁴

The negotiation process was acknowledged in the Friday sermon later that day as the *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque, Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamā‘a (d. 727/1327), mentioned

³⁷² Quṭb al-Dīn Mūsā ibn Muḥammad al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mir‘āt al-Zamān: Tārīkh al-Sanawāt m1312–1297/ h711 – 697*, ed. Ḥamza A. ‘Abbās (Abu Dhabi: Hay‘at Abū Zaby lil-Thaqāfa wa-al-Turāth, al-Majma‘ al-Thaqāfī, 2007).

³⁷³ As explained in Chapter 1, I subscribe to Li Guo’s theory that the 697–702 section of the *Dhayl Mir‘āt al-Zamān* is al-Yūnīnī’s *synthesis* of al-Jazarī’s chronicle entries for this period, while the 702–711 section of the *Dhayl* is written by al-Jazarī* and misidentified by a later copyist as belonging to the *Dhayl*. In the maintext, I identify the author of the 697–702 section as *al-Yūnīnī/al-Jazarī*, while author of the 702–711 section is identified as *al-Jazarī**. In footnotes, the *Dhayl* is referred to as al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, *x* in keeping with the Abu Dhabi edition from 2007. See above, 25–27.

³⁷⁴ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 258–259.

no sultan in his sermon.³⁷⁵ As far as we can tell from the sources, not mentioning a sultan in the Friday sermon occurred very rarely. Under normal circumstances, such a decision would be tantamount to rebellion; however, in the volatile situation after Wādī Khazandār, it was a strategic move. At this point, the breach of al-Nāṣir power in Syria was a fact, but negotiations with Ghazān would still have to be conducted. Thus, the deliberate omission of reference to any sultan in the Friday sermon seems to have been a way to underline the transitory nature of the situation and to signal to the Mongols that while the city recognised the defeat of al-Nāṣir, it would not recognise Ghazān's sovereignty before a guarantee of safety had been issued.

On the following Friday, when a truce had been all but ratified, Ibn Jamā'a included the Ilkhān Ghazān in the sermon with the following titles: 'Our master the sultān the most powerful, the sultān of Islam and the Muslims, The victor of the earthly world champion of faith Maḥmūd Ghazān'.³⁷⁶ In this case, the typical resistance to heaping lavish praise on rulers in *al-du'ā' lil-sultān* that is generally found in the juridical literature seems to have been completely ignored. Presumably, the volatility of the situation and the immediate need for a truce led Ibn Jamā'a to disregard the consensus about modesty when praying for rulers.

To conclude: the *minbar* afforded rulers the opportunity to communicate indirectly with their subjects and for the local elites to communicate with a foreign occupying force *through* the sermon of the *khaṭīb*. Two adjacent structures, however, provided a political platform for other actors and underlined the status of the Friday Ceremony as a socio-political event that reached beyond the formal affirmations of allegiance within the sermon. We now turn to exploring the importance of these two 'adjacent structures' – the Suddat al-Mu'adhhdhin (the stand of the muezzin) and the Maqṣūrat al-Khiṭāba (the enclosure of the *khaṭīb*ship). We discuss their function related to Mamluk communication and interaction with the Damascene community; with specific regard to the Maqṣūrat al-Khiṭāba, we also discuss how this structure provided a socio-political venue for Damascene citizens without the presence of state officials.

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 260.

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 269.

iii. Politics beyond the minbar: the function of the sudda and the maqṣūra

The Suddat al-Mu'adhdhin was an elevated stand located near the *minbar* from which the muezzin would pronounce the second call to prayer immediately before the ceremony started. Apart from its liturgical function, this stand was also the primary platform for publishing new decrees aimed at the broader population of Damascus that were read out here in connection with the Friday ceremony. It was thus from the Suddat al-Mu'adhdhin that the decree condemning Karāy's behaviour and abolishing his tax program was announced on the 16 of Jumādā II 711/29th of October 1311.³⁷⁷

The Maqṣūrat al-Khiṭāba was a wooden enclosure to the left of the minbar which fenced off the central mihrāb and the shrine where the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān was kept. We have no detailed indications of its size in the Mamluk period, but it seems to have extended out into the center of the prayer hall under the Qubbat al-Naṣr.³⁷⁸

On occasions when important declarations were made from the *minbar* or *sudda*, the governor and the high-ranking amirs would appear in the *maqṣūra* to witness the announcements.³⁷⁹ Moreover, when sultans or other high-ranking military officials visited Damascus, they would usually attend prayer in the *maqṣūra* accompanied by the top civilian and military officials of Damascus (usually the judges [*qāḍīs*] and the amirs); sometimes these appearances were followed by appointment ceremonies inside the *maqṣūra*.³⁸⁰ This central space, which was fenced off from the rest of the prayer hall, thus had a political function as a secluded venue for negotiations and ceremonies uniting the higher echelons of military and civilian elites. This was, however, not the sole function of the *maqṣūra*.

Even though the Maqṣūrat al-Khiṭāba seems to have been the primary space for appearances of rulers in the mosque, it was also a space with a wider religious and socio-political function. On regular Fridays, there would be no military or sultanic presence there since the governor of Damascus performed the Friday noon prayer in a separate

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 1440; al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafi* vol. 4, 27.

³⁷⁸ Its minimum size at the end of the 6th/12th century can be deduced from two comments made by the Andalusian traveller Ibn Jubayr (d. 614/1217). He describes that the Maqṣūrat al-Khiṭāba was the largest enclosure in the mosque, and also notes that another *maqṣūra*, which enclosed the south-eastern mihrāb known as Mihrāb al-Ṣaḥāba (the Mihrāb of the Companions [of the Prophet]), measured 44 x 22 spans (*shabr*), or roughly 10 x 5 metres. See Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Jubayr, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, ed. William Wright and M. J. de Goeje (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1907), 265.

³⁷⁹ See, e.g., al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 310 and al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith* vol. 1, 252 for reports on the governor attending prayer in the *maqṣūra* to observe the appointment of Ibn Jamā'a as *khaṭīb* in 699/1300.

³⁸⁰ See, e.g., al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith* vol. 1, 329 where Kitbughā attends prayer in the *maqṣūra* during his first sultanic visit to Damascus in 696/1295.

chamber in the north-western corner of the open courtyard called Mashhad ‘Uthmān or Mashhad al-Nā’ib (the Shrine of ‘Uthmān or the Shrine of the Governor). Under normal circumstances, the Maqṣūrat al-Khiṭāba housed the Shāfi‘ī law school, whose members used it for worship as well as teaching activities.³⁸¹ Other groups of local worshippers, such as funeral processions, would also enter the *maqṣūra* to perform prayer for the deceased. We know of this practice primarily because the governor Sayf al-Dīn Qarasunqūr (d. 728/1328) unsuccessfully tried to ban it in 710/1310.³⁸² The fact that the prohibition occurs only once and lasted no more than a few days indicates that the Mamluk authorities in general were not able or perhaps not willing to dictate the terms of use for this space.

Besides teaching among the Shāfi‘īs and wider prayer ceremonies, the Maqṣūrat al-Khiṭāba could also be used as a space for internal arbitration and reconciliation among the wider scholarly community. For example, it was used for a séance of reconciliation within the judicial community of Damascus in 736/1335 following an incident where the Mālikī chief judge had indicted his Shāfi‘ī colleague for moral iniquity (*fīsq*).³⁸³ There are also examples where the *maqṣūra* seems to have functioned as a more open political forum accessible to a wider section of the public. This is seen most clearly in the al-Yūnīnī/al-Jazarī’s description of the official surrender to the Ilkhān Ghazān, which took place in the *maqṣūra* the day after Ibn Jamā‘a’s *ruler-free* Friday sermon in Rabī‘ II 699/January 1300. According to the *Dhayl*, the Ilkhān Ghazān was represented at this meeting by a delegation headed by one Amir Ismā‘īl, while members of the scholarly elite and the ordinary public of Damascus crowded inside and outside the *maqṣūra*, filling it and the adjacent floor space.³⁸⁴

The combination of the *minbar*, the *sudda* and the *maqṣūra* thus constituted the physical stage for a wide range of public practices. Interactions ranging from affirmations of allegiance or publication of administrative decrees to more or less

³⁸¹ The other three law schools were assigned smaller *maqṣūras* to the left and right along the *qibla*-wall. See Louis Pouzet, *Damas Au VII/XIII S. Vie et Structures Religieuses Dans Une Metropole Islamique* (Beirut: Dar el-Mashreq Sarl Editeurs, 1991), 86.

³⁸² al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafī* vol. 3, 484–485; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 83. In the *Dhayl*, al-Jazarī* relates the same story without specifying who ordered the ban. See al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1324.

³⁸³ al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith* vol. 3, 855.

³⁸⁴ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 261. It is unclear whether all Damascenes irrespective of social status were allowed into the *maqṣūra*. Al-Jazarī* states that ‘people and commoners (*al-nās wa-al-‘awāmm*) gathered and the inside of the *maqṣūra* and the [space] under the Qubbat al-Naṣr filled with people (*al-nās*)’. We can speculate that some form of hierarchy was in place that left the people on the lower rungs of the social ladder outside the *maqṣūra*.

exclusive negotiations about power, privileges and appointments were all centred around these three physical structures at the center of mosque, often in connection with the Friday liturgy. These practices further mark the spatio-temporal setting of the mosque on Fridays as pivotal to socio-political life in Damascus.

Before returning to 711/1311, we need to make a few observations about how political interventions in the ceremony could also come from the ordinary worshipers in the prayer hall.

iv. Audience members' strategic uses of the Friday ceremony

The communication that took place in Umayyad Mosque was far from restricted to those who were allowed to speak from either the *minbar* or the *sudda* or within the *maqṣūra*. Apart from the political strategies of sultans and the negotiations of the local scholarly elites, the Friday service also afforded a platform for individual civilians to use the atmosphere of solemnity and piety to advance various socio-political agendas. In Chapter 3, for example, we encountered the case of a Christian man who was executed in Sūq al-Khayl in 730/1330 for declaring himself a Muslim during the Friday sermon, only to retract his conversion a moment later. As noted, this case resembles similar cases from Cairo where Christians chose to stage their conversion-retraction during Friday prayers as a form of public martyrdom with maximal audience.³⁸⁵

While the performances of these repentant converts are perhaps the most bizarre example of co-optation of the Friday service, there are numerous examples of individuals and groups exploiting the ceremony in less suicidal ways for communicating their claims to a wider audience, including their rulers. With reference to the 9th/15th century, Amina Elbendary points out that Friday sermons in both Damascus and Cairo played a pivotal role in urban protests and riots, both as a stage for disruptive performance and as an organisational platform for rallying the worshippers for wider collective action in the streets.³⁸⁶ Konrad Hirschler also notes cases where protesters prevented the muezzin from making the traditional call to prayer as a way of creating a momentary lapse of order, and James Grehan notes the use general boycotts of the Friday services in

³⁸⁵ See above, 115–116.

³⁸⁶ Elbendary, 2016, 192. The use of minarets as tools of mobilisation has been widely noted as a common feature of pre- and early modern protesting in the Islamic world. See, e.g., Fumihiko Hasebe, 'Invocations from the Tops of Minarets: A Popular Uprising and Its Aftermath in Ottoman Cairo, November 1724', *Memoirs of the Toyo Bunko* 63 (2005): 89–105; Fumihiko Hasebe, 'Popular Movement Al-Jaqmaq, the Less Paternalistic Sultan', *AJAMES* 20, no. 2 (2005): 26–51.

Damascus as a tool of protest similar to a general strike.³⁸⁷ While protests were nowhere near as common in the 8th/14th century, there are still cases where the Umayyad Mosque functioned as a stage for displaying dismay or organising collective protest. In the following section, we will see several examples where worshippers disrupted or boycotted the ceremony due to animosity against the *khaṭīb*.

To summarise: we can say that whether it was used by ruling figures to make self-aggrandising or conciliatory gestures towards the assembled worshippers, or by individuals or groups aiming to address and mobilise the congregation, the overall tendency is clear. On Fridays, a congregational mosque constituted a socio-political space of strategic interaction and even conflict wherein the ceremony could be adjusted, co-opted or even disrupted for multiple purposes. Against this background, we can now ask what specific role the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus and the Friday Ceremony played in structuring the 711 tax conflict and the 711 protest.

v. The Umayyad Mosque and the 711 tax conflict

The first thing we can note is that the protest itself did not evolve according to the ‘dramaturgy’ of protest registered by Elbendary, Hirschler and others. The protest did not take place on Friday afternoon in direct extension of the ceremony; instead, the plaintiffs made the strategic choice of seeking out the Monday parade in Sūq al-Khayl. That said, the spatio-temporal setting of the Friday ceremony seems to have played a role in the planning and the aftermath of the protest. First, according to al-Jazarī*, the order for general taxation of property was issued on a Friday, which caused the people to voice dismay and demand intervention from the ‘*ulamā*’, specifically the *khaṭīb* al-Qazwīnī.³⁸⁸ This could suggest that the Friday ceremony was in fact the occasion where the initial arrangement of the protest took place

As for the actual protest, we know that the march began with al-Qazwīnī retrieving the banners and the Qur’ān of ‘Uthmān from the mosque, and that the protesters marched via Bāb al-Faraj, some forty-five metres northwest of the mosque. While this suggests that the courtyard of the mosque functioned as the rallying point for the protesters, we cannot say whether any form of agitation took place here before the march.

³⁸⁷ Konrad Hirschler, 'Riten Der Gewalt: Protest Und Aufruhr in Kairo Und Damaskus (7./13. Bis 10./16. Jahrhundert)', in *Islamwissenschaft Als Kulturwissenschaft; I: Historische Anthropologie. Ansätze Und Möglichkeiten*, ed. S Conermann, S. and v. Hees (Schenefeld (Hamburg): EB-Verlag, 2007), 205–233, 216; Grehan, 2003, 218.

³⁸⁸ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1435.

A much clearer use of the Friday ceremony can be seen on the Friday after the protest. As mentioned in Chapter 2, al-Jazarī* relates that the Sufi *shaykh* ‘Alī Ibn ‘Alī al-Ḥarīrī (d. 715/1315) appeared before the governor in the Mashhad ‘Uthmān and warned him that the discontent of the population might turn into wider opposition against the sultan if the tax policy was not changed.³⁸⁹ The fact that this exchange took place at the *mashhad* should also be considered in the light of the fact that a sizeable crowd was either gathered in the main prayer hall or possibly leaving it at that very moment. If al-Ḥarīrī did have a wider base of popular supporters, as suggested in Chapter 2, we can speculate that many of them were in fact at the mosque when this exchange took place, thus making the threat of another round of protest both tangible and immediate.³⁹⁰

These hints at the direct physical role of the Umayyad Mosque in the protest are less significant, however, than the symbolic references to the Mosque and the Friday service imbedded in the protest march itself. The Qur’ān of ‘Uthmān and the black banners that the protesters carried were taken directly from the *minbar* and the Maqṣūrat al-Khiṭāba. Not only did these objects constitute links to early Islamic history, they were also tied directly to the central space of the Friday Ceremony. In other words, we could say that the protesters were bringing the moveable parts of the ceremonial setting of the Friday Ceremony with them to Sūq al-Khayl.

At this point, we should recall that Sūq al-Khayl was a space that the Mamluks tried to control as a unilateral stage for projecting the military power of the state; the Monday inspection parades are one example of this intention.³⁹¹ By comparison, the ceremonial space of the mosque was, as noted above, a more dynamic space where political communication took on a more open and multilateral form. To be sure, the prayer hall was subjected to some hierarchies: the *maqṣūra* was at least occasionally sealed from the rest of the prayer hall and the *khaṭīb* was obliged to allot the ruler a place in the sermon. However, the examples cited above show that the Umayyad Mosque was also a *public* political space shared by the civilian population and their rulers. Drawing clear visual references to the Mosque could thus have been a way for the protesters to bring the culture tied to one space into another, thereby juxtaposing the military rigour,

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 1436. The exchange between the *shaykh* and the governor is recounted above, 43–45.

³⁹⁰ See above, 43–44.

³⁹¹ By *tried*, I mean that the interruptions of their ceremonies or even occupations of this space showed that they were not always able to maintain their spatial hegemony. For a more detailed discussion of this see above, 108–111 and 114–118.

exclusivity and sultanic control of Sūq al-Khayl with the piety, interaction and shared control characteristic of the Umayyad Mosque.

Beyond the use of inanimate objects as protesting-props, the fact that the *khaṭīb*, the liturgical figure who constituted the living center of the Friday Ceremony, led the protest should also be seen as an attempt to generate a symbolic link between the protest march and the ceremonial environment of the Umayyad Mosque.

We can point to two primary categories of connotations that would have made the *khaṭīb* a powerful figurehead for a protest march. First, by way of his physical appearance as well as his performance, the *khaṭīb* draws a line backward through history to the prophet and the early caliphs who commanded the minbar before *khiṭāba* evolved into an office staffed by religious scholars. Shelomo D. Goitein traces the figure of the preacher back to the Medina period around the year 0/620, when the prophet Muhammad would preach to his congregation on Fridays at noon. The ritual demanded the suspension of commercial activity and the assembly of all adult male Muslims in what was effectively a statement of their allegiance to the *umma* of the prophet and a weekly reaffirmation of the existence of a unified Muslim community.³⁹² During the Umayyad and early Abbasid periods, Friday preaching and leading the collective prayer remained part of the undifferentiated prerogatives of the caliph and his provincial deputies. The *minbar* from which the prophet preached was purportedly a simple two-step stool made from tamarisk wood, but in the Umayyad period, it was extended into a nine-step pulpit from where the caliphs and their deputies would preach and also carry out other leadership functions such as dispensing justice.³⁹³

To find the origins of the *khaṭīb* as a separate office, we need to look to the 3rd/9th century at the point when the Abbasid Caliphs conferred the duty of giving the Friday sermon onto scholars, predominantly judges who were identified as *ṣāhib al-ṣalāt wa-al-khuṭba* (the master of prayer and sermon).³⁹⁴ When the officially appointed *khaṭībs* of the following centuries addressed their congregations, their attire and performance underlined the origins of Friday preaching as a prophetic and later caliphal privilege. When they ascended the *minbar*, they were dressed in the black robes consistent with

³⁹² Shelomo D. Goitein, 'The Origin and Nature of the Muslim Friday Worship', *The Muslim World* 49, no. 3 (1959): 183–195.

³⁹³ See Johannes Pedersen, 'Minbar', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 7*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1993), 71–76.

³⁹⁴ Arent J. Wensinck, 'Khuṭba', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 5*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986), 74–75.

the Abbasid tradition and carried a short staff or ceremonial sword, as Muhammad is said to have done. While many scholarly offices of medieval Islam such as the judges (*qādīs*) or the *muhtasibs* referred back to the example of the prophet, the *khaṭīb* was perhaps the figure that expressed this connection with Muhammad and early Islamic history in the most visible terms through his costume, his carrying the ceremonial staff or sword and, of course, his ascending the *minbar*.³⁹⁵

Second, apart the historical connotations conjured up by *khaṭībs* in general, we should also consider the particular position of the *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque within the landscape of official appointments in Damascus. The *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque was not the only preacher in Mamluk Damascus; as mentioned above, each of the congregational mosques that sprung up in the extra-mural suburbs between the 7th/13th and 10th/16th centuries had their own *khaṭīb* who performed similar rituals. In addition, the figure of the itinerant *wā'iz* (admonisher or popular preacher) should also be taken into account when discussing preaching in general.³⁹⁶ Thus, there would have been several people in Damascus at the beginning of the 8th/14th century who could take pride in ascending a *minbar* on Fridays or preaching in other less formal public fora.

That said, there can be no doubt that the *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque was the primary preacher of the city and that 'his *minbar*' was its primary pulpit. First, the *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque was one of the highest paid civilian office holders of the city, and unlike the *khaṭībs* of smaller mosques, he was appointed by sultanic decree on a par with the chief judge (*qādī al-quḍāt*).³⁹⁷ The *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque also had a special building at his disposal called Dār al-Khiṭāba, which was located behind the mosque.³⁹⁸ When a new *khaṭīb* was appointed, a celebratory reception would be held in

³⁹⁵ The extent to which medieval *khaṭībs* attempted to imitate the prophet outright has been a matter of some debate. Linda Jones has argued that Andalusian *khaṭībs* cultivated a prophetic *habitus* by performing supposed mannerisms of Muhammad when they preached, and that the congregation bought into this display of prophetic imitation. See Jones, 2012b, chapters 5 and 8. Jones's idea was criticised later by Daniella Talmon-Heller as being 'romanticized' and 'overly reliant on theorization'. See Daniella Talmon-Heller, 'Review of Linda G. Jones: The Power of Oratory in the Medieval Muslim World'. (Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization.) Xi, 298, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77, no. 2 (2014): 388–90.

³⁹⁶ For locations and descriptions of the suburban congregational mosques, see Rihawi, 1977. For more details on the *wā'iz*, see, e.g., Jonathan P. Berkey, *Popular Preaching and Religious Authority in the Medieval Islamic Near East* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011).

³⁹⁷ Talmon-Heller, 2007, 99.

³⁹⁸ Jean-Michel Mouton, *Damas et Sa Principauté Sous Les Saljoukides et Les Bourides, 468–549*. (Paris: Institut Francais d'Archéologie Orientale, 1994).

the Dār al-Khiṭāba and large crowds would sometimes gather in front of it to cheer the new officeholder.³⁹⁹

When we look to the representation of *khaṭīb*s in the narrative sources, we can see that the *khaṭīb*s of the Umayyad Mosque, unlike those of the suburban mosques, are often referred to simply as *al-khaṭīb* without other specifications. Furthermore, chronicles such as the *Dhayl* introduce each year by listing the holders of important imperial and local offices; the *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque is usually included in the lists, whereas his suburban counterparts are not.⁴⁰⁰

To summarise: we can say that the 711 protest featured not only parts of the physical environment that set the frame for the Friday ceremony in the Umayyad Mosque, but also the figure who constituted the living heart of the ceremony and evoked the Islamic history of preaching in his weekly performance. However, the involvement of the *khaṭīb* in the march on Sūq al-Khayl cannot be understood simply as the instrumentalisation by the protesters of yet another ceremonial prop from the context of the mosque. We also need to examine the office of the *khaṭīb* from an institutional perspective as well as the person who commanded it. This, in short, is what the second half of this chapter does by considering the level and quality of the socio-political agency inherent in this office in combination with any personal motives that could have prompted Jalāl al-Dīn to use his office and the symbols attached to it in an act of street-level political negotiation.

III. The *Khaṭīb* as a Socio-Political Actor

In this section, this proposed link between the *khaṭīb* as a liturgical figure and as a socio-political leader is examined through a look at the *khaṭīb*ship in general and a discussion of whether we can regard *khaṭīb*s as holders of socio-political authority beyond the *minbar*.

All of the sources cited so far agree that Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī was the leading figure of the procession of protesters that marched on Sūq al-Khayl in 711/1311. However, only al-Jazarī* explicitly foregrounds the connection between al-Qazwīnī's liturgical function and his leadership of the protest through the following short dialogue:

³⁹⁹ See al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1123 for a description of the reception that followed the first sermon given by al-Qazwīnī in 1307/706.

⁴⁰⁰ See, *Ibid.*, 805.

By the time the *khaṭīb* reached the governor he [Karāy] had been filled with anger and malice towards him [al-Qazwīnī]. The *khaṭīb* greeted him with a ‘peace be upon you’ and he said ‘may no peace be upon you’ (*fa-salama al-khaṭīb, fa-qāla lā salām ’aleikum*).⁴⁰¹

It is impossible, of course, to determine whether this exchange took place or whether it was added by al-Jazarī* for dramatic effect. In any case, the scene mimics the customary exchange of *salām* greetings between *khaṭīb* and congregation that initiated the Friday sermon, which indicates that al-Jazarī* wished to present the authority with which al-Qazwīnī approached the governor as an extension of his office and that Karāy directly disregards this authority through his choice of words.⁴⁰²

Daniella Talmon-Heller, who discusses the role of the *khaṭīb* in her wider examination of religious life in Zangid and Ayyubid Syria, is reluctant to assign a general socio-political authority to the *khaṭīb* of this period. She argues that the combination of preaching and wider communal leadership can only be seen in very specific cases. One place where she sees a longer trend of communal leadership is among the Ḥanbalī preachers of the Qudāma clan who resided in the Damascene suburb of al-Ṣāliḥiyya. They had come to Damascus and settled on the slopes of Mount Qāsyūn at the end of the 6th/12th century as part of a group of emigrants fleeing villages in Northern Palestine that were being pressured by the Franks. Apart from preaching in the quarter’s congregational mosque, the Qudāmas acted as heads of their community for several generations. One of their functions was mediation in the internal as well as the external politics of their local community, but Talmon-Heller regards this as an effect of the small size and shared origins of the Ṣāliḥiyya community, not as an institutional trait of the office of the *khaṭīb* in general.⁴⁰³

We can thus say that the idea of the *khaṭīb* as an intermediary figure not only between a congregation of worshippers and God, but also between a civilian community and the ruling authorities did exist in Damascus, albeit within a small and cohesive community of Ḥanbalī immigrants. While it lies beyond the scope of this thesis to determine whether the legacy of the engaged Ḥanbalī *khaṭīb*s of al-Ṣāliḥiyya had a wider influence in early Mamluk Damascus, the cases that we examine below do show a distinct tendency for Ḥanbalīs and other traditionalist-oriented supporters of the Ḥanbalī

⁴⁰¹ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1436.

⁴⁰² See, e.g., a description of a Friday sermon in 743/1342 in Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 315.

⁴⁰³ Talmon-Heller, 2007a, 97–99.

shaykh Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) to intervene as supporters or opponents of the *khaṭībs* of the Umayyad Mosque. Ibn Taymiyya's reactions to Mamluk tax policies as well as some of his fatwas on taxation were discussed in Chapter 2.⁴⁰⁴ This chapter shifts its focus more toward Ibn Taymiyya's socio-political role as a uniting figure for Ḥanbalīs, traditionalist Shāfi'ī scholars and a wider segment of the common population within the appointment struggles that surrounded local scholarly positions, including the post of *khaṭīb*.

With regard to the Umayyad Mosque in the Ayyubid period, Talmon-Heller points to only one exceptional Shāfi'ī scholar who combined a politicised performance on the *minbar* with active participation in the socio-political life of the city: Izz al-Dīn Abd al-Salām al-Sulamī, who held the position of *khaṭīb* in 637–638/1239–1240.⁴⁰⁵ Al-Sulamī, whose resistance to the tax policies of al-Muẓaffar Quṭuz (d. 659/1260) was mentioned in Chapter 2, is a striking example of a politically vocal *khaṭīb* who displayed a defiant and uncompromising approach to preaching in both thought and action that eventually drove him into exile.⁴⁰⁶ In 638/1240, the Ayyubid prince of Damascus al-Ṣāliḥ Ismā'īl (d. 643/1245) had concluded a treaty with the Franks and had even allowed for the sale of arms to the ruler of Jerusalem, Frederick II (d. 648/1250). Mounting the *minbar* on a Friday, al-Sulamī chastised the prince for his appeasement policies and even refrained from pronouncing the *du'ā' lil-sultān* for him in any form. This naturally angered the prince and led him to banish al-Sulamī from the city.⁴⁰⁷

When we move from the Ayyubid into the early Mamluk period, we encounter no cases of direct criticism of this kind. However, the absence of criticism and defiance in the Mamluk period does not mean that we should regard the performance of later Umayyad Mosque *khaṭībs* as apolitical. Instead of seeing them as provocateurs, we should consider them as intermediary agents who navigated a complex political field

⁴⁰⁴ See above, 71–75.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 99–100. Daniella Talmon-Heller, 'Islamic Preaching in Syria during the Counter-Crusade (Twelfth-Thirteenth Centuries)', in *In Laudem Hierosolymitani - Studies in Crusades and Medieval Culture in Honor of Benjamin Z. Kedar*, ed. Iris Shagrir, Ronnie Ellenblum, and Jonathan Riley-Smith (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 61–75, 65–67. For al-Sulamī's stance on *nafaqa*-taxes, see above, 67–68.

⁴⁰⁶ Talmon-Heller, 2007b, 65–67.

⁴⁰⁷ Talmon-Heller, 2007b, 67; Humphreys, 1977, 266–67. Al-Sulamī's refusal to accommodate the wishes of rulers also manifested itself in the fact that he preached in white instead of the black robes that since the Abbasid period had signified the connection between the *khaṭīb* and the political sphere. Talmon-Heller, 2007a, 89 n. 10.

that more often than not required the caution of a diplomat rather than the defiance of a revolutionary.

i. The khaṭīb as intercessor on the minbar and beyond

Apart from occasional references to *al-du‘ā’ lil-sulṭān*, Syrian chroniclers of the Mamluk period do not generally report the content of the Friday sermon. But in the few cases when they do, their references suggest that *khaṭībs* were cognizant of the political weight of their sermons. We have a few examples that show the *khaṭīb* using his sermon as a means to secure communal cohesion and avoid conflict.

We can see this tendency in the sermon of the *khaṭīb* al-Maqdisī on Friday the 20th of Muḥarram 694/10th of December 1294. This was the first occasion where the sultanate of Kitbughā was acknowledged in Damascus, and al-Maqdisī commented on it, emphasising that political consensus was as crucial a blessing to Muslim society as the winter rains.⁴⁰⁸ The same approach to political change was adopted by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī when al-Nāṣir Muḥammad abdicated for the second time in in 708/1309 and Baybars al-Jāshankīr took the throne as al-Malik al-Muẓaffar. On the first Friday after al-Nāṣir’s abdication, al-Qazwīnī directly discouraged opposition by preaching about the necessity of consensus and agreement among Muslims.⁴⁰⁹ While these messages are certainly more cautious than al-Sulāmī’s vocal condemnations of rulers in the 640s/1240s, this does not make them any less political.

The cautious remarks of al-Maqdisī and al-Qazwīnī should be seen in light of the volatility of the political situation between the death of Sultan al-Ashraf Khalīl in 693/1293 and the beginning of the third reign of al-Nāṣir in 709/1310. In a period where factions of Mamluk amirs competed against each other and the Mongols in Iraq tested the outer borders of the realm repeatedly, accepting the changing winds of imperial politics was most likely the wisest choice. By condemning the policies of an Ayyubid prince with family ties to Damascus, al-Sulamī had surely put his own health and safety on the line, but evidently not that of his congregation. By contrast, a refusal to recognise the authority of an outside power like Kitbughā, the Ilkhān Ghazān or Baybars al-Jāshankīr could have sparked war and destruction.⁴¹⁰ In these cases, we should view the

⁴⁰⁸ al-Jazarī, *Hawādith* vol. 1, 249.

⁴⁰⁹ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1211. Once al-Nāṣir returned to power, al-Qazwīnī gave the celebratory sermon in the open prayer ground of al-Muṣallā south of the walled city. See al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1260.

⁴¹⁰ In the case of al-Nāṣir’s return to power in 709/1310, the *Dhayl* describes how the governor and civilian leaders of Damascus balanced a political tightrope when deciding on the correct moment to switch their

khaṭīb as the figure who negotiated the political status of his city in ceremonial form. Rather than an uncritical mouthpiece of the regime, he can be seen as a careful intercessor who attempted to steer his community safely through the often-turbulent waters of imperial politics.

The role of the *khaṭīb* as an intercessor who acted on behalf of the Damascene community vis-à-vis an outside power is parallel to the intercessory role that the *khaṭīb* played in rituals that did not take place within the mosque. These rituals did not deal with politics *per se*, but other threats to the welfare of the congregation. One example is the *khaṭīb*'s customary role as leader of the rain prayer ceremonies (*ṣalāt al-istisqā'*), which were performed when the winter rains in Syria were delayed and famine loomed. In these situations, the *khaṭīb* would actively supplicate to avert drought through divine intervention.⁴¹¹ When the Black Death hit Damascus in 749–750/1348–49, Ibn Kathīr describes how the *khaṭīb* stepped in to instruct the population on how to perform special supplications for the plague to end.⁴¹²

We have already seen how Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'a helped manage the surrender to the Mongols in 699/1299–1300 by making weekly alterations to the *du'ā' lil-sultān*. Once the surrender of the city had been formalised, Ibn Jamā'a played an active part in mediating between the remaining Mamluk forces who were holed up at the citadel and Ghazān's governor to Damascus, Sayf al-Dīn Qipjak who controlled the surrounding city.⁴¹³ While the details are not clear, another *khaṭīb*, Shams al-Dīn al-Khalāṭī (d. 706/1306), who assumed the office in 706/1306, also seems to have had some form of socio-political engagement during his life. Al-Jazarī* states that 'he was steadfast in guarding the rights of the people [...]'.⁴¹⁴

It would seem, then, that the office of the *khaṭīb* was partially tied to functions of speaking or acting on behalf of the congregation with the aim of securing their welfare and safety. Championing socio-political causes such as the 711 protest while surrounded by the symbols associated with the Friday ceremony could be seen as an extension of this intercessory role, when the *khaṭīb* is called to step up and negotiate on behalf of the entire city. That said, it is important to note that the *khaṭībs* were not alone in taking

loyalties from Baybars al-Jāshankīr back to al-Nāṣir in order to minimise the risk of war. See, e.g., *Ibid.*, 1248.

⁴¹¹ See, e.g., al-Jazarī, *Hawādith* vol. 1, 116–117.

⁴¹² Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 342.

⁴¹³ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 229.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1146.

on the role of public intercession. Ibn Jamā‘a shared his role as negotiator in 699/1300 with Ibn Taymiyya. As for al-Khalāfī, the remark of al-Jazarī* could be referring to socio-political involvement before he was elected as *khaṭīb*. Therefore, we should resist the temptation to regard the authority of the *khaṭīb* as an authority *sui generis* tied exclusively to this office. Rather, we should regard the office of the *khaṭīb* as a privileged platform from which it was possible to activate a form of intercessionary authority attributed to influential ‘*ulamā*’ in general.⁴¹⁵ With its distinct ceremonial setting and pivotal function in the Friday ceremony, the office of the *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque may have increased a scholar’s opportunity to expand and use the authority which he derived from being a prominent member of the ‘*ulamā*’, giving his actions the weight of the connection with the Islamic past symbolised by the *minbar*, the black banners and relics like the Qur’ān of ‘Uthmān.

Even though it was privileged, the position of *khaṭīb* was not an uncontested socio-political platform: holding this office required sultanic, scholarly and broad popular support that under certain circumstances could turn to opposition. The next section discusses the contested nature of this office through a specific case study that details the underlying power struggles behind *khaṭīb* appointments.

ii. Local support and opposition to the khaṭīb: the case of Ibn al-Muraḥḥil

The *khaṭībs* of the Umayyad Mosque were almost exclusively Shāfi‘ī scholars; most appointees held the office until they died or were moved to a higher office.⁴¹⁶ Some *khaṭībs* were able to pass on the office to their offspring. This was the case with Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī. He was appointed chief judge of Egypt in 727/1327 and was succeeded as *khaṭīb* of Damascus first by his son Badr al-Dīn in (d. 742/1342) and then by another son, Tāj al-Dīn (d. 749/1350).

Besides Shāfi‘ī credentials and family connections, what were the prerequisites for obtaining and holding this office? As stated above, appointing a new *khaṭīb* required a sultanic decree sent from Cairo; however, we should add that the sultan’s decision often

⁴¹⁵ For a more detailed discussion of intercession (*shafā‘a*) as a political resource for scholars, see, e.g., Daniella Talmon-Heller, ‘‘Ilm , Shafā‘ah , and Barakah : The Resources of Ayyubid and Early Mamluk Ulama’, *Mamluk Studies Review* 13, no. 2 (2009): 23–45.

⁴¹⁶ See Pouzet, 1991, 419–421. To my knowledge, the only exception was Shams al-Dīn Ibn al-Ḥadād al-Amdī (d. ?), a Ḥanbalī scholar who temporarily replaced al-Qazwīnī in 709/1310. His case will be examined in the following section. As for *khaṭībs* who left the office alive, both Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamā‘a and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī gave up the position order to take up the position of the Shāfi‘ī, chief judge of Egypt.

followed local compromises made in Damascus between supporters of different candidates. While most appointments of new *khaṭīb*s went smoothly, a few generated opposition among the local scholarly elite and a broad spectrum of the population. Damascenes could have strong opinions about who should hold this office and were not prepared to accept any *khaṭīb* appointed from Cairo. In fact, members of the congregation were prepared to boycott or disrupt the Friday service in order to undermine the authority of an unpopular *khaṭīb* and convince Cairo to change the appointment.

By examining local reactions to a newly elected *khaṭīb*, we can identify what type of expectations the Damascenes had for the holder of this office and what form of leadership position he held within the community.

The most detailed case of conflict over the *khaṭīb*ship in early Mamluk Damascus occurs in 703/1303. In this year, the *khaṭīb*, a senior Shāfi‘ī *shaykh* by the name of Zayn al-Dīn al-Fāriqī, died after holding the office for approximately one year. A group of Damascenes (al-Jazarī* simply calls them *jamā‘a*) persuaded the governor, Amir Aqūsh al-Afram (d. after 720/1320-21), to accept another senior Shāfi‘ī *shaykh*, Sharaf al-Dīn al-Fazārī (d. 705/1305), as a temporary replacement, expecting that he would be approved later by Cairo. However, their nominee was passed over, and the position was given instead to a younger Shāfi‘ī scholar by the name of Saḍr al-Dīn Ibn al-Muraḥḥil (d. 716/1316). Ibn al-Muraḥḥil had gone to Egypt after al-Fāriqī’s death and had successfully lobbied for his own candidacy as *khaṭīb* and after having secured the appointment, he returned to Damascus to take up the position. Al-Fazārī’s deposition did not sit well with some sections of the local community, which organised a campaign to have Ibn al-Muraḥḥil’s appointment revoked. The governor al-Afram eventually caved in and facilitated the re-appointment al-Fazārī.⁴¹⁷

There is some disagreement among the chronicles about what happened and who was involved in the campaign against Ibn al-Muraḥḥil’s bid for the *minbar*. However, the general tendency of the sources is to identify Ibn Taymiyya as the central figure. According to al-Jazarī*, Damascus was split over the question of the *khaṭīb*ship: one

⁴¹⁷ It should be noted that Ibn al-Muraḥḥil also secured command of two of teaching positions formerly held by al-Fāriqī. Before his return to Damascus, these posts had been distributed among other scholars, including individuals who are mentioned among the opponents of al-Muraḥḥil’s *khaṭīb*ship. In other words, the case against most likely had other facets beyond the office of the *khaṭīb* that is in focus here. For details about these appointments see e.g., al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 763–766; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*, vol. 15 pt. 32, 55.

faction (*tā'ifa*) accepted Ibn al-Muraḥḥil's appointment, the other opposed it. Ibn Taymiyya convened the opposing faction at the adjacent Madrasat al-Kalāsa where they agreed to take the case to the governor. Apart from Ibn Taymiyya himself, this group included seven other leading members of the scholarly community, including the Shāfi'ī chief judge Najm al-Dīn Ṣaṣrā (d. 724/1324) and Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī.⁴¹⁸ The group included eight scholars named by sources as members of the group; it also included lower ranking '*ulamā*' such as jurists and Sufis and many common merchants and other ordinary people.⁴¹⁹

The involvement of people beyond the higher echelons of the scholarly milieu is also visible in several other accounts. Three chroniclers, al-Birzālī, Ibn Kathīr and the Syrian biographer al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363) state that it was the people (*al-nās*) who complained about the dismissal of al-Fazārī.⁴²⁰ The most vivid and dramatic narrative of this event is provided by the Egyptian chronicler al-'Aynī (d. 855/1453). According to this version, the crowd interrupted al-Muraḥḥil's first sermon with angry shouts from the moment he ascended the pulpit while one group simply left the mosque shouting, 'Where is Islam? How is it permissible for this man to be the *khaṭīb* and imam of the Muslims?'⁴²¹

Despite their differences, all these accounts suggest that the resistance to al-Muraḥḥil was more than an internal struggle among members of the scholarly community over the portfolio of the deceased al-Fāriqī. A larger segment of the local population seems to have been very passionate about the office of the *khaṭīb* and would take their passion so far as to boycott, or, if we are to believe al-'Aynī, disrupt the Friday

⁴¹⁸ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 765. The other members are identified as the Hanafī supreme judge Ibn al-Ḥarīrī (d. 728/1328), the Shāfi'ī jurist and *hadīth* teacher Shaykh 'Alā' al-Dīn Ibn al-'Aṭār (d. 724/1324), Sheikh Muhammad Ibn al-Qawwām (d. ?), the Shāfi'ī *shaykh* Kamāl al-Dīn Ibn al-Sharīshī (d. 718/1318) and Shaykh 'Alī Kurdī (d. ?). The only other source to identify the group is al-'Aynī, but he leaves out al-Sharīshī and replaces al-Qawwām with the Shāfi'ī jurist Kamāl al-Dīn al-Zamlakānī (d. 727/1327). In addition, he mistakes Jalāl al-Dīn for his brother Imām al-Dīn, who could not have participated because he died in 699/1299. See Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-'Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān 5 Vols.* (647-7120, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyya, 2009), vol. 4, 310.

⁴¹⁹ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 765. The wider group is described as follows '*wa-jamā'a min al-fuqahā*', *wa-al-fuqarā*', *wa-āmmat al-tujjār*, *wa-al-nās khalqan kathīran*' (a group of jurists, and paupers [i.e., Sufis] and many common merchants and many [from among] the people). There seems to be a *min* missing between *wa* and *al-nās*.

⁴²⁰ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 30; al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafi* vol. 3, 245; Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān al-'Aṣr wa-A'wān al-Naṣr 6 Vols.*, ed. 'Alī Abū Zayd et al. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1998), vol. 5, 11.

⁴²¹ al-'Aynī *Iqd* vol. 4, 310.

service. Sultanic approval, it seems, did not inoculate a *khaṭīb* against deposition through local resistance.

If we look at the case in more detail, we can also read the conflict over Ibn al-Muraḥḥil as part of a wider struggle between two theological currents: *Ash'arism* and *traditionalism*. Since the same conflict seems to come up in the case of Jalāl al-Dīn, it is worth pursuing it a step further.

Ash'arism was the late medieval form of rationalist theology in Sunni Islam or *kalām* in the tradition of Abū al-Ḥassan al-Ash'arī (d. 324/936).⁴²² In 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries, Damascene adherents of Ash'arism were mainly found within the Shāfi'ī school; apart from their focus on *kalām*, Ash'arīs were generally characterised by an interest in philosophy, logic and other sciences of Greek origin (in Arabic, *'ulūm al-Awā'il* – the sciences of the ancient). In opposition to Ash'arism, traditionalism was in broad terms characterised by the rejection of *kalām* and a strong focus on *ḥadīth* transmission. Traditionalism was dominant within the Ḥanbalī school; however, many Shāfi'ī scholars of Damascus, such as the *ḥadīth* expert and chronicler Ibn Kathīr, whose work is quoted extensively in this study, also leaned strongly towards traditionalism.

How might the scholarly profile of al-Muraḥḥil have affected his candidature as *khaṭīb*? Both Marion Katz and Talmon-Heller have noted that some traditionalist-oriented scholars of 7th/13th century Damascus suspected that those with inclinations towards *kalām* lacked sincere piety and devotion. Talmon-Heller notes the example of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī (d. 631/1233), a central Shāfi'ī theologian and physician engaged in logic, *kalām* and philosophy, whose students suspected that their master did not pray at all because of his interest in these disciplines.⁴²³ Ibn al-Muraḥḥil is too young to have studied under al-Āmidī, but he did study under the latter's students, among them al-Ṣafī al-Hindī (d. 715/1315), who was one of the most influential *kalām* scholars in Damascus in the latter part of the 7th/13th century.⁴²⁴ Moreover, besides his being trained in *kalām*,

⁴²² George Makdisi presents al-Ash'arī's theology as an attempt to find a theological middle ground between the *metaphorical interpretation* (*ta'wīl*) of the Mu'tazilites and *anthropomorphism* (*mutashābiha*) – an accusation that was often directed against the traditionalists. The central bone of contention between the two groups was whether the divine attributes described in the Qur'ān should be regarded as metaphorical or literal physical attributes. Al-Ash'arī's solution became known as *entrustment* (*tafwīd*), i.e., entrusting their real meaning to God. See George Makdisi, 'Ash'ari and Ash'arites in Islamic Religious History I', *Studia Islamica* 17 (1962): 37–80.

⁴²³ Katz, 2013, 168; Talmon-Heller, 2007a, 61. In 626/1229, al-Āmidī fell victim to the rigorous anti-Ash'arī campaign of the Ayyubid prince al-Ashraf Mūsa (d. 635/1237). The prince let it be known that anyone engaged in *kalām* or *philosophy* would be exiled and had al-Āmidī removed from his teaching post at the 'Azīziyya Madrasa. Pouzet, 1991, 204–205.

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*, 202–203.

Ibn al-Muraḥḥil was also a poet and a master of several of the Greek sciences, such as medicine and philosophy, in addition to the customary disciplines of *fiqh* and *ḥadīth*.

Meanwhile, al-Fazārī, the other candidate for the post of *khaṭīb*, was more closely affiliated with the traditionalist current. This can be as seen from his biographies, most of which mention that he was a specialist in *ḥadīth* scholarship, Arabic and Grammar. He was also a well-known *khaṭīb* who had preached for many years in the city of Jarāḥ.⁴²⁵ Moreover, if we look at the biographies of al-Fazārī's predecessor, Zayn al-Dīn al-Fāriqī and his eventual successor Shams al-Dīn al-Khalāṭī, we see a similar inclination towards traditionalism.⁴²⁶ Ibn al-Muraḥḥil, the very archetype of an Ash'arī scholar, seems to have claimed a position that was dominated by the traditionalist camp at this time. This indicates that we need to regard the *khaṭīb* as suspended not just between the sultan and the local congregation, but internally between different factions of the congregation.

This theological aspect of the conflict becomes clearer when we consider the fact that Ibn Taymiyya was identified as the leader of the opposition to Ibn al-Muraḥḥil's candidature. Ibn Taymiyya was the traditionalist and anti-Ash'arī champion of his day.⁴²⁷ Moreover, if we look at the wider group of scholars named as part of the opposition, we see that several of them were tied in one way or another to Ibn Taymiyya. For example, the person who pronounced the formal verdict declaring al-Muraḥḥil unfit to preach was the Ḥanafī judge al-Ḥarīrī, who was a supporter of Ibn Taymiyya.⁴²⁸ The official accusation against Ibn al-Muraḥḥil was that he could not lead prayer because he drank alcohol, but this might very well have been a traditionalist accusation against someone whom they saw as unhealthily consumed by non-Islamic sciences and logic and thus unwilling to take matters of religion very seriously. As for the wider segments of the population who opposed him, most are also identified as partisans of Ibn Taymiyya. Ibn al-Muraḥḥil would most likely have seemed to them to be an elitist intellectual with questionable theology and morals. Al-Qazwīnī also seems to have been an Ash'arī-leaning Shāfi'ī; his very visual employment of his office and its associated symbols in the 711 protest might have been partially aimed at winning over anyone

⁴²⁵ See, e.g., his obituary in Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 48.

⁴²⁶ al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān* vol. 2, 733–734.

⁴²⁷ Furthermore, when Ibn Taymiyya was put on trial in Damascus in 705/1306, Ibn al-Muraḥḥil would prove to be one of his staunchest opponents. See Sherman A. Jackson, 'Ibn Taymiyyah on Trial in Damascus', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 39, no. 1 (1994): 41–85, 46–47.

⁴²⁸ Caterina Bori, 'Ibn Taymiyya Wa-Jamā'atuhu', in *Ibn Taymiyya and His Times*, ed. Yossef Rapoport and Shahab Ahmed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 23–55, 40.

sceptical of his suitability as *khaṭīb*. (This aspect of al-Qazwīnī's involvement in the 711 protest is addressed in more detail later in this chapter.)

Ibn al-Muraḥḥil was not alone in having been opposed by members of the congregation. Three decades later, in Rajab 743/December 1342, a new conflict emerged when another vocal Ash'arīte, the Shāfi'ī supreme judge of Syria Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 756/1355), attempted to wrest the *minbar* from al-Qazwīnī's son Tāj al-Dīn (d. 749/1350). Tāj al-Dīn was acting as temporary replacement for his brother Badr al-Dīn, who died in 742/1342, but his command of the office was challenged by al-Subkī, who had secured an official appointment as Badr al-Dīn's successor during a visit to Cairo. In Damascus, local resistance rose against al-Subkī, resembling the case against al-Muraḥḥil. According to Ibn Kathīr, a group of commoners (*tā'ifa min al-'amma*) approached the governor during the Monday parade asking him not to hand the position over to al-Subkī. When this did not work, they threatened al-Subkī with harassment (*safāha*) if he ascended the *minbar*. Immediately before al-Subkī was to hold his first Friday ceremony, news spread that he had stepped down and that Tāj al-Dīn had been reinstalled. At this point the commoners, according to Ibn Kathīr, swarmed the mosque and cheered for their candidate.⁴²⁹

In each of these cases, the final and decisive word seems to have been that of committed local Damascene actors among the scholars and ordinary worshippers, who rallied to the cause of their chosen candidate and pressured the governor and through him the sultan to accept their choice for *khaṭīb*. As Michael Chamberlain has shown, scholarly factions and households in Damascus were often engaged in intense competition over positions in the administrative and educational institutions, and would use both accusations of moral deficiency and political back channeling to further their own cause in this competition for prestige and resources.⁴³⁰

In terms of form, the conflicts over the office of *khaṭīb* are no different from the wider disputes over salaried posts described by Chamberlain. The difference relates instead to the exclusivity of the position and the scale of the associated conflicts. While the institutional landscape of madrasas was broad and offered many senior and junior positions, there was only one position available as *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque, and while several of the Damascene suburbs had their own *khaṭībs*, the *khaṭīb* of the

⁴²⁹ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* Vol. 8 pt. 16, 314–315.

⁴³⁰ See in particular Chamberlain, 1994, Chapter 3 'Manṣabs and the Logic of Fitna'.

Umayyad Mosque was the only position that seems to have generated opposition on the scale described here. What these conflicts demonstrate is that local Damascenes felt a particularly strong sense of ownership over the process of appointing the *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque, which suggests that they conceived of it as a position of local communal leadership. This made it both a potential political platform and a potential bone of contention.

As we have seen above, it is not enough to regard the *khaṭīb* as another symbolic prop in the 711 protest. We must also take into consideration the potential for socio-political action imbedded within this position in conjunction with the *khaṭīb*'s place in local power struggles. In the final section of this chapter, we return to the case of al-Qazwīnī, and look at the man behind the robes of the office.

IV. A Personal Perspective: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī as *Khaṭīb*

There are no earlier or later examples from the early Mamluk period where we find a *khaṭīb* making the transition from liturgical to socio-political leadership in a fashion as dramatic as Jalāl al-Dīn did in 711/1311. Therefore, we must also consider the following question: What may have motivated Jalāl al-Dīn in particular to throw the weight of his office, including the associated objects (the banners and the Qur'ān), behind this protest march? In order to answer this question, the following section examines Jalāl al-Dīn's background, family, socio-political connections and career path in order to situate his appointment as *khaṭīb* and his participation in the protest of 711/1311 in its proper context.

i. From immigrant scholar to chief judge of Egypt: the life of Jalāl al-Dīn

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī was born in 666/1268 in Mosul into a family of jurists who had emigrated westward from Persia around the time of the Mongol invasions under Hulegü in the 650s/1250s. His father and uncle were judges, as was his older brother Imām al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī (d. 699/1299), who was born in 653/1255 in Tabriz. Jalāl al-Dīn started his juridical career as deputy judge under his father in Anatolia (*bilād al-Rūm*) when he was in his 20s.⁴³¹ Around 690/1289, he arrived in Damascus with his brother, Imām al-Dīn. The brother initially took up teaching *fiqh*, but his big break came in Jumādā II 696/

⁴³¹ Seeger A. Bonebakker, 'Al-Kazwīnī', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 4*, ed. E. van Donzel et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 863–64.

April 1297, when he was appointed as Shāfi'ī chief judge of Syria by the sultan Ḥusām al-Dīn Lajīn, who had seized the sultanate from Kitbughā a few months earlier in Ṣafar 696/ December 1296.⁴³²

According to Mathieu Eychenne, Imām al-Dīn owed his success to the fact that he spoke Turkish and to his background in Persia and Anatolia. As Eychenne explains, Lajīn had previously been the governor of Damascus, during which time he had cultivated ties with Damascene scholars of Turco-Persian background. When he became sultan, Lajīn facilitated the appointment of a number of these scholars to central positions in Cairo and Damascus.⁴³³ The following year, Jalāl al-Dīn was appointed as deputy judge under his brother. Two recent immigrants had now entered higher league of Damascene offices, thanks to their background and connections at court.

Imām al-Dīn fled to Cairo when the Mongols attacked Damascus in 699/1299. He died during his stay in the capital, and at this point Jalāl al-Dīn lost his position as deputy. He regained the position shortly after, in 706/1306, when he was deputised by Najm al-Dīn Ibn Ṣaṣrā, but lost it the same year when he was appointed *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque, first as replacement for the deceased *khaṭīb*, al-Khalāṭī, and then with confirmation from Cairo. During his tenure as *khaṭīb*, Jalāl al-Dīn continued to cultivate his connections with the ruling Mamluk elite in Damascus as well as in Cairo. According to Eychenne, it was again his command of Turkish that brought him close to the Sultan al-Nāṣir and later to Sayf al-Dīn Tankiz, al-Nāṣir's governor of Damascus between 712 and 740/1312 and 1340.⁴³⁴

Apart from a temporary interruption that is addressed below, Jalāl held the office of *khaṭīb* of Damascus for 21 years. In 724/1324, when Ibn Ṣaṣrā died, al-Qazwīnī was appointed to the post of Shāfi'ī chief judge in addition the *khaṭīb*ship. Three years later, in 727/1327, he was called to Cairo to assume the position as Shāfi'ī supreme judge there. In Cairo, his relationship with the sultan became even closer. In 732/1332, for

⁴³² Imām al-Dīn's new position was taken from Badr al-Dīn Ibn Jamā'a (d. 733/1333), who had held the office since 694/1293 and who was also the *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque. Ibn Kathīr uses the term '*intaza'a*' (to pull, take or wrest away) to describe how Imām al-Dīn got the position. See Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 15, 602. Ibn Jamā'a was reappointed after the Imām al-Dīn's death in 699/1299 and later went on to hold the Shāfi'ī chief judgeship for more than 20 years.

⁴³³ Mathieu Eychenne, *Liens Personnels, Clientélisme et Réseaux de Pouvoir Dans Le Sultanat Mamelouk (Milieu XIIIe-Fin XIVe Siècle)* (Beirut: Presse de L'Ifpo, 2013), 211. See also al-Jazarī, *Ḥawādith* vol. 1, 340. Imām al-Dīn was originally offered the position of Shāfi'ī, supreme judge of Egypt. When he declined, he was assigned the post in Damascus instead.

⁴³⁴ Eychenne, 2013, 211.

example, he joined al-Nāṣir on his third Hajj.⁴³⁵ In 738/1338, however, he fell out of favour with the sultan and was sent back to Damascus where he died shortly after at age 71–72. His removal from office in Cairo was caused by corruption charges against one of his sons, Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī (d. 743/1342).⁴³⁶ When Jalāl al-Dīn moved to Cairo in 727/1327, he had managed to pass the position of *khaṭīb* on to his sons Badr al-Dīn and Tāj al-Dīn. However, neither of them managed to regain their father’s and uncle’s former position as Shāfi‘ī chief judge. Moreover, after Jalāl al-Dīn’s death, the Qazwīnī family seems to have been relatively poor and none of his descendants earned the same renown as their father.

With Jalāl al-Qazwīnī’s ‘curriculum vitae’ in mind, we can see several possible reasons for why he chose to use his position as *khaṭīb* in the 711 protest. First, the fact that he understood Turkish could have made him the ideal candidate to approach Karāy and his retinue of predominantly Turkish-speaking amirs in Sūq al-Khayl. Second, al-Ṣafadī describes Jalāl al-Dīn as a man fully committed to championing the cases of plaintiffs. For example, he quotes a former *kātib al-sirr* (chancery chief) of Egypt, who describes how al-Qazwīnī once presented 16 complaint cases (*qiṣaṣ*) to the sultan, who judged according to al-Qazwīnī’s opinion in all of them.⁴³⁷ This claim should be seen in light of the fact that a friendship seems to have existed between biographer and biographee, but it could also suggest that al-Qazwīnī was a vigorous intercessor who could have made a virtue out of championing causes like the 711 tax conflict.⁴³⁸

In addition to the personal qualities of Jalāl al-Dīn, we should note the nature of the office of the *khaṭīb* compared to that of the other holders of important offices who are described as having ties to the protest: the judges of Damascus. The narratives of the six chronicles used for reconstruction of the 711 conflict in Chapter 2 agree that the

⁴³⁵ al-Ṣafadī, *A ‘yān* vol. 4, 494; al-Jazarī, *Hawādith* vol. 2, 532.

⁴³⁶ Jamāl al-Dīn had followed his father to Egypt in 727/1327, but had used his position to enrich himself, which eventually brought on the sultan’s wrath and public disgrace on the father’s name. The 9th/15th century Egyptian scholar ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449) relates a story on the authority of the chronicler al-Yūsufī’s now lost work *Nuzhat al-Nāzir*, according to which Jamāl al-Dīn ‘squandered away money on bribery and entertainment [...]’. See Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Durar al-Kāmina fī A ‘yān al-Mī‘at al-Thāmina 4 Vols.*, (Beirut, 1993), vol. 4, 5. Al-Ṣafadī, who was obviously intending to clear Jalāl al-Dīn of any wrongdoing, describes his son in unflattering terms as greedy and overweight – the direct opposite of the composed and controlled ideal scholar. He also mentions that his scholarly talents were more modest than those of his father. See al-Ṣafadī, *al-A ‘yān* vol. 2, 724–727.

⁴³⁷ al-Ṣafadī, *A ‘yān* vol. 4, 494.

⁴³⁸ al-Ṣafadī’s biography of Jalāl al-Dīn includes correspondence between biographer and biographee that is indicative of their relationship. al-Ṣafadī, *A ‘yān* vol. 4, 496.

judges of Damascus were involved in planning the protest.⁴³⁹ Two narratives state that people aggrieved by the taxes approached the judges and the *khaṭīb* asking for intervention,⁴⁴⁰ while four relate that people sought out the *khaṭīb*, who then met with the judges and decided to bring up the case.⁴⁴¹ However, while all six narratives identify Jalāl al-Dīn as the leader of the protest march, the judges do not seem to participate in the active phase of the protest, at least not as its leaders. In fact, only Ibn Kathīr presents an account that seems to suggest that a judge was part of the protest march. He reports that ‘when the governor saw them [the protesters] he became angry with them and cursed the judge and the *khaṭīb* [...]’.⁴⁴²

By contrast, the narratives of al-Birzālī and al-Dhahabī mention no judges beyond the planning stage. Al-Jazarī*, al-Ṣafadī and al-Nuwayrī also do not include judges among the members of the march, but they do relate that the Shāfi‘ī chief judge, Najm al-Dīn Ṣaṣrā, was summoned to the governor’s quarters along with the *khaṭīb* after the protest. Here, the governor abused Ibn Ṣaṣrā verbally for not giving him warning of the morning’s protest.⁴⁴³ According to al-Ṣafadī, Karāy even accused Ibn Ṣaṣrā of being the main instigator behind the protest, a charge he denied.⁴⁴⁴ In light of these other versions, Ibn Kathīr, whose account is very condensed and relatively meagre in terms of details, could just as well have been referring to this subsequent summoning and not the actual protest when he states that the judge was cursed, together with the *khaṭīb*.

If both the judges and the *khaṭīb* were involved in arranging the protest, what caused the *khaṭīb* to lead the protest alone? A possible explanation could be that the institutional mandate tied to the office of the judge was very concrete, while that of the *khaṭīb* was not. The primary job of the judge was to secure the correct implementation of sharia law among the local population, including cases that required the governor to implement corporal punishments. In addition, the Shāfi‘ī chief judge was in charge of administrative functions such as overseeing the *awqāf* (pious endowments) designated for orphans and other vulnerable groups. These responsibilities also required the judges

⁴³⁹ These six are al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*; al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafī*; al-Ṣafadī, *al-A’yān*; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat*; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, ‘Dhayl al-‘Ibar fī Khabar Man Ghabar’, in *al-‘Ibar fī Khabar Man Ghabar + al-Dhuyūl (al-Dhahabī - al-Husaynī) 4 Vols.*, ed. Abū Hājir Muḥammad al-Sa‘īd b. Basyūnī Zaghūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1985), vol. 4, 3–118.

⁴⁴⁰ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1435; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* vol. 15 pt. 32, 136.

⁴⁴¹ al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafī* vol. 4, 21; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 88; ‘Dhayl al-‘Ibar’, 27; al-Ṣafadī, *al-A’yān* vol. 4, 153.

⁴⁴² Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 88.

⁴⁴³ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1435; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* vol. 15 pt. 32, 137.

⁴⁴⁴ al-Ṣafadī, *al-A’yān* vol. 4, 153.

to meet with the governor frequently, for example, to discuss cases brought before the *mazālim* (grievance) court. By contrast, the mandate of the *khaṭīb* was symbolic: apart from his liturgical role in the Friday ceremony and occasional ceremonies such as the eid celebrations, the position had no specified duties. Jalāl al-Dīn's leadership of the 711 protest could thus be an example of how flexible a political platform his office offered in comparison with the office of the judge. While the judges could plan the protest with the *khaṭīb*, they may have felt that the boundaries of their office were too restrictive and their working relationship with the Mamluk administration too important to allow them to lead such a protest. The mainly symbolic mandate of the *khaṭīb*, on the other hand, allowed him to go a step further in opposing the governor. The governor's rebuke of the Shāfi'ī chief judge for not warning him could be interpreted as a sign that he expected the judge to cooperate with the Mamluk administration in the affairs of the city and that Ibn Ṣaṣrā and his colleagues had to balance these expectations by keeping away from direct confrontation with the governor and leaving protesting to the *khaṭīb*.

However, these altruistic explanations do not rule out the possibility of a more strategic agenda behind Jalāl al-Dīn's involvement in the protest. As we saw in the case of al-Muraḥḥil, being the *khaṭīb* was not only a question of occupying a communal leadership position, but also about gaining and maintaining it. Therefore, we should also pay attention to the possible payoff that leading the protest could have had for al-Qazwīnī. As we saw in the cases of both Ibn al-Muraḥḥil and al-Subkī, holding the office of the *khaṭīb* depended in large part on backing among the local congregation, which could force a change of *khaṭībs*. As his life story suggests, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī, like his brother, was a skilled politician who understood how to manoeuvre in the political landscape in order to better the position of his household. We can add to this the fact that he was a first-generation immigrant to Damascus who apparently had caught his lucky break in part because of his background and the chord it struck with the Turkish-speaking Mamluk sultans and their deputies.

Seen in this light, championing the cause of the local Damascene population opposed to fiscal demands made by the Turkish rulers could have been a way for al-Qazwīnī to entrench himself more thoroughly in the local context and build a wider local following. Moreover, we should also note that al-Qazwīnī was a relatively young *khaṭīb*: he was 40 when he was appointed and 45 at the time of the protest. Many of the *khaṭībs* who had come before him were senior *shaykhs* with lifelong ties to Damascus and high

popularity among the inhabitants.⁴⁴⁵ More specifically, the three *khaṭīb*s who preceded al-Qazwīnī, Shams al-Dīn al-Khalāṭī, Sharaf al-Dīn al-Fazārī and Zayn al-Dīn al-Fāriqī, all assumed the position after the age of 60. All three were from Damascus and had long careers as teachers of *ḥadīth* and *fiqh* before assuming the position of *khaṭīb*. All three are said to have been revered among the Damascene population for their *baraka* (blessing).⁴⁴⁶ In this context, we can speculate that al-Qazwīnī may have felt the need to assert himself as a socio-politically active *khaṭīb* in order to make up for his lack of seniority, local origins and perhaps his lack of *baraka* in comparison with his predecessors.

ii. *Jalāl al-Dīn the Ash‘arī?*

Assuming leadership of the 711 protest should also be interpreted as an attempt by al-Qazwīnī to win favour with a very specific segment of the Damascene population: the traditionalist followers of Ibn Taymiyya. As we saw above, this group had been among the opponents of Ibn al-Muraḥḥil’s *khaṭīb*ship in 703/1303. Al-Qazwīnī actively supported this complaint against Ibn al-Muraḥḥil; however, six years later, in 710/1310, he found his own candidature for *khaṭīb* disputed by the traditionalists.

According to al-Jazarī*, the dispute began in 709/1310 when al-Qazwīnī temporarily left Damascus as part of the entourage of al-Malik al-Nāṣir, who was on his way from Karak to Cairo in order to reclaim the throne from Baybars al-Jāshankīr. Jalāl al-Dīn followed al-Nāṣir to Cairo and returned to Damascus in the spring of 709/1310.⁴⁴⁷

However, during his absence al-Nāṣir had appointed the amir Sayf al-Dīn Qarasunqūr as the new governor of Damascus, who had resorted to appointing a new *khaṭīb*. As part of his retinue, Qarasunqūr had brought the Ḥanbalī judge Saḍr al-Dīn Ibn al-Ḥadād al-Miṣrī al-Amdī (d. 724/1324), and in Dhū al-Qa‘da 709/April of 1310, he appointed Saḍr al-Dīn’s son, Badr al-Dīn (d. ?) as *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque. This

⁴⁴⁵ Six out of the ten scholars who held the office of *khaṭīb* between 689/1290 and the appointment of al-Qazwīnī in 706/1306 held it for a few years toward the end of their lives and died in office. See Pouzet, 1991, 420–421.

⁴⁴⁶ For the obituary of al-Khalāṭī, see, e.g., Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 55 and al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtaṭfī* vol. 3, 338–339. For al-Fazārī, see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 48 and Birzālī, *al-Muqtaṭfī* vol. 3, 308–309. For al-Fāriqī, see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 34 and Birzālī, *al-Muqtaṭfī* vol. 3, 241–242.

⁴⁴⁷ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1263. See also al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtaṭfī* vol. 3, 437; al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* vol. 15 pt. 32, 121. Al-Qazwīnī formed part of a larger delegation that also included other office holders from Damascus such as the Ḥanafī chief judge, Ibn al-Ḥarīrī. None of the three states the specific purpose of their journey, although al-Jazarī* mentions that al-Qazwīnī brought back a 200-dirhams increase of his salary as *khaṭīb*. See al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1263.

appointment constituted a break with half a century of Shāfi‘ī command of the *minbar*. Once Jalāl al-Dīn returned to Damascus, he began working to regain the position. Though deposed from the pulpit of the Umayyad Mosque, he did not stop preaching: for two months he gave Friday sermons in a suburban mosque northwest of the walled city; according to al-Jazarī*, these sermons drew a crowd of regular attendants.⁴⁴⁸ Jalāl al-Dīn’s persistence evidently paid off: in Muḥarram in 710/June 1310, he was reappointed as the official *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque.⁴⁴⁹

However, according to al-Jazarī*’s account, support for al-Qazwīnī’s return was not unanimous:

At the beginning of this month [Ṣafar/mid-June] the case of the *khaṭīb* Jalāl al-Dīn incurred criticism (*kalām*) from the companions (*aṣḥāb*) of the shaykh Taqī al-Dīn and this led him to take signed statements (*khuṭūṭ*) from a group of the elites (*al-a’yān*) [witnessing] their satisfaction with his imamate and praise for him.⁴⁵⁰

Al-Jazarī* ends this anecdote by stating that *al-nās* (the people) were eventually satisfied with al-Qazwīnī and that nothing further came of this criticism. Nevertheless, the fact that this dispute occurred one year before the tax conflict begs the question of whether scepticism from the adherents of Ibn Taymiyya could have contributed to al-Qazwīnī’s role in the 711 protest.

First, however, a few reservations about the veracity of reports of this episode should be noted. First, there is no wider confirmation of this episode in other sources besides a partial corroboration by al-Birzālī.⁴⁵¹ Second, it is not possible to determine specifically who these critical *adherents* were: I have found no other direct accounts of tensions between al-Qazwīnī and Ibn Taymiyya or any group that adhered to him. In previous years, al-Jazarī and Ibn Taymiyya appear in the same context several times in the Damascene sources without indications of hostility.⁴⁵² Moreover, the three authors, al-Birzālī, Ibn Kathīr and al-Dhahabī, who despite being Shāfi‘īs were part of the

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 1315. There is a lacuna in al-Jazarī*’s text where the name of the mosque should be. Right after the lacuna, there is mention of the Madrasa al-Fārukhshāhiyya, a Ḥanafī/Shāfi‘ī madrasa on the northern bank of the Barāda west of the walled city in the area known as al-Sharaf al-‘Alā’. It is possible that the mosque in question was connected or adjacent to this madrasa.

⁴⁴⁹ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1315–1316.

⁴⁵⁰ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1319.

⁴⁵¹ al-Birzālī confirms that there was criticism, but simply states that it was from *a group (min jiha jamā‘a)*. See Birzālī, *al-Muqtaṭī* vol. 3, 458.

⁴⁵² In 693/1294, Ibn Taymiyya attended a lecture given by Jalāl al-Dīn; as noted, both men were part of the group that opposed al-Muraḥḥil in 705/1305. For al-Qazwīnī’s lecture, see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 15, 576. For Ibn al-Muraḥḥil’s case, see al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 765.

traditionalist circles around Ibn Taymiyya, are also very positive towards al-Qazwīnī. (See the next chapter.) Third, we should also consider the possibility that the criticism described by al-Jazarī* had less to do with al-Qazwīnī than with the fact that al-Miṣrī al-Amdī was the first Ḥanbalī scholar to command the office of *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque.⁴⁵³

Despite the lack of direct corroboration, we can identify some aspects of al-Qazwīnī's background that indicate that he, like Ibn al-Muraḥḥil, leaned towards Ash'arism, and that this could have caused some traditionalist partisans of Ibn Taymiyya to protest against his reappointment. While these partisans did not include the *shaykh* himself or the traditionalist-leaning Shāfi'īs who belonged to Ibn Taymiyya's circle, the *adherents* mentioned by al-Jazarī* could come from the broader Ḥanbalī community or Ibn Taymiyya's following among the commoners of Damascus, who were also engaged in resisting Ibn al-Muraḥḥil. There are two contemporaneous authors who directly identify Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī as an adherent of al-Ash'arī: al-Ṣafadī and Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī (d. 771/1370), the son of the aforementioned judge Taqī al-Dīn. In the biographical notice in *al-A'yān*, al-Ṣafadī adds the *nisba al-Ash'arī* as the last of Jalāl al-Dīn's epithets.⁴⁵⁴ Later in the biography, he presents 49 lines of a longer panegyric poem that he wrote for Jalāl al-Dīn on the occasion of his return from the Hajj in 733/1333. The poem addresses the breadth of al-Qazwīnī's knowledge, the soundness of his argumentation, and his zealous defense of Islam, but one verse also identifies him directly as an Ash'arīte:

He raised the banner of al-Ash'arī and he did not /

doubt on single day and never suffered from illness (*al-danaḥ*).⁴⁵⁵

In his biographical dictionary of the Shāfi'ī school, *Tabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā*, Tāj al-Dīn Subkī presents a lengthy biography of al-Qazwīnī. He quotes 14 verses from al-

⁴⁵³ For the *khaṭīb*-appointments in the 7th/13th century, see Pouzet, 1991, 419–421.

⁴⁵⁴ The full name with epithets is *al-Shaykh al-Imām al-'Ilāma, dhū al-funūn, Qādī al-Quḍāt Jalāl al-Dīn Abū 'Abd Allah al-Qazwīnī al-Shāfi'ī al-Ash'arī*. Al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān* vol. 4, 492.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid. Vol. 4, 497. Four lines earlier, al-Ṣafadī also suggests that al-Qazwīnī had originally been a Ḥanafī and then changed to the Shāfi'ī school. Since the Ḥanafī school was more fully committed to rationalism, this might be another indicator of where Jalāl al-Dīn stood theologically. For Ḥanafism and Rationalism, see, e.g., Makdisi, 1962, 46. Bonebakker also raises the question of al-Qazwīnī's original affiliation. See Bonebakker, 1997, 863.

Şafadī's poem, including the verse in question; however, he changes the last word from illness (*al-danaḥ*) to falsehood (*al-zayyaf*).⁴⁵⁶

While other biographers of al-Qazwīnī I have consulted are less outspoken about his theological stance, they include other details that suggest that he was inclined towards Ash'arism.⁴⁵⁷ His biographers usually mention that he studied *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *uṣūl al-dīn* (called *al-aṣlain* i.e., the two *uṣūls*) with the Persian Shāfi'ī *shaykh* Shams al-Dīn al-Aykī, who taught in Damascus until his death in 697/1298. Al-Aykī was engaged in Sufism and was master of *kalām*, logic and the ancient sciences. Apart from clearly belonging to the Ash'arī wing of the Shāfi'ī school, al-Aykī also seems to have upset members of the traditionalist Ḥanbalī community of Damascus on at least one occasion.⁴⁵⁸ There is no indication that Jalāl al-Dīn pursued all of the disciplines taught by al-Aykī or that he was involved in his dispute with the Ḥanbalīs, but their connection would still suggest that the Qazwīnī brothers were closer to the rationalist than the traditionalist current within the Shāfi'ī school.⁴⁵⁹ Al-Aykī also seems to have had a deeper connection to the Qazwīnīs, which is evident in the fact that when al-Aykī died, it was Jalāl al-Dīn's brother Imām al-Dīn who led the funeral prayer and burial procession.⁴⁶⁰ Apart from the connection to Ash'arism, Jalāl al-Qazwīnī was also a specialist in rhetoric (*al-bayān wa-al-ma'ānī*) and a lover of literature and poetry, and was also good friends with poets of Damascus such as Ibn Nubāṭa (d. 768/1366).⁴⁶¹

Returning to the dispute about the *khaṭīb*ship in 710/1310, we can say that al-Qazwīnī was a scholar who most likely leaned towards Ash'arism and was actively

⁴⁵⁶ Tāj al-Dīn Abū Naṣr 'Abd al-Wahhāb ibn Taqī al-Dīn 'Alī al-Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'iyya al-Kubrā 10 Vols.*, ed. Maḥmūd M. al-Ṭanāhī and 'Abd al-Fatāḥ M. al-Halwa (Cairo: Dār Ihyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabiyya, 1964), vol. 9, 161.

⁴⁵⁷ In the case of traditionalist-leaning chroniclers such as Ibn Kathīr and al-Dhahabī, we can expect that their general aversion to Ash'arism led them to exclude direct references to this theological current from their obituaries of al-Qazwīnī.

⁴⁵⁸ With reference to the school's founder, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), al-Aykī reportedly said that 'Ahmad was not a mujtahid', thus denying Ahmad Ibn Ḥanbal, the school's founder, the status of a jurist who is capable of using his faculties of reasoning in legal matters (*ijtihād*), and allowed to do so. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām wa-Wafayāt al-Mashāhīr wa-al-A'lām 15 Vols.*, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf, Şāliḥ Mahdī 'Abbās, and Shu'ayb Arna'ūt (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1988), 865.

⁴⁵⁹ al-Şafadī mentions that Imām al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī shared al-Aykī's interest in logic (*manṭiq*). See al-Şafadī, *A'yān* vol. 3, 634.

⁴⁶⁰ We should remember that al-Aykī was also an immigrant who had made the same journey from the east as the Qazwīnīs.

⁴⁶¹ Within the field of rhetoric, he wrote a work called *Talkhīṣ al-Miftāḥ* (Abridgement of the Key), a supplement that is identified as *al-Idāḥ* (the clarification). Bonebakker, 1997, 863.

In addition to the literary circles of Damascus, al-Şafadī also mentions that al-Qazwīnī had connections to Persian and Turkish poets at the court of Cairo, including one Shams al-Dīn al-'Ajāmī (d. 731/1330), who al-Şafadī says, helped get al-Qazwīnī appointed to the judgeship of Cairo. Al-Şafadī, *A'yān* vol. 3, 156.

engaged in literature, poetry and rhetoric. In short, his scholarly profile resembles that of Ibn al-Muraḥḥil, although al-Qazwīnī seems to have been the less belligerent and less overtly self-promoting of the two men.⁴⁶² If the adherents of Ibn Taymiyya had reacted negatively to the scholarly profile of Ibn al-Muraḥḥil, the similarities with the profile of al-Qazwīnī could explain why they opposed him in 710/1310.

With this incident in mind, we can now regard al-Qazwīnī's stance in the 711 conflict as partially motivated by a wish to position himself as an 'activist scholar' and a champion of ordinary people, as figures like Ibn Taymiyya had done since the 690s/1290s. This may have been a way for al-Qazwīnī to divert attention away from his theology and background in order to win the favour of those adherents of Ibn Taymiyya who had criticised his reappointment. If this was the case, active participation in a public protest would certainly have struck a chord with this specific group of Damascenes.

There are numerous stories of public interventions that demonstrate that Ibn Taymiyya and his followers did not hesitate to practice what they preached. One striking example of this was a protest against a Christian secretary charged with insulting the prophet in 693/1294. Ibn Taymiyya and Zayn al-Dīn al-Fāriqī (who was later appointed as preacher) led this protest and were incarcerated for it. Their followers reacted with anger and violence and proceeded to stone the amir, who had accused the secretary in his service.⁴⁶³

As seen in Chapter 2, when al-Qazwīnī assumed leadership of the 711 protest, he brought into play the symbolic items associated with the office of the *khaṭīb*: the banners, the Qur'ān of 'Uthman and the Sandal of the Prophet, which epitomised the traditionalist culture around the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiyya. By doing so, he could have been attempting to position himself visibly as a politically active scholar in the tradition of *shaykhs* such as Ibn Taymiyya or al-Fāriqī. In other words, he could have sought to present himself as a *khaṭīb* who did not hesitate to put his position and its associated symbols in play in order to censure the governor when he failed to honour the Islamic principles of just governance and fair taxation.

⁴⁶² According to al-Ṣafadī, there was even a measure of animosity between al-Qazwīnī and al-Muraḥḥil. al-Ṣafadī uses al-Qazwīnī as source for a very unflattering description of Ibn al-Muraḥḥil's intervention in the al-Nāṣir/Baybars al-Jāshankīr conflict in 709/1310. See al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān* vol. 5, 10.

⁴⁶³ Pouzet, 1991, 332–333; al-Jazarī *Hawādith* vol. 1, 203. Admittedly, this incident took place before al-Fāriqī was appointed as *khaṭīb*, but it demonstrates that he was a scholar who was willing to engage in street politics.

V. Conclusion

We started this chapter within the same thematic territory as the previous chapter: examining a limited section of Damascene urban space with focus on its origins, history and socio-political function during the early Mamluk period. We found that the Umayyad Mosque was a pivotal site of identification for the Damascenes and their Mamluk rulers because of its historical ties to the early Islamic history of Syria and its status within the body of legends through which medieval people connected with the history of pre-Islamic monotheism and imagined the end times to come. This symbolic status, combined with the fact that the Mosque constituted the largest assembly space within the walled city and housed the central weekly Friday ceremony, made it a primary public forum for socio-political interaction among the Damascenes. It also enabled the Mosque to function as a space for communication for the city's population and its regional rulers.

The term *public* was used at several points in Chapter 3 to describe the ceremonial manifestations of Mamluk power that took place in Taḥt al-Qal'a. However, we should understand the term *public* in a different way when we apply it to the Mosque. Taḥt al-Qal'a was public in so far as the Damascenes were allowed to observe various manifestations of military power, but interference within these manifestations were punished or at best ignored. State control was less intense in the Umayyad Mosque: there was no continuous presence of military officials or attempts at regulation, and except for extraordinary occasions, the local community could use the space according to internal power relations, e.g., between the law schools.

To be sure, the sultan demanded his weekly affirmation of allegiance from the *khaṭīb* of the Mosque. This affirmation, however, was transactional and lasted only as long as the sultan was deemed capable of honouring allegiance with protection. If interactions between ruler and ruled within the Sūq al-Khayl were aimed at instilling awe and respect for military force, what the chroniclers often refer to as *hayba*, the Umayyad Mosque was a space where they could meet in joint reverence for the divine sovereignty of God in an atmosphere charged with sacred history that presented piety, justice and generosity as the sound basis for earthly rule and obedience. That the protesters who challenged governor Karāy on his fiscal policies in 711/1311 brought the banners, the Qur'ān and in some sense the figure of the *khaṭīb* out of the mosque and to Sūq al-Khayl should be seen in the context of the difference between these two spaces of interaction, and as an appeal to the governor for honouring the pact of government

that was evoked within the mosque on a weekly basis and sometimes directly addressed through declarations and negotiations.

The figure of the *khaṭīb* is at the same time the most direct reference to the spatio-temporal setting of the Friday ceremony and the most difficult reference to pin down. As we have seen, his liturgical persona was highly symbolic and evocative of prophetic and early caliphal history. However, the *khaṭīb*'s performance should also be seen in the context of the performer and his social world. This is especially critical when the performer moves beyond his customary liturgical framework, as Jalāl al-Dīn did when he led the 711 protest.

Being the *khaṭīb* of Damascus meant playing the role of admonisher, representative and intercessor for the congregation on and occasionally off the *minbar* through a very special position that required support by both the sultan and the local congregation. It was a position that could easily be affected by high politics or schisms between different local factions forming along theological lines or otherwise. Ultimately, gaining definitive clarity about why Jalāl al-Dīn assumed leadership of the protest on the 27th of September would be too much to hope for based on the material at our disposal. However, we can capture at least some of the complexity of his leadership if we understand it as the product of the interplay between the history and the symbolic weight of the *khaṭīb*ship, its embroilment in local partisanship and the portrait of Jalāl al-Dīn conveyed by his biographers.

Chapter 5 - Historiography as Socio-Political Practice: Eight Accounts of 711/1311 Compared

I. Introduction

The previous three chapters of this thesis have explored the local political context of the 711 protest, the protesters' symbolic communication through the use of objects and spaces and the role and motivations of its leader. These explorations have in turn led to wider examinations of the role of relics and geography and ceremonial practices in political communication between the Damascenes and their rulers in the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries. Up to this point, the contemporary narrative sources (chronicles, encyclopaedias and biographical dictionaries) have been used primarily as a vast corpus of information about events, names, objects and places. This chapter abandons this instrumental approach in order to examine the sources themselves.

As noted in Chapter 1, the Damascene historians who recorded the events of 711 were often relying on the notes, drafts or even the finished works of their colleagues.⁴⁶⁴ This chapter argues that these and other historians writing in 8th/14th century Syro-Egypt did more than copy and synthesise a shared pool of facts to fit the particular format of their respective works. By comparing contemporary representations of the 711 protest and the arrest of the governor of Damascus, Sayf al-Dīn Karāy al-Manṣūrī (d. 719/1319), this chapter demonstrates that 8th/14th century historians were in fact creating narratives that reflected personal and collective views of the world in which they lived as well as defined socio-political agendas.

i. Approach and sources

In theoretical terms, this chapter connects with a larger shift within the study of Islamic historiography away from source-critical studies centred on historicity toward the study of historiography as the crafting of narratives by socio-political agents who acted through their texts (a detailed overview of this approach was sketched out in Chapter 1).⁴⁶⁵ This chapter draws specifically on Tarif Khalidi's approach from *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (1994), which centred on grouping authors according to their socio-political background and political worldview.⁴⁶⁶ It includes excerpts from

⁴⁶⁴ See above, 24–25.

⁴⁶⁵ See above, 22–24.

⁴⁶⁶ Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic Historical Thought in the Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Chapter 5.

seven different chronicles as well as one biographical dictionary, each of which cover the events related to Karāy and his arrest in Damascus in 711/1311. These eight works are divided into three groups according to geographical origins and the socio-political background of the author.

While Khalidi's approach provides a useful scheme for sorting a larger number of historical works, its weakness lies in the fact that it does not account for intra-group contradictions. In order to highlight how members of each group were still able to follow more personalised agendas even when relying on information from other members of the same group, Khalidi's scheme is combined with Konrad Hirschler's approach from *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors* (2006), which focuses on the agenda of the individual author and the ways that personal socio-political strategies could be pursued through the narrative framing of historical events.⁴⁶⁷ The three groups, which are identified as A, B and C, are presented here:

Group A) Damascene historians with scholarly background

Title	Author	Biography
<i>al-Muqtafi 'alā al-Rawḍatayn al-Ma'rūf bi-Tārīkh al-Birzālī</i> ⁴⁶⁸	al-Birzālī, 'Alam al-Dīn al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf	Historian and <i>muḥaddith</i> , Shāfi'ī school (d. 738/1338)
<i>al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya fī al-Tārīkh</i> ⁴⁶⁹	Ibn Kathīr, Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'il ibn 'Umar	Historian, <i>muḥaddith</i> , jurist & theologian, Shāfi'ī school (d. 774/1373)
Dhayl al-'Ibar fī Khabar Man Ghabar ⁴⁷⁰	al-Dhahabī, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad	Historian, <i>muḥaddith</i> , jurist and theologian, Shāfi'ī school (d. 749/1348)
<i>Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān</i> ⁴⁷¹	al-Jazarī*, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm. ⁴⁷²	Historian and legal notarian, Shāfi'ī school. (d. 738/1338)

⁴⁶⁷ Konrad Hirschler, *Medieval Arabic Historiography: Authors as Actors* (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁴⁶⁸ 'Alam al-Dīn al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafi 'alā al-Rawḍatayn al-Ma'rūf bi-Tārīkh al-Birzālī 4 Vols.*, ed. 'Umar A. S. Tadmurī (Ṣaydā - Beirut: al-Maktaba al-'Aṣriyya, 2006).

⁴⁶⁹ Abū al-Fidā' Ismā'il ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya fī al-Tārīkh 20 pts. in 11 Vols.* (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2010).

⁴⁷⁰ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, 'Dhayl al-'Ibar fī Khabar Man Ghabar,' in *al-'Ibar fī Khabar Man Ghabar + al-Dhuyūl (al-Dhahabī - al-Ḥusaynī) 4 Vols.*, ed. Abū Hājir Muḥammad al-Sa'īd b. Basyūnī Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1985), vol. 4, 3–118.

⁴⁷¹ Quṭb al-Dīn Mūsā ibn Muḥammad al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān: Tārīkh al-Sanawāt m1312–1297/ h711–697*, ed. Ḥamza A. 'Abbās (Abu Dhabi: Hay'at Abū Zaby lil-Thaqāfa wa-al-Turāth, al-Majma' al-Thaqāfi, 2007).

⁴⁷² As explained in Chapter 1, I subscribe to Li Guo's theory that the 697–702 section of the *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān* is al-Yūnīnī's *synthesis* of al-Jazarī's chronicle entries for this period, while the 702–711 section of the *Dhayl* is written by al-Jazarī* and misidentified by a later copyist as belonging to the *Dhayl*. In the

Group B) Egyptian historians with military background

Title	Author	Biography
<i>Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmi‘ al-Ghurar</i> ⁴⁷³	ibn al-Dawādārī, <i>Abū Bakr ibn ‘Abd Allāh</i>	Historian, Son of Mamluk amir (d. 736/1336)
<i>Kitāb al-Tuḥfa al-Mulūkiyya fī al-Dawla al-Turkiyya</i> ⁴⁷⁴	al-Manṣūrī, <i>Baybars</i>	Mamluk amir, Viceroy of Egypt and historian (d. 725/1325)
<i>Nuzhat al-Nāzīr fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir</i> (Via <i>Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān</i> ⁴⁷⁵)	al-Yūsufī, <i>Mūsa ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaḥyā</i> . (Via al-‘Aynī, <i>Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad</i> d. 855/1451). ⁴⁷⁶	Historian and <i>ḥalqa</i> officer (d. 755/1355)

Group C) Biographer with bureaucratic/scholarly background

Title	Author	Biography
<i>A’yān al-‘Aṣr wa-A’wān al-Naṣr</i> ⁴⁷⁷	al-Ṣafadī, <i>Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Aybak</i>	Biographer, chancery secretary, litterateur. Born in Ṣafad, Syria. Studied with the ‘ <i>ulamā</i> ’ of Damascus. Worked in the chanceries of Cairo and Damascus, (Shāfi‘ī school) (d. 764/1363)

Section II examines the four chronicle excerpts in Group A, all of which were written by Damascene scholar-historians in the first and early second half of the 8th/14th century. This section connects with Hirschler’s *Authors as Actors* in more than its approach, since the four authors examined here constitute the 2nd and 3rd generations of the so-called Syrian school of historiography, whereas Abū Shāmā al-Maqdisī, one of Hirschler’s two cases in *Authors as Actors*, can be considered as part of its 1st generation along with Sibṭ Ibn Jawzī (d. 654/1256). (The connections between the consecutive generations of

main text, I identify the author of the 697–702 section as *al-Yūnīnī/al-Jazarī*, while author of the 702–711 section is identified as *al-Jazarī**. In footnotes, the *Dhayl* is referred to as al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, *x* in keeping with the Abu Dhabi edition from 2007. See above, 25-27.

⁴⁷³ Abū Bakr ibn ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Dawādārī, *Kanz al-Durar wa-Jāmi‘ al-Ghurar 9 Vols.*, ed. Ulrich Haarmann (Cairo; Hans Robert Roemer, 1971).

⁴⁷⁴ Baybars al-Manṣūrī, *Kitāb al-Tuḥfa al-Mulūkiyya fī al-Dawla al-Turkiyya: Tārīkh Dawlat al-Mamālik al-Baḥriyya fī Al-Fatra min 648–711 Hijriyya*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd Ṣāliḥ Ḥamdān (Cairo: al-Dār al-Miṣriyya al-Lubnāniyya, 1987).

⁴⁷⁵ Badr al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Aḥmad al-‘Aynī, *Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān 5 Vols. (647–712 AH)*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥammad Amīn (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathā‘iq al-Qawmiyya, 2009).

⁴⁷⁶ For a discussion of the al-‘Aynī – al-Yūsufī connection, see above, 32-33 and below, 203-204.

⁴⁷⁷ Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī, *A’yān al-‘Aṣr wa-A’wān al-Naṣr 6 Vols.*, ed. ‘Alī Abū Zayd et al. (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1998).

Damascene chroniclers were also explored in the Chapter 1).⁴⁷⁸ Section II also takes a more critical look at the school-label, and explores the differences that emerge when comparing the 711 protest narratives of authors in Group A. Even authors within this school who relied extensively on each other's work would shape their narrative of the 711 protest and Karāy's arrest to fit their personal authorial agenda, which should make us question the uniformity within the school.

Section III examines the three narratives in Group B, all of which come from chronicles written by 8th/14th century Egyptian historians tied to the military and the court in Cairo. The idea of a distinction between a Syrian and Egyptian tradition in Mamluk historiography based on the background of the authors and the structure of their works has been common in modern scholarship for a long time. However, Li Guo argues that our understanding of these seemingly separate traditions needs to rest not only on registering their geographical and socio-economic differences but also on analysing '[...] what impact these differences might have had on Syrian and Egyptian historians' assumptions and objectives in writing history'.⁴⁷⁹ The events in Damascus in 711/1311 afford us an excellent opportunity to begin comparing the assumptions and objectives of Damascene scholars and Egyptian soldiers because their respective backgrounds and outlook permeate the very way they frame the arrest of Governor Karāy.

Group C, the third and last group, contains only one single text. Instead of a description of the events of 711/1311, this is a biography of Sayf al-Dīn Karāy from al-Şafadī's biographical dictionary *A'yān al-'Aşr wa-A'wān al-Naşr*. This biography includes a description of the protest and arrest, but in the context of Karāy's general life story. Al-Şafadī does not conform to the framework of either the Damascene or Egyptian tradition when he describes the events of 711/1311, instead, he borrows from both. His account is included in the present examination because it might suggest a third position in the historiographical landscape that transcends the geographical and socio-economic distinction between the Damascene scholar and the Egyptian soldier: the Mamluk bureaucrat-scholar.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁸ See above, 24–30.

⁴⁷⁹ Li Guo, 'Mamluk Historiographic Studies : The State of the Art', *Mamluk Studies Review* 1 (1997): 15–43, 39.

⁴⁸⁰ At its initial stage, the present chapter also included the account provided by the bureaucrat and encyclopaedist Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī (d. 733/1333) *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab*. Al-Nuwayrī's account was excluded at a later stage since it proved to be a condensed reproduction of the version found in al-Yūnīnī's *Dhayl*. See Shihāb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat al-Arab fī Funūn al-Adab 33 pts. in 15 Vols.*, ed. Najīb M. Fawwāz et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2004), vol. 15 pt. 32, 136–138.

Naturally, the breadth of this examination makes it unlikely to produce a conclusion as clear-cut as Hirschler's distinction between reformism and accommodationism. However, what a multi-polar comparison can do is to reveal both broader discrepancies according to geographical and socio-political lines as well as more subtle disagreements and even conflicts of interpretation between authors who evidently knew each other and used each other's works.

ii. The political situation of 711/1311 revisited

The question of why Governor Karāy was arrested ten days after the 711 protest was raised briefly in Chapter 2. As discussed there, Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad (d. 741/1341) accused a group of high-ranking Maṣṣūrī amirs of treason in the fall of 711/1311 and had them arrested. Governor Karāy had also belonged to the Maṣṣūrī corps, and we concluded that he was most likely arrested and deported as a victim of the sultan's purge, not because of his conduct as governor.

We do not reopen the discussion of 'what really happened' here. Instead, we explore what we can learn about each author and his worldview and political agendas by looking at how he frames the arrest of Karāy and his alleged co-conspirators.

In order to navigate among the eight authors' often eclectic references to the purge of 711/1311, we must begin with a short summary of the most important details. This time, specific attention is paid to the identity of the victims of al-Nāṣir's purge.

In 711/1311, the internal political situation in the Mamluk Empire was defined first and foremost by al-Nāṣir's second return to power in 709/1310. Between 699 and 708/1299 and 1309, al-Nāṣir had ruled under the auspices and control of two Maṣṣūrī amirs, Sayf al-Dīn Salār (d. 710/1310), who held the title of viceroy (*nā'ib al-salṭana*), and Rukn al-Dīn Baybars al-Jāshankīr (d. 709/1310). Over time, relations between al-Nāṣir and his two custodians became more and more strained; in 708/1309, he abdicated and left the throne to al-Jāshankīr.

Al-Jāshankīr's sultanate ended after a mere 10 months: in Ramaḍān of 709 /February 1310, al-Nāṣir left the Jordanian fortress of Karak, where he had been exiled since his abdication, and returned to Egypt. Karāy and other Maṣṣūrī amirs gradually abandoned al-Jāshankīr and came out in support of al-Nāṣir. Once his entourage reached Cairo, al-Jāshankīr had very few allies left and was removed from the throne. Both al-Jāshankīr and Sayf al-Dīn Salār were captured and killed within a year of al-Nāṣir's return.

Once al-Nāṣir had returned to the throne, he rewarded a number of amirs for their support. Amir Baktamur al-Jūkandār al-Maṣṣūrī (d. 711/1311), the governor of Safad, was called back to Cairo and ordered to take over the position of viceroy of Egypt after Salār. Meanwhile, an amir by the name of Quṭlūbak (d. 716/1316) was sent to Safad, and an amir by the name of Quṭlūqtamur (d. ?) was appointed governor of Gaza. Amir Sayf al-Dīn Qarasunqūr (d. 1328/728) was appointed governor of Damascus and viceroy of Syria, but in the spring of 711/1311, he requested a transfer to the governorate of Aleppo. The sultan granted Qarasunqūr his wish and chose Karāy as the new governor of Damascus; Karāy had actively distinguished himself in 709/1310 by taking and holding the city of Gaza to aid al-Nāṣir's approach on Cairo.

The luck of Karāy and the other governors, however, would soon run out. In the fall of 711/1311, al-Nāṣir moved against them on suspicion of treason and in Jumādā I/October, Baktamur al-Jūkandār was deposed and sent to prison at Karak along with several of his trusted Mamluk soldiers. Almost simultaneously, arrest orders were sent out for the governors of Syria; Quṭlūqtamur in Gaza and Quṭlūbak in Safad were soon dispatched to Karak. On the 22nd of Jumādā I/6th of October, one of al-Nāṣir's confidants, Amir Sayf al-Dīn Arghūn al-Dawādār (d. 730/1330-31), arrived in Damascus on the pretext of bringing honorary robes for the governor. However, on the following day, he and his men put Karāy in chains and sent him to Karak. He was temporarily replaced by amir Sayf al-Dīn Bahadur Aṣ (d. 729/1329), who arrived in Jumādā II/November. Karāy remained a prisoner at Karak for several years; he died in 719/1319. Qarasunqūr in Aleppo was spared imprisonment in Karak, but in 712/1312 he initiated a revolt against al-Nāṣir with the aid of the governor of Tripoli, Amir Aqūsh al-Afram (d. 720/1320). Soon after, both defected to the Ilkhānite Mongols in Iraq where they remained until they died.

The official excuse for al-Nāṣir's purge in 711/1311 was that Baktamur al-Jūkandār had conspired with the governors of Syria, among others, to stage a coup and install the sultan's cousin in his place.⁴⁸¹ There are different opinions among the contemporary authors regarding the specific details of this coup, which are discussed in more detail below. These differences involve the exact identification of the participants as well as the question of whether or not the coup was legitimate. Among the Damascene

⁴⁸¹ Winslow W. Clifford, *State Formation and the Structure of Politics in Mamluk Syro-Egypt, 648–741 A.H/1250-1340 C.E.*, ed. S Conermann (Bonn: Bonn University Press, 2013), 190.

scholar-chroniclers in Group A, the coup and al-Nāṣir's purge are acknowledged; however, these issues play a relatively insignificant role compared to the protest, whereas the opposite is true for the Egyptian scholars in Group B.

II. The Events of 711/1311 from a Contemporary Damascene Perspective

The most general thing we can say about the group of Damascene narratives is that they give far more attention to the 711 protest and the local factors behind the arrest of Karāy than to the purge orchestrated by al-Nāṣir. The overarching question is why and how local events are *foregrounded* at the expense of imperial events in these sources.

With regard to the *why*, the simplest (and most innocent) explanation would be to say that it is natural for a historian to be drawn toward dramatic local events such as the public display of relics, violence against ordinary citizens and the arrest of local dignitaries. However, I argue that we cannot simply regard the Damascene chroniclers as mere compilers of local news motivated by an appreciation for the colourful and dramatic. Instead, we need to regard them first, as stakeholders with a common vested interest in an event such as the 711 protest, and second, as individual authors who carefully selected and arranged their material in ways that indicate a certain worldview extending beyond the event in question.

i. The Damascene chronicler as stakeholder in the 711 protest

To consider these authors as *stakeholders* in the events of 711/1311 is to consider their relationships with the people portrayed in the 711 protest narratives. It also means asking whether they could have had any personal interest in the struggle over the 711 tax. We begin by looking at the social and personal aspect of the case since we have some specific information about who participated in the protest. Al-Birzālī, Ibn Kathīr and al-Dhahabī simply describe the protest as a group made up of the people (*al-nās*). However, al-Jazarī* adds more detail and describes it as a procession made up of 'the *ulamā*', the jurists, the Qur'ān readers, the muezzins and the common people (*'āmmat al-nās*').⁴⁸² In this portrayal, a particular section of the civilian population is highlighted and distinguished from ordinary people, that is, those who possessed some measure of training within the religious sciences such as theology, law, grammar and recitation of the Qur'ān. We can thus say that al-Jazarī*'s narrative of the protest foregrounds the

⁴⁸² al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1435.

members of the local community of religious scholars to which all the authors in Group A belonged.

Moreover, we can see that this foregrounding of the religious scholars occurs across Group A when we take a closer look at the two men that these accounts present as the leaders of the protest: Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338), the *khaṭīb* (Friday preacher) of the Umayyad Mosque who headed the protest procession and Majid al-Dīn al-Tūnisī (d. 718/1319), a grammarian who was arrested along with al-Qazwīnī and beaten in front of the governor.⁴⁸³

On a general level, the 711 protest offers our authors an occasion to emphasise the pivotal role of the local scholarly community, a characteristic in Syrian historiography that reaches back to Abū Shāma al-Maqdisī and Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī's underlining of the importance of the *'ulamā'* as a class.⁴⁸⁴

That said, we are also able to propose a narrower explanation. First, we can point to a partisan connection between the two leading figures in the 711 protest and the authors in Group A: Al-Qazwīnī and al-Tūnisī belonged to the local branch of the Shāfi'ī law school, as did all the authors in question. As mentioned earlier, Jalāl al-Dīn had immigrated to Damascus with brother in the late 680s/1280s. By 711/1311, he was a prominent jurist and orator and had already acted as deputy to two Shāfi'ī chief judges in addition to holding the office of *khaṭīb*.⁴⁸⁵ Majid al-Dīn al-Tūnisī did not reach as high a position as Jalāl al-Dīn, but he was nevertheless considered a prolific scholar in Damascus until his death in 718/1319. He was born in Tunis, but relocated with his father to Cairo and later Damascus. Since his adolescent years in Tunis, Majid al-Dīn had dedicated himself to studying law, grammar and recitation of the Qur'ān. It was primarily within the latter two fields that he established himself in Damascus. He held several teaching appointments, headed Qur'ān-recitation sessions in the Umayyad

⁴⁸³ As discussed in Chapter 4, al-Jazarī* also mentions that the Shāfi'ī chief judge (*qādī al-quḍāt*) of Damascus, Najm al-Dīn Ibn Ṣaṣrā (d. 724/1324), was summoned by the governor after the protest. However, the judge is not identified as part of the procession. Ibid., 1435. In *al-Bidāya*, Ibn Kathīr reports that al-Qazwīnī was verbally abused along with the judge during the protest. See Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 88. See further discussion of the involvement of the judge above, 154-156.

⁴⁸⁴ For the case of Abū Shāma, see Hirschler, 2006, 113. For the case of Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī, see Khalidi, 1994, 202–203.

⁴⁸⁵ In 696–699/1297–1299 under his brother Imām al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī (d. 699/1299) and again in 705/1305 under Najm al-Dīn Ibn Ṣaṣrā, who still held this position in 711/1311.

Mosque and also held the position of *khaṭīb* of the suburban mosque of al-‘Uqayba north of the walled city.⁴⁸⁶

A narrative in which al-Qazwīnī and al-Tūnisī, two locally renowned Shāfi‘ī scholars, spoke truth to a tyrannical governor and faced physical violence for their words would certainly reflect favourably on the protagonists themselves and by extension on the Shāfi‘ī law school, which both they and the authors in Group A belonged to.

Second, in addition to their formal association through the Shāfi‘ī school, we can see a pattern of personal connections between the protagonists and several of the authors. Al-Birzālī studied *ḥadīth* with or under Jalāl al-Dīn, and both Ibn Kathīr and Al-Dhahabī include laudatory obituaries of him in their respective works.⁴⁸⁷ Moreover, al-Jazarī seems to have known Jalāl al-Dīn’s son, Badr al-Dīn (d. 742/1342), since he quotes him as an informant in his chronicle *Tārīkh Ḥawādith al-Zamān*.⁴⁸⁸ As a further sign of respect for al-Qazwīnī, which could also simply be intra-‘ulamā’ or intra-Shāfi‘ī solidarity, neither the authors in Group A nor any other contemporary biographer mention the financial scandal involving Jalāl al-Dīn’s son that caused his father’s dismissal from the Shāfi‘ī chief judgeship of Egypt in 738/1338.⁴⁸⁹ The only exception is al-Ṣafādī, but his account of the scandal exculpates Jalāl al-Dīn by shifting the blame onto the son.⁴⁹⁰

As for Majīd al-Dīn al-Tūnisī, both al-Birzālī and al-Dhahabī praise him for his piety and intellect and also mention that they studied with him in Damascus.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁶ al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafi* vol. 4, 343; Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Dhayl Tārīkh al-Islām Lil-Imām al-Ḥāfiẓ Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī*, ed. Māzen Bin Sālim Bāwazir (Riyyad: al-Mughnī lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī‘, 1998), 193.

⁴⁸⁷ The term used in several obituaries is *wa-kharraja lahu al-Birzālī juz ‘an min ḥadīthihi*. See, e.g., Shihāb al-Dīn ibn Aḥmad ibn ‘Imād al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadhrāt al-Dhahab fī Akhbār Man Dhahab 9 Vols.*, (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, n.d.), vol. 8, 216. For the obituary of al-Qazwīnī by Ibn Kathīr, see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 287–288; for his obituaries written by al-Dhahabī, see *Dhayl Tārīkh al-Islām*, 448 and ‘Dhayl al-‘Ibar’, 112.

⁴⁸⁸ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Abū Bakr al-Jazarī, *Tārīkh Ḥawādith al-Zamān wa-Anbā’ihi wa-Wafayāt Al-Akābir wa-al-A’yān Min Abnā’ihi 3 Vols.*, ed. ‘Umar ‘Abd al-Salām Tadmuri (Ṣaydā - Beirut: al-Maktaba al-‘Aṣriyya, 1998), vol. 2, 183. Apart from this quote, there is also a close description of Badr al-Dīn’s inauguration as preacher in 727/1327, which could suggest that al-Jazarī was present at this event. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 185.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibn Kathīr simply states that the sultan got angry with him for reasons that are too long to explain (*bi-sabab umūr yaṭūl sharḥuhu*). See Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 287.

⁴⁹⁰ For al-Ṣafādī’s take on the scandal, see above, 154 n. 436. The first detailed explanation is provided by Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, an Egyptian, who lived 100 years later, in his biographical entry on Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī. Aḥmad ibn ‘Alī ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Durar al-Kāmina fī A’yān al-Mī‘at al-Thāmina 4 Vols.* (Beirut, 1993), vol. 4, 5.

⁴⁹¹ al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafi* vol. 4, 343 and al-Dhahabī, *Dhayl Tārīkh al-Islām*, 193. Majīd al-Dīn’s obituary is not mentioned by Ibn Kathīr. In al-Jazarī’s case, there is a lacuna in his work that includes the year 718/1319; therefore, we cannot know whether he includes this obituary and what relationship he might have had with the shaykh.

To summarise, we can say that by including the narrative of the 711 protest in their works, authors in Group A were also constructing a narrative of heroic conduct and responsible leadership that praised two of their colleagues and friends. This does not rule out, of course, that the historical protest might have included market vendors, artisans and the like, but the narratives of this group of authors foreground the scholarly community and especially these two Shāfi‘ī’s play a leading role.

Let us now turn to the economic aspect of the 711 protest and consider how the tax that provoked the protest could have affected this specific group of Damascene authors. As explained in Chapter 2, the 711 tax started as a claim imposed on a small group of wealthy locals, but after several rounds of unsuccessful negotiations, it was expanded to encompass both the markets and private property and also the *awqāf* (pl. of *waqf* – pious endowment).⁴⁹² In this context, we focus on the last of these categories since it is the category that can be connected most directly to the authors in Group A. As noted in Chapter 2, the *awqāf* was a pivotal economic institution in pre-modern Islamic societies. It was a religious institution considered beyond the reach of the state; state encroachment on *waqf* assets through taxation and confiscation tended to provoke moral outrage and riots.⁴⁹³

On this background, we can read the 711 protest narratives as echoes of the wider moral outrage to the taxation of *awqāf* that probably helped motivate the protesters themselves. In addition, we should note that scholars, such as al-Jazarī, al-Birzālī, Ibn Kathīr and al-Dhahabī, who were all part of the traditionalist, *ḥadīth*-oriented wing of the Shāfi‘ī school, could have been particularly vulnerable to state encroachment on the *awqāf*. As Yunus Mirza explains, the traditionalist wing of the Shāfi‘ī school of Damascus did not have the access to state resources that many of the rationalist Ash‘arīs in the Shāfi‘ī school gained through state offices, e.g., in the judiciary system or the treasury.⁴⁹⁴ Instead, the traditionalists earned their livelihood mainly through teaching positions funded by the *awqāf*-system. The authors under examination here all fall into this second category. None of them seems to have held a higher position within state administration: Al-Dhahabī was a prominent *ḥadīth* teacher; Al-Birzālī at one point worked as a professional witness, but only for two years; Ibn Kathīr briefly held a

⁴⁹² For more information on the taxation of *waqf* property, see above, 42-43.

⁴⁹³ See above, 42.

⁴⁹⁴ Yunus Y. Mirza, 'Ibn Kathir (D. 774/1373): His Intellectual Circle, Major Works and Qur'anic Exegesis' (Georgetown University, Washington, DC, 2012), 31.

position as judge.⁴⁹⁵ As for al-Jazarī, he worked throughout his life as a court notarian and professional witness. According to al-Birzālī, however, he refused to take any money for these services, subsisting instead on what he could earn from his teaching positions.⁴⁹⁶

We should remember that humility and the refusal to accept salaries are two common tropes in the biographies of medieval *‘ulamā’*.⁴⁹⁷ Nevertheless, it seems safe to say that none of the authors in Group A had significant resources to draw on that were not tied to their teaching positions. In this light, a case where the governor attempts to seize funds directly from the *awqāf* would thus be of a direct and critical threat to the livelihood of these authors and their colleagues. Furthermore, the fact that the governor actually rolled back this taxation plan because of local pressure makes this case a valuable story of local agency in defence of the economic system on which large parts of the *‘ulamā’* of Damascus depended.

By now we can conclude that the authors in Group A had a shared interest in the 711 protest on ideological, social and economic grounds, which explains why they give this case attention in their chronicles and why some of them tie it directly to the arrest of Governor Karāy. The next sub-sections shift focus from the socio-economic context to the individual texts in order to examine their similarities and differences. They demonstrate that the authors’ common interests did not prevent each of them from assigning layers of meaning to his narrative that are quite distinct from what we find in the accounts of his peers. Section II ends with a short discussion of how the results of this examination reflect on the idea of the Syrian school of historiography.

ii. With God on our side? The 711 protest and local political agency

By now we have concluded that all authors in Group A had an interest in the 711 protest, in part because it demonstrated *local agency*. This section examines exactly how this agency is emphasised in the authors’ respective accounts.

The most general comparison of the accounts in Group A suggests that we are dealing with two narrative strains. The first strain includes the accounts of al-Birzālī, al-

⁴⁹⁵ Muriel Rouabah, 'Une Édition Inattendue: Le Tārīkh D'al-Birzālī', *Arabica* 57, no. 2 (2010): 309–318, 312.

⁴⁹⁶ Ulrich Haarmann, 'Quellenstudien Zur Frühen Mamlukenzeit', (Universität Freiburg, Freiburg, 1969), 22.

⁴⁹⁷ For example, Hirschler shows that Abū Shāma al-Maqdisī successfully created a self-image as an ascetic scholar who refused to accept salary while at the same time occupying a number of paid teaching positions. See Hirschler, 2006, 31–32.

Dhahabī and Ibn Kathīr. Their accounts follow the same succinct pattern: in less than 10 lines and without any dialogue, we hear of the announcement of the tax decree, the protest, the arrest of the protest leaders and finally, the arrest of the governor. Moreover, a close comparison of sentence structure and choice of words suggests that these three accounts are related even though we cannot talk of exact copies.⁴⁹⁸ Since al-Birzālī's text is the oldest, we can speculate that two younger authors, Ibn Kathīr and al-Dhahabī, drew on his version of the protest, albeit without quoting him *ad verbatim*.

The second strain consists of the longer and more detailed account by al-Jazarī*, which was inserted into al-Yūnīnī's *Dhayl Mir'āt al-Zamān*. This account devotes several pages to the negotiations that preceded and succeeded the protest, and the day of the protest itself is described over the course of 29 lines and includes fragments of dialogue between the different contending parties. This account was also picked up and used by later writers, such as the encyclopaedist al-Nuwayrī (d. 732/1332), who presents an account that is almost identical to al-Jazarī*'s in his *Nihāyat al-Arab fī funūn al-Adab*.⁴⁹⁹ Moreover, in the last section of this chapter we see how the biographer al-Ṣafadī crafts part of his biography of Karāy on the basis of al-Jazarī*'s version of the 711 protest narrative.⁵⁰⁰

a. Al-Birzālī, Ibn Kathīr and al-Dhahabī

We begin by examining the first narrative strain that comprises the accounts of al-Birzālī, Ibn Kathīr and al-Dhahabī. These authors all emphasise the agency of the protesters by establishing a causal relation between the protest and the subsequent arrest of governor Karāy. In *al-Muqtafī*, al-Birzālī concludes his account of the protest with the following words:

Much pain befell the Muslims because of that [Karāy's behaviour], and so after that God did not even give him what amounted to ten days, before he was deposed and chained and arrested.⁵⁰¹

In *al-Bidāya*, Ibn Kathīr presents a very similar conclusion:

⁴⁹⁸ Compare al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafī*, 21 ll. 4–15 with Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 88 ll. 9–16 and al-Dhahabī, 'Dhayl al-'Ibar', 27 ll. 7–11.

⁴⁹⁹ Compare al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1434–1437 with al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* vol. 15 pt. 32, 136–138. As stated above, al-Nuwayrī's changes in the narrative are so small that his version has not been included in the present examination.

⁵⁰⁰ See below, 213.

⁵⁰¹ al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafī* vol. 4, 21.

The people suffered a lot because of this, and so God did not give him more than 10 days and then his time came suddenly and he was deposed and arrested [...] ⁵⁰²

In al-Dhahabī's version, the causality is slightly less explicit but nevertheless still evident:

The people suffered and they pronounced the *da'wa* against (*da'ū 'alā*) Karayh. And so after 9 days he was taken from the governorship and enchained and imprisoned in Karak. ⁵⁰³

These three accounts all conclude that Karāy's oppressive actions against the Damascenes were the direct cause of his demise. Moreover, according to the first and second quote, the arrest and deportation of the governor was not a question of human agency: it was God who directly decided to grant Karāy only ten days in office before punishing him for his offence against the protesters. Here, the confrontation between the protesting Damascene citizens and the governor is recast in theological terms as a confrontation between good and evil / belief and unbelief. Al-Birzālī adds further emphasis to this trope by identifying Karāy's victims as *the Muslims* (*al-muslimān*), a strategy that indirectly frames Karāy as an outside threat that is averted by the interventionist God. Meanwhile, Ibn Kathīr describes Karāy's victims with the less emphatic term *the people* (*al-nās*). However, his account still makes clear that we are dealing specifically with a group of Damascenes on whose account God intervenes. In other words, his account also conveys the notion of a special proximity between his own local community and the divine.

In al-Dhahabī's version, there is no direct mention of who facilitated the arrest of the governor. Whether we read his account as one of divine intervention depends on how we interpret the expression 'they pronounced the *da'wa* against Karayh' (*da'ū 'alā Karayh*). To pronounce the *da'wa* against (*'alā*) someone can mean to curse or invoke the name of God against him, as opposed to pronouncing it *for* (*ilā*) someone. ⁵⁰⁴ Since the subsequent sentence is in the passive voice, it is difficult to determine whether he

⁵⁰² Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 88.

⁵⁰³ al-Dhahabī, 'Dhayl al-'Ibar', 27. Apart from the causality comment itself, al-Dhahabī's account of the protest also contains strong similarities with the other two. Compare, e.g., 'Dhayl al-'Ibar', 27 ll. 10–11 with *al-Muqtafi* vol. 4, 21 ll. 14–16.

⁵⁰⁴ See 'd 'w' in Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. M. Cowan (New York: Spoken Language Services, 1994), 326.

means that it was God or simply the sultan who reacted to their *da'wa*. In any case, the complaint of the protesters still led to the arrest.

Despite their differences, we can say that all three accounts ascribe to the local population, the protesters in particular, the ability to have an abusive governor removed and held accountable for his actions. Moreover, in the case of the accounts of al-Birzālī and Ibn Kathīr, we can see that this causality directly transcends the boundaries between what Bernd Radtke calls the *innerworldly* (*innerweltliche*) and the *outerworldly* (*ausserweltliche*). The explanation for the removal of Karāy is not simply the agency of men, but the interference of God who stands out as the real acting subject (*eigentliche Handlungssubjekt*).⁵⁰⁵

If we look elsewhere within the work of al-Dhahabī and Ibn Kathīr, we see that they have resorted to divine intervention before in their narratives as a solution to or punishment for sultanic encroachment on Damascene wealth. For example, we can look al-Dhahabī's description of the dispute between the sultan Baybars (d. 676/1276) and the Damascenes about the rights to the orchards (*basātīn*) of al-Ghūṭa in 666/1267. Al-Dhahabī states that when the sultan decided to confiscate the orchards, God burned them as a punishment for his greed:

The sultan had guarded the Ghūṭa and had wanted to seize ownership of it. He oppressed (*ta'aththara*) people with injustice and confiscation, and they moaned and supplicated God. Therefore, when they [Baybars's men] pressured the Muslims and obliged them to weigh out the fees (*alzamūhum bi-wazn al-ḍamān*) on their orchards and even reached for the *awqāf*, God burned it [...].⁵⁰⁶

This account follows the same basic logic as the 711 protest accounts of al-Birzālī, al-Dhahabī and Ibn Kathīr: when a representative of the state infringes upon property that is not rightfully his, the Damascenes who are identified as *the Muslims* supplicate God, who resolves the situation, in this case by destroying the property which the sultan coveted.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ Bernd Radtke, *Weltgeschichte und Weltbeschreibung im Mittelalterlichen Islam* (Beirut: Frantz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 1992), 162–163.

⁵⁰⁶ Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dhahabī, *Tārīkh al-Islām wa-Wafayāt al-Mashāhīr wa-al-A'lām 15 Vols.*, ed. Bashshār 'Awwād Ma'rūf, Ṣāliḥ Mahdī 'Abbās, and Shu'ayb Arna'ūt (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1988), vol. 15, 21.

⁵⁰⁷ For an overview of the dispute over the orchards of al-Ghūṭa, see Jacqueline Sublet, 'Le Sequestre Sur Les Jardins de La Ghouta (Damas 666/1267)', *Studia Islamica* 43 (1976): 81–86.

In Ibn Kathīr's *al-Bidāya*, we find a somewhat similar comment when he describes a severe tax campaign in Damascus in 688/1289 ordered by Sultan al-Manṣūr Qalāwūn, who died shortly after. The money was collected by the sultan's treasurer, Amir al-Shujā'ī (d. 1294/694), but according to Ibn Kathīr, God did not allow the sultan to enjoy the spoils:

Verily this [the tax] accelerated the destruction of the tyrant and his death, for the wealth al-Shujā'ī had gathered for him did not benefit al-Manṣūr, for after this he did not live but for a short while before God chastised him, *he chastises communities in the midst of their wrong* [Qur'ān 11:102].⁵⁰⁸

Once again, we are presented with the idea that God protects the Damascenes from fiscal abuse by making sure that the abuser cannot enjoy his gain, here by accelerating the death of the sultan. In this case, the point about divine punishment is underlined with a Qur'ānic quote that describes God as the historical punisher of unjust pre-Islamic rulers.

To summarise, we can say that al-Birzālī and Ibn Kathīr use the account of the 711 protest to present the specific idea that the people of Damascus can rely on divine protection against tyranny, while al-Dhahabī does so in a more indirect fashion. As we can see from the earlier passages in *al-Bidāya* and the *Tārīkh al-Islām*, this trope is not limited to the specific case of the 711 tax; the idea of a pact between God and the Damascenes seems to permeate the work of these scholars on a broader scale.

b. Al-Jazarī*

In al-Jazarī*'s account in the *Dhayl*, we find an entirely different method of foregrounding the importance of local political agency, which is devoid of the *outerworldly* dimension. Instead of rounding off the narrative of the tax conflict and the arrest of the governor with direct divine or sultanic intervention, this account presents a more nuanced description of the interplay between the governor and the local civilians in the days between the protest and the arrest. According to al-Jazarī*, the protest ended with the release of al-Qazwīnī on Tuesday morning without any resolution of the tax conflict. According to this account, the resolution came four days later during the Friday

⁵⁰⁸ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 15, 532. The italicised sentence is part of Qur'ān 11:102, which reads 'Such is the chastisement of thy lord when he chastises communities in the midst of their wrong: grievous, indeed, and severe is his chastisement'. *The Holy Quran – Text, Translation and Commentary by Abdullah Yusuf Ali* (Durban: Islamic Propagation Centre International, 1946), 542. The verse in question is part of a longer description of how God destroyed pre-Islamic people who had sinned that includes the story of the punishment of Pharaoh and the Egyptians.

Ceremony at the Umayyad Mosque. According to al-Jazarī*, Governor Karāy was approached during prayer by the leader of the Ḥarīriyya Sufi order, *Shaykh* ‘Alī Ibn ‘Alī al-Ḥarīrī (d. 715/1315)⁵⁰⁹. During this meeting, which is also described in Chapter 2, al-Ḥarīrī uttered what seems to be a convoluted threat of civic unrest:

He [al-Ḥarīrī] talked to him [Karāy] about the situation of the people of Damascus and about lightening the claim on them and among other things he said: I love the House of Qalāwūn and I don’t want anyone to curse them (*an yad ‘ū ‘alayhim*), and he exerted himself in speech (*bālagha fī al-qawl*).⁵¹⁰

The fact that none of the other authors in Group A mention this encounter can be explained by their focus on the idea of divine intervention rather than on political negotiations. However, we can also speculate that the hostility between the Ḥarīriyya Sufis and traditionalist *ḥadīth*-scholars such as al-Birzālī, al-Dhahabī and Ibn Kathīr could have prompted these authors to omit *Shaykh* ‘Alī from their narratives about the 711 tax.⁵¹¹

Let us return to al-Jazarī*, who either did not share or display any misgivings towards the al-Ḥarīrī that the other authors in Group A might have felt. According to his account, the words of al-Ḥarīrī compelled Karāy to host a new meeting that ended with the tax being lowered from funding 1500 troops to 400 troops. In addition, the governor suspended the claim until tax collectors from Cairo directly requested it.⁵¹²

Here is Karāy’s invitation and a description of the meeting as found in the *Dhayl*:

He [Karāy] said to them, ask the people of the city to appear before us at the palace (*al-qaṣr*)⁵¹³. When the Friday prayer had ended they went to the palace and he gave them the most noble welcome and rose before them and they kissed the ground [before him]. Then he asked them to be seated, and he said to them, go and set it [the tax] to 400 troops and I will not collect it unless the

⁵⁰⁹ Son of the founder of the Ḥarīriyya order, *Shaykh* ‘Alī al-Ḥarīrī (d. 654/1248). For the biography of the son, see, e.g., al-Ṣafadī, *A ‘yān* vol. 3, 466.

⁵¹⁰ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1436.

⁵¹¹ The hostilities between the traditionalists and the early *Ḥarīriyya* in the 7th/13th century are briefly sketched in Chapter 2. See above, 43. For Ibn Kathīr’s hostile attitude towards the *Ḥarīriyya*, see Henri Laoust, 'Ibn Kaṭīr Historien', *Arabica* 2, no. 1 (2016): 42–88, 72. In this context, it is important to note that traditionalist scholars were not hostile to Sufism in general, but specifically to those groups who like the *Ḥarīriyya* practiced excessive asceticism and self-degradation as part of their path to God. See e.g., D. Talmon-Heller, *Islamic Piety in Medieval Syria: Mosques, Cemeteries and Sermons Under the Zangids and Ayyūbids (1146–1260)* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 2007), 239 n. 69.

⁵¹² al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1436–1437.

⁵¹³ This reference is unclear, but he could be referring to Qaṣr al-Ablaq (The Piebald Palace) – the palace which Sultan Baybars built in the 660s/1260s next to the Maydān al-Akhḍar (The Green Hippodrome).

noble riders appear, and I will strive not to extract anything from you God willing. Then they left him thanking him and calling his praise [...].⁵¹⁴

While the first three accounts in Group A tell a rather simple story of how the plight of the Damascenes was alleviated through the help of God or the sultan, we see that al-Jazarī* is concerned with describing how the local community is ultimately able to break the governor's recalcitrance and force him to the negotiating table. This is perhaps a more realistic presentation of a political process than one in which God heeds the call of the oppressed, but it is not necessarily less ideologically charged. In fact, we could say that al-Jazarī*'s narrative conveys political agency onto the Damascenes in an even more explicit way than the other three narratives, since it states that they were able to handle the problem of the tax by themselves without any outside intervention.

Moreover, this scene is reminiscent of an earlier passage from the Jazarī* section of the *Dhayl*, namely the conclusion to the story of Saḍr al-Dīn Ibn al-Muraḥḥil's (d. 716/1316–17) election as *khaṭīb* in 703/1303. As in the case of the 711 tax, the dispute between the governor and a faction of the local community over the appointment of al-Muraḥḥil was ultimately solved by a group of local notables who convinced the governor to yield to their demands.

Al-Jazarī* states that the team of negotiators that went to the governor in 703/1303 consisted of 'ulamā' (including Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī), who enjoyed the support of a wider group of local merchants and commoners, whose moral character he evaluates in the following passage:

[...] each of them were known for piety and determination and strength of spirit (*ma 'rūf bil-ṣalāḥ wa-al-himma wa-quwwat al-nafs*). When they came to the governor he was most gracious to them and he took up their case and agreed to consult the sultan with regards to this appointment [i.e. the appointment of the *khaṭīb*].⁵¹⁵

Composed of Damascene 'ulamā' and a wider group of concerned Damascenes, the 703 negotiation party resembles al-Jazarī*'s description of the 711 protest procession mentioned above. What we see in both of these situations is a concerted effort by the author to portray local citizens as potent political actors who are able to make a governor listen and heed their advice and eventually effectuate a sultanic decree that backed their

⁵¹⁴ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1436. al-Nuwayrī presents a condensed version of the same story, but leaves out the exchange between al-Ḥarīrī and Karāy. See al-Nuwayrī, *Nihāyat* vol. 15 pt. 32, 137.

⁵¹⁵ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 764–765.

claims. Unlike the three narratives examined above, al-Jazarī*'s account does not resort to transcendental solutions; instead, his account suggests that the Damascenes are able to effect decisions of governance through skilful negotiation and sheer determination.

As a final observation concerning the question of political agency, we note that al-Jazarī* is the only author in Group A who is prepared to let the Damascene protesters resort to violence when the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān and the Sandal of the Prophet are thrown to the ground by Karāy's guards:

They [the guards] hit the people and threw the blessed Qur'ān codex and the noble sandal, and so the people stoned them.⁵¹⁶

In the other accounts in Group A, violence is strictly reserved for the governor and his men, who beat and abuse the protest leaders. The protesters, however, remain calm and defend themselves exclusively by piously supplicating God to avert their hardship. Eventually, their supplications turn out to be much more powerful than the violence of the governor, which adds further weight to the idea that the Damascenes enjoyed divine protection against tyranny. We do not hear whether or not al-Jazarī* condones the stoning of the guards, but since his protest narrative does not cast the conflict in theological terms, it affords more space for the nitty-gritty details of the encounter in Sūq al-Khayl and the recurrent negotiation processes that preceded and followed the protest.

To summarise: two narrative strains found in Group A employ different strategies for emphasising the political agency of the Damascene citizens who fought against the 711 tax: either they were able to call on divine intervention or they could handle the problem through effective local diplomacy.

iv. Weighing the local and imperial dimensions

We now turn to the second element of the 711 case, the arrest of Governor Karāy. In the narratives of al-Birzālī, Ibn Kathīr and al-Dhahabī, we saw that the authors presented a direct causal relation between the protest and the arrest of the Governor: his tax policies oppressed the Damascenes and following their protest, he was arrested. As noted above, the arrest of Karāy was by all accounts connected with a series of arrests across the Mamluk Empire. By presenting a direct causality between the protest in Damascus and Karāy's arrest, the first three narratives in Group A foreground the local dimension over

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 1436.

the imperial dimension. In contrast, al-Jazarī* avoids the direct causality between the protest and the arrest of the governor in order to make room for the imperial dimension.

Al-Jazarī* states that the Damascenes succeeded in alleviating the tax burden through protest and negotiation, but he does not state that the governor was deposed *because* of the protest. Instead, he is adamant about the imperial dimension of the affair: he states clearly that Karāy was connected with the coup planned by the viceroy Baktamur and that this connection contributed to his fall. This is laid out most clearly in what is presented as a quote from the sultanic declaration, which was read out to the amirs and judges of Damascus after Karāy's arrest:

On Thursday the 8th [of Jumādā II / 21st of October] a letter from the sultan was read out at the gate of the *maydān* [Maydān al-Akhḍar] to the amirs and the judges, containing praise of them for arresting Sayf al-Dīn Karāy, because he and Sayf al-Dīn Quṭlubak⁵¹⁷ had conspired with Baktamur al-Jaukandār against the sultan, and more of this sort [...]⁵¹⁸

As for the idea that Karāy was deposed because of the tax conflict, this is presented in the *Dhayl* as originating in a second sultanic declaration. This declaration was read out to a wider audience in Umayyad Mosque on 16th of Jumādā II/Friday the 29th of October. According to al-Jazarī*, these are the words of the sultan:

Verily when we [the sultan] learned of the weakening (*da'f*) of the city and of its people we forfeited what we had demanded, out of consideration and kindness towards them (*min al-ra'iyya wa-al-ihsān ilayhim*) and out of objection against what had come from Sayf al-Dīn Karāy.⁵¹⁹

Thus, we can say that in the case of the *Dhayl*, the protest and Karāy's arrest are presented as a fortunate coincidence: Damascus was relieved of an unpopular governor and the sultan was able to frame the arrest of Karāy as a direct intervention on behalf of the tax-burdened Damascenes, portraying himself as the helper of the oppressed. Al-Jazarī* does use the 711 protest as an opportunity to emphasise the agency of the local Damascene community. However, his account is nuanced: he depicts the fall of Karāy as a complex interplay between court intrigues and provincial fiscal politics, thereby avoiding the rather simplistic causality that we see in the other three accounts in Group A.

⁵¹⁷ Governor of Tripoli in 711/1311 (d. 716/1316–17).

⁵¹⁸ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1440. Al-Birzālī does mention the reading of this declaration, but says nothing about the coup. Thus, the protest-arrest causality is not challenged. Al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafī* vol. 4, 21.

⁵¹⁹ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1440–1441.

Al-Birzālī's account of the 711 protest underlines the protest-arrest causality. However, he does shift to the imperial angle later in his mention of the arrests of the governors of Safad and Gaza that coincided with the arrest of Karāy.⁵²⁰ More importantly, he also quotes the sultanic declaration stating Karāy's connection to the coup that was read to the amirs on the 8th of Jumādā II/21st of October. Al-Birzālī presents the same quote as al-Jazarī*, but there is a lacuna in the edition just before the word *bāṭin* (coup).⁵²¹ Moreover, he also indirectly quotes the sultan's second declaration in words that sound like a summary of the same statement quoted by al-Jazarī*.⁵²² Al-Birzālī's insistence that the protest led to divine intervention on behalf of the Damascenes should therefore be seen as the foregrounded, but not exclusive, explanation.

In the case of al-Dhahabī's 'Dhayl al-'Ibar', the protest narrative is succeeded by a short reference to the other arrests of 711/1311, but no connection is made between Karāy and the coup of Baktamur. In this version, the causality between the protest and the arrest of the governor is not compromised by inclusion of an imperial dimension. When we turn to Ibn Kathīr's 711 entry in *al-Bidāya*, we see that he mentions that the governors of Gaza and Safad as well as the viceroy Baktamur were arrested and imprisoned with Karāy at the castle of Karak, but, like al-Dhahabī, he also refrains from commenting directly on Karāy's connection to the coup.

However, while al-Dhahabī does not mention either of the two sultanic declarations read out in Damascus in October/Jumādā II, Ibn Kathīr displays a more eclectic approach. He omits the first declaration, which frames Karāy as a coup-maker, but includes the second declaration, which frames the arrest of Karāy as punishment for his abuse of the Damascenes.

Ibn Kathīr's description of the reading of the second declaration is very similar to what we find in the accounts of al-Birzālī and al-Jazarī*.⁵²³ If Ibn Kathīr did in fact copy this description from either of the two older chroniclers, this would also mean that he consciously omitted the first declaration, perhaps in order to make the protest-arrest causality and divine intervention more explicit. This narrative is one of the clear examples of the *salvational* character of *al-Bidāya*. As Mohammad Gharaibeh explains,

⁵²⁰ al-Birzālī *al-Muqtafī* vol. 4, 25.

⁵²¹ Ibid. vol. 4, 26. Compare ll. 13–14 with al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1440 ll. 7–9.

⁵²² al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafī* vol. 4, 27. Compare ll. 6–9 with al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1440 l. 20–1441 l. 2.

⁵²³ Compare Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 89 ll. 15–16 with al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafī* vol. 4, 27 ll. 6–9.

God is the true cause behind the progress of history in *al-Bidāya*, and therefore faith and good deeds result in reward, while unbelief and bad deeds are punished.⁵²⁴ While Ibn Kathīr does not explicitly accuse Karāy of unbelief, his narrative clearly states that God punished him for his actions, and as we have seen, this claim remains uncontested throughout his description of the aftermath of the protest. Of the four authors in Group A, we can say that Ibn Kathīr is the most unequivocal in favouring the local dimension of Karāy's arrest. If we were to place the remaining three narratives on a scale according to the weight they give to the local and imperial dimensions respectively, al-Jazarī* would be placed squarely at the imperial end, al-Dhahabī at the local, while al-Birzālī would be closer to the middle.

We now leave the broad comparisons across all four accounts for the moment to focus on some aspects of the accounts of Ibn Kathīr and al-Jazarī*. We then return to a final evaluation of the similarities and differences found within Group A.

v. Ibn Taymiyya's connection with the 711 protest as presented by Ibn Kathīr

The omission of the first and inclusion of the second sultanic declaration concerning Karāy's arrest is not the only case where Ibn Kathīr borrows selectively from al-Birzālī. As explained in detail in Chapter 1, Ibn Kathīr relied extensively on al-Birzālī's work for the pre-739/1338 sections of *al-Bidāya*. In one passage of his chronicle, he describes his use of al-Birzālī's work as *intiqā'* (selection or eclecticism)⁵²⁵. We examine here another example of how Ibn Kathīr readjusted the material presented by al-Birzālī in order to fit a particular agenda. This example does not relate directly to the question of God as acting subject, but rather to the question of who carries out the will of God in the world.

Unlike all the other Damascene narratives examined above, Ibn Kathīr adds one final and significant detail to the story of the protest and Karāy's arrest. Immediately after explaining how God punished Governor Karāy, he notes that the sultan might have taken action in Karāy's case because of the intervention of the Ḥanbalī jurist and theologian Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328):

⁵²⁴ Mohammad Gharaibeh, 'Geschichtsschreibung Im Dienste Des 'abbāsīdischen Kalifats – Das Al-Bidāya Wa N-Nihāya Des Ibn Kathīr (1301–1373) – Ein Geschichtstheologisches Werk', *Jahrbuch Für Islamische Theologie Und Religionspädagogik* vol. 3 (2014), 113.

⁵²⁵ Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 285.

It was said (*wa-qīla*) that the shaykh Taqī al-Dīn had heard about the matter [Karāy's behaviour?] from the people Syria and had informed the sultan of it, and so he immediately sent for him to be forcefully seized.⁵²⁶

As mentioned in Chapter 2, there is reason to be sceptical of this account: Ibn Kathīr is alone in reporting it and he presents Ibn Taymiyya as directly responsible for al-Nāṣir's arrest of Karāy. In that chapter, we discussed the plausibility of this intervention. We concluded that the encounter could have taken place, since Ibn Taymiyya was in fact in Cairo in 711/1311 and had contact with the sultan. Moreover, we concluded that intervening to prevent the exaggerated taxation and abuse of the Damascenes at the hands of Karāy fitted with the *shaykh's* general views on just government and fair taxation.

However, our interest in the present context is not so much in the plausibility of the situation, but rather in the function of this narrative within Ibn Kathīr's wider portrayal of Ibn Taymiyya. From a very general perspective, we can say that Ibn Kathīr's *al-Bidāya* reveals a strong attachment to traditionalism. In this light, directing some of the credit for the abolition of the 711 tax onto Ibn Taymiyya, the leading traditionalist figure of early 8th/14th century Damascus, could be seen simply as a way to foreground this theological current and its members.⁵²⁷

However, this conclusion leaves us with another question: given that both al-Birzālī, Ibn Kathīr and al-Dhahabī were part of Ibn Taymiyya's circle, why was Ibn Kathīr alone in reporting this detail? In the course of the following discussion, I argue that this difference is tied to a broader disagreement among the sympathisers of Ibn Taymiyya about how his political agency and especially his relationship to the Sultan al-Nāṣir should be described. I also argue that Ibn Kathīr uses the report of Ibn Taymiyya's involvement in the 711 tax conflict as one of many means to promote a portrayal of Ibn Taymiyya as a politically interventionist scholar, a portrayal that was actively resisted by other scholars of the traditionalist camp.

Looking at al-Birzālī's chronicle entries for the years around 711/1311, we find that he presents two brief accounts about Ibn Taymiyya and al-Nāṣir. The first account relates to Ibn Taymiyya's release from prison in 709/1310. According to al-Birzālī, al-Nāṣir ordered that the *shaykh* be sent from Alexandria to Cairo. Here the two met at a courtly gathering that also included Damascene notables who had followed al-Nāṣir on

⁵²⁶ Ibid., vol. 8 pt. 16, 88.

⁵²⁷ Mirza, 2012, 103–109.

his return from Karak.⁵²⁸ The second account relates to Ibn Taymiyya's return to Damascus in 712/1313. Al-Birzālī notes that Ibn Taymiyya travelled with the Egyptian army to Gaza and made his way from there to Damascus, and that people celebrated his homecoming.⁵²⁹

A comparison reveals that Ibn Kathīr quotes heavily from al-Birzālī when describing these two events.⁵³⁰ However, in the homecoming scene from 712/1313, Ibn Kathīr highlights the personal connection between Ibn Taymiyya and the Sultan. He states that Ibn Taymiyya had travelled with the sultan from Egypt to Ghaza while al-Birzālī merely stated that he travelled with the army. Moreover, according to Ibn Kathīr, when the *shaykh* reached Damascus, he found that the sultan had been there and had already travelled on to the Hijaz. Thereby, Ibn Kathīr indicates that Ibn Taymiyya had wished reunite with the sultan in Damascus. This indication is not present in al-Birzālī's text.⁵³¹ In this light, Ibn Kathīr's inclusion of Ibn Taymiyya into the narrative of the 711 protest seems like part of a wider pattern regarding Ibn Taymiyya's connection with the sultan in this period: Ibn Kathīr relies on al-Birzālī's accounts, but he cultivates a stronger connection between the *shaykh* and the sultan.

In the case of al-Dhahabī's 'Dhayl al-'Ibar', Ibn Taymiyya's meeting with the sultan in 709/1310 is not mentioned. As for the *shaykh*'s homecoming in 712, this scene is described in one line that does not include details about his travel arrangements.⁵³² This in itself suggests that al-Dhahabī does not follow Ibn Kathīr's line when it comes to Ibn Taymiyya's time in Cairo. However, in another work by al-Dhahabī that was published recently, we find that he does not simply tone down the connection between Ibn Taymiyya and the sultan, he explicitly refutes it.

In 2004, Caterina Bori published an edited and translated excerpt from a biography of Ibn Taymiyya written by al-Dhahabī and titled *Nubdha min sīrat Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya*.⁵³³ According to Bori, here is what al-Dhahabī has to say about Ibn Taymiyya's life in Cairo between his release from prison in 709/1310 and his return to Damascus in 712/1312:

⁵²⁸ al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafi* vol. 3, 445.

⁵²⁹ Ibid., vol. 4, 89.

⁵³⁰ For the 709 meeting in Cairo, see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 75. For Ibn Taymiyya's homecoming, see Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 99.

⁵³¹ Ibid., vol. 8 pt. 16, 99.

⁵³² al-Dhahabī, 'Dhayl al-'Ibar', 32.

⁵³³ Caterina Bori, 'A New Source for the Biography of Ibn Taymiyya', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 67, no. 3 (2004): 321–48. I owe Dr. Bori special thanks as she has kindly helped me conduct the research for this section of the thesis.

Then, he settled in Cairo, living in a house, and met with the Sultan after that time. [Yet,] the shaykh was not a man of government and did not concern himself with [its] intrigues, so the Sultan did not repeat his meeting with him.⁵³⁴

When comparing Ibn Kathīr's *al-Bidāya* with al-Dhahabī's *Nubdha*, we see two radically different portrayals of Ibn Taymiyya in Cairo. Ibn Kathīr goes out of his way to underline the influence that the *shaykh* had on al-Nāṣir's political decisions: his narrative of the 711 protest can be seen as part of this strategy.⁵³⁵ Meanwhile, al-Dhahabī emphasises that even though the *shaykh* did meet with the sultan, he was 'not a man of government' and after their initial meeting was not a frequent confidant of the sultan. This does not seem to be a casual remark: it reads like a deliberate defence of the *shaykh* from any accusations of political involvement and association with the sultan. If we combine this with his exclusion of Ibn Taymiyya from the 711 protest narrative in the 'Dhayl al-'Ibar', it seems that al-Dhahabī was actively working against the image of the *shaykh* as political advisor that we see in the narrative of Ibn Kathīr.

Although it is expressed less explicitly, the same defensive tendency can be seen in other biographies of Ibn Taymiyya written by his Damascene followers. For example, the Ḥanbalī author Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥādī (d. 743/1343) devotes a chapter to Ibn Taymiyya's exile in Cairo in his biography of the *shaykh* titled *al-'Uqūd al-Durriyya min Manāqib Shaykh al-Islām Aḥmad ibn Taymiyya*. While he describes several meetings between the sultan and the *shaykh*, he does not mention any interference in the political events of 711/1311.⁵³⁶

The image of the Ibn Taymiyya created by Ibn Kathīr in the 711/1311 entry of his chronicle thus seems to be at odds with a number of Ibn Taymiyya's other biographers. Because this chapter is a specific case study of the events in Damascus in 711/1311, we

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 345. This and all future translations from *al-Nubdha* are borrowed from Dr. Bori's translation in Bori, 2004.

⁵³⁵ Apart from Ibn Taymiyya's involvement in the case of the 711 tax, Ibn Kathīr is also alone in reporting that the *shaykh* earlier that year advised the sultan al-Nāṣir to appoint the former governor of Damascus, Amir al-Afram (d. after 720/1320–21), as governor of Tripoli. While this bolsters the claim that Ibn Kathīr sought to promote the political image of the *shaykh*, it has been excluded from the present discussion since it is not directly related to the 711 tax conflict. See Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 86.

⁵³⁶ Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Ḥādī, *al-'Uqūd Al-Durriyya Min Manāqib Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya*, ed. Ṭalā'at ibn Fu'ād al-Halwānī (Cairo: al-Fārūq al-Ḥadītha lil-Ṭibā'a wa-al-Nashr, 2002), 217–228. In the *A'lām al-'Āliyya fī Manāqib Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya* written by 'Umar ibn 'Alī al-Bazzār (749/1349–50), there is also no mention of this meeting taking place, but there are several references to the *shaykh*'s disdain for sultans and the world of politics. See, e.g., the chapter 'On his courage and the strength of his heart' in 'Umar ibn 'Alī al-Bazzār, *A'lām al-'Āliyya fī Manāqib Shaykh al-Islām Ibn Taymiyya*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Munajjid (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1976), 63–66.

cannot open up a broader examination of the relationship between Ibn Kathīr and Ibn Taymiyya. However, we can point to the more extensive examination presented by Henri Laoust, who argues that Ibn Kathīr generally portrays Ibn Taymiyya as much more politically active than his biographers, who preferred to distance the *shaykh* from power.⁵³⁷

On this background we can argue that Ibn Kathīr's inclusion of Ibn Taymiyya in the 711 protest is not a curious detail, but rather part of a much wider debate about the *shaykh's* character among the members of his circle. The two positions in this debate have recently been summed up by Bori as:

[...] a contradictory trend in the biographical material about Ibn Taymiyya which oscillates between the topos of the wise/ascetic without any contact with the impurity of the world of power, along the model preferred by Ibn Ḥanbal, and explicit reference to cooperation with power [...].⁵³⁸

As Bori points out, here the image of Ibn Taymiyya as the engaged intellectual did not conform to the pious and non-interventionist image of the founder of the Ḥanbalī school, Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855). Part of the reason why some of his biographers, including Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥādī, would wish to exclude this aspect of his life could be in order to make him conform more to the ideal of the founder of their school.⁵³⁹ However, with particular regard to al-Dhahabī, Bori concludes that he might also have been motivated to actively distance the *shaykh* from *government* and *intrigues* because this aspect of his personality made him a vulnerable target for accusations of love of power. Such accusations would consequently have reflected badly on his associates after his death. Bori argues that al-Dhahabī's *Nubdha* could be intended to guard himself against the negative effects of his own association with the *shaykh*.⁵⁴⁰ As we have seen in Ibn Kathīr's narrative of the 711 protest, these authors clearly did not share the concerns of the *shaykh's* biographers in this regard.

The struggle over the portrayal of Ibn Taymiyya, however, did not stop with Ibn Kathīr and his contemporaries, such al-Dhahabī and Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥādī. We also find

⁵³⁷ Henri Laoust, 'La Biographie d'Ibn Taymiyya D'après Ibn Kathir', *Bulletin D'études Orientales* 9 (1942): 115–162, 144–145 and 162. The same argument is presented in Donald P. Little, 'The Historical and Historiographical Significance of the Detention of Ibn Taymiyya', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4, no. 3 (1973): 311–327, 322.

⁵³⁸ Caterina Bori, 'Ibn Taymiyya : Una Vita Esemplare Della Sua Biografia', *Revista Degli Studi Orientali* 76, no. Supplemento No. 1 (2003): 1–235, 139. NB: The quote is my translation from the original Italian.

⁵³⁹ See also Bori, 2004, 325.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 326–327.

indications that Ibn Kathīr’s attitude towards Ibn Taymiyya was controversial to later copyists of *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya*, specifically to one copyist whose two-volume copy is housed at the German National Library in Berlin. The manuscript is signed by a copyist by the name of Muḥammad ibn Sulṭān ibn Sa‘īd ibn al-Ba‘lī al-Ḥanbalī (d. ?) and dated 805/1402.⁵⁴¹ In this manuscript, the comment about the *shaykh*’s advice to the sultan on the 711 tax is omitted from the text, while the rest of the narrative of the 711 tax resembles other versions.⁵⁴²

Of course, this could be an accidental omission, but a further comparison between the Berlin Manuscript and printed editions of *al-Bidāya* (in this case, vol. 16 of the Dar Ibn Kathīr edition from 2010) reveals a wealth of omissions in the Berlin manuscript specifically related to Ibn Taymiyya, whereas very few changes have been made to the rest of the text. While a detailed description of all of these omissions would exceed the scope of this thesis, we can safely say that the general tendency of the scribe is to omit references to Ibn Taymiyya’s socio-political role in Damascus and Cairo.⁵⁴³ Some general themes that have been omitted are Ibn Taymiyya’s role in the negotiations with the Ilkhān Ghazān (d. 704/1304) in 699/1299⁵⁴⁴, his conflicts with contemporary scholars, especially the Cairo-based Sufī *shaykh* Naṣr al-Manbijī (d. 719/1319-20)⁵⁴⁵, as well as Ibn Taymiyya’s influence on the policies of Sultan al-Nāṣir Muḥammad.⁵⁴⁶

That said, the scribe does not attempt to write Ibn Taymiyya out of Ibn Kathīr’s chronicle; in fact, his name and the titles of his works are recurrently written in a larger and thicker script than the main text, even sometimes in red.⁵⁴⁷ Instead of marginalising

⁵⁴¹ This two-volume copy of *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya* can be found in the collection of the German National Library, Berlin registered as *MS. OR. Sprenger 60 & MS. OR. Sprenger 61*. It is a copy of the text of *al-Bidāya* covering the years 4–738 AH with some alterations and omissions. It is registered by Wilhelm Ahlwardt as *MS. 9449*, but mistakenly appropriated directly to al-Birzālī. Wilhelm Ahlwardt, *Die Handschriften-Verzeichnisse Der Königlichen Bibliothek Zu Berlin – Verzeichnis Der Arabischen Handschriften von W. Ahlwardt Vol. 1–10*. (Berlin: A. Asher & Co., 1887–1899), vol. 9, 56–57.

I am indebted to the editors of the 2010 version of *al-Bidāya wa-al-Nihāya* (Dār Ibn Kathīr, Damascus) for alerting me in their footnotes to this manuscript and its many omissions.

⁵⁴² For the protest-narrative, *Ibid.*, Folio 479a l., 26–30.

⁵⁴³ At the present time, I am preparing to elaborate on this comparison with the aim of including it in a future publication.

⁵⁴⁴ See, e.g., *Ibid.*, Folio 486a l., 26, where the description of the meeting is omitted from the obituary of one Shaykh al-Ṣāliḥ al-‘Ābid al-Nāsik, who died in 718/1318–19.

⁵⁴⁵ See, e.g., *Ibid.*, Folio 476a l., 25, where a comment about the divine punishment of al-Manbijī and his patron the sultan, al-Malik al-Muzaffar Baybars al-Jāshankīr (d. 710/1310), is omitted.

⁵⁴⁶ See, e.g., *Ibid.* Folio 479a l. 5, where his advice about Amir al-Afram’s appointment as governor of Tripoli in 711/1311 is omitted. See also *Ibid.*, Folio 480b l. 8, where a comment about Ibn Taymiyya’s influence on new regulations for punishing murderers is omitted.

⁵⁴⁷ See *Ibid.*, Folio 438a, where a marginal note in red marks the birth of Ibn Taymiyya in 661/1263 with the words ‘*mawlid al-Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya shaykh al-Islām*’. See also *Ibid.*, Folio 480a l.18,

the *shaykh*, the scribe seems intent upon ‘sanitising’ his image by removing anything that goes against the image of the *shaykh* as pious, ascetic and apolitical.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to locate this particular scribe within the relevant 8th–11th/14th–17th century biographical dictionaries.⁵⁴⁸ However, we can see that there were several Ḥanbalīs in Syria in the 7th–9th/13th–15th centuries with the nisba *al-Ba‘lī*, most of whom came from Baalbek.⁵⁴⁹ In addition, a scribe by the name Muḥammad ibn Sulṭān ibn Sa‘īd ibn Sulṭān al-Ba‘lī al-Ḥanbalī has left his signature on a copy of a work by Ibn Taymiyya’s student Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 750/1350). In this case, there is a specification that the copy was produced in 774/1372.⁵⁵⁰ Assuming that we are dealing with the same scribe (despite the adding of the extra *Ibn Sulṭān*), we can conclude that the activist and politically engaged image of Ibn Taymiyya that Ibn Kathīr presents in *al-Bidāya*, hereunder through the account of the 711 protest, which differs from other contemporary and near contemporary portraits, was met with such resistance within the Damascene/Syrian Ḥanbalī community of the time that one of them attempted to write this aspect out of *al-Bidāya* when copying it.

vi. Al-Jazarī*’s portrait of Governor Karāy: a parable about maẓālim?

We now return to the narrative of al-Jazarī* in order to examine a particular tendency in his portrayal of the governorship of Karāy in 711/1311. This is the tendency to present Karāy’s tenure as governor as a parable about good and bad governance centred around the problem of the unapproachable ruler and the subjects’ right to *maẓālim* (court of grievances). In short, we can say that al-Jazarī*’s treatment of Karāy’s short-lived rule returns repeatedly to scenes that emphasise his authoritarian style of governance and his unwillingness to listen to his subjects. This problem is highlighted already in al-Jazarī*’s description of Karāy’s arrival in Damascus in Muḥarram 711/May 1311:

where the beginning of a report about Ibn Taymiyya’s return to Damascus in 712/1313 is highlighted in red. See also *Ibid.*, Folio 497a l. 26 where Ibn Taymiyya’s obituary is introduced in red.

⁵⁴⁸ According to my examination, the scribe has not left any personal trace in either of the following works: al-‘Asqalānī, *Durar*; ibn ‘Imād al-Ḥanbalī, *Shadhrāt*; ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad ibn Rajab, *al-Dhayl ‘alā Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanabīla 5 Vols.*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Sulaymān al-‘Uthaymin (Riyad: Maktabat al-‘Ubaykān, 2005).

⁵⁴⁹ The use of *al-Ba‘lī* as a marker of Baalbek-origins is noted by Li Guo. See Li Guo, *Early Mamluk Syrian Historiography – Al-Yūnīnī’s Dhayl Mir’āt Al-Zamān 2 Vols.*, (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 1998), vol. 1, 7. The Index of Ibn Rajab’s *Dhayl* vol. 5 lists 10 other individuals with this *nisba*. See ibn Rajab, *Dhayl* vol. 5, 241.

⁵⁵⁰ See catalogue no. *Vollers 0388* in the online manuscript catalogue of the University of Leipzig <http://www.refaiya.uni-leipzig.de>.

[...] the people went out to meet him, and they lit candles [...] He put up his tent in the *Maydān*, and did not meet with anyone from among the common population.⁵⁵¹

We know from other descriptions of sultans and governors entering Damascus that meeting with the population and receiving petitions on their first day in office was a way for rulers to project an image of themselves as approachable and attentive towards the plight of their subjects.⁵⁵² By including the comment quoted above, al-Jazarī* is portraying Karāy negatively as a ruler who flaunts the expectations of a good ruler from the start. Here, we should not forget that al-Birzālī is initially positive towards Karāy, that is, until the dispute over the 711 tax emerges. In his report on the governor's arrival in Damascus, al-Birzālī paints a different picture than the one provided by al-Jazarī*:

[...] he displayed good conduct, and did not take bribes or gifts from anyone.⁵⁵³ The people came out to meet him and lit candles, and it was a memorable day.⁵⁵⁴

Returning to the al-Jazarī*, we can tie his use of the 711 tax anecdote with his initial portrayal of Karāy, if we see his dismissal of the protest procession led by al-Qazwīnī as a reiteration of his unapproachability. Despite the second delegation's successful negotiation of the 711 tax, which was mentioned above, the focus on governor Karāy's inaccessibility is repeated in al-Jazarī*'s final characterisation of him, which concludes the description of his arrest: 'he was feeble-minded (*'adīm al-'aql*), of base character (*shars al-akhlāq*) and he did not listen to what people said to him'.⁵⁵⁵ The final comment on his rule thus invokes the initial problem, which was introduced on the day of his arrival and addressed throughout his reign: Karāy's unwillingness to listen.

Finally, the theme of approachability is addressed publicly in a declaration from the Sultan that encouraged plaintiffs to present any grievances to Karāy's temporary replacement, Amir Sayf al-Dīn Bahādur Aṣ (d. 729/1329). According to al-Jazarī*, the declaration read:

⁵⁵¹ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1428.

⁵⁵² The accessible approach was adopted, for example, by Sultan Kitbughā (d. 702/1302) when he visited Damascus in 696/1295. Yehoshua Frenkel, 'Public Projection of Power in Mamluk Bilad Al-Sham', *Mamluk Studies Review* 11 (2007): 40–53, 51. See also al-Jazarī, *Hawādith* vol. 1, 329.

⁵⁵³ The Arabic reads *aḥmad*, not *aḥad*, but I choose to regard the *mīm* as a typing error.

⁵⁵⁴ al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafī* vol. 4, 6.

⁵⁵⁵ al-Yūnīnī, 1439.

[...] he who has a need (*hāja*) should go to the honourable highness (*al-janāb al-‘ālī*) Sayf al-Dīn Bahādur Aṣ and present his case for him (*yaqdīhā lahu*).⁵⁵⁶

Al-Jazarī* then continues to describe how Bahādur received five or six plaintiffs in one session (*majlis*) on the same day.⁵⁵⁷ In a sense, Bahādur’s reception of the plaintiffs becomes a sort of restoration of the relationship between ruler and subjects that had suffered during Karāy’s tenure. No other Damascene source I have examined treats the theme of the complaints to Bahādur.

In a final remark about al-Jazarī*’s use of the concept of lodging of complaints, we should note that in contrast to the inaccessibility and aggressiveness of Governor Karāy, the narrative casts his retinue of amirs as more sensible and compassionate. First, al-Jazarī* relates that a group comprising the blind, the lepers and the orphans of Damascus actually preceded the procession led by al-Qazwīnī and were the first to plead against the taxation of the *awqāf* from which they received assistance. According to this account, their pleas moved the amirs to tears and moved Karāy’s *hājib* (chamberlain), Amir Sayf al-Dīn Quṭlūbak (d. 729/1329) to exempt these vulnerable groups from taxation.⁵⁵⁸ Second, we also see the amirs who surrounded the governor acting in a sensible manner once again during the arrest of al-Qazwīnī, where they stop Karāy from beating the *khaṭīb*.⁵⁵⁹ The reader is thereby given the impression that it is Governor Karāy in particular who interrupts and distorts the relationship between the population and the resident Mamluk amirs.

To summarise: we can say that in the version presented by al-Jazarī*, the entire account of Karāy’s short rule in Damascus reads like an exemplary tale of bad governance overcome by local pressure before finally being corrected by the sultan. Admittedly, the *Dhayl* is not alone in highlighting the problem of Karāy’s inaccessibility: the other Damascene sources present him as equally dismissive towards the 711 protesters. However, the remarks about his initial refusal to meet the population upon his arrival in Damascus and the description of Bahādur’s accessibility are not found in any of the other sources that I have consulted.

⁵⁵⁶ Ibid., 1440.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., 1440.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid., 1435. The dialogue between the chamberlain and the lepers et al. is treated in greater detail below, 212–214.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid., 1436.

There is one overarching concept that looms behind this entire narrative without being mentioned explicitly: the institution known as *mazālim*. The history of this institution in Damascus is discussed at length in Chapter 3; the following description briefly summarises that discussion. The term *mazālim* is derived from the noun *ẓulm* (injustice) and describes a long-standing tradition of Islamic rulers for accepting complaints about grievances (sing. *mazlīma* / pl. *mazālim*) from their subjects. From the 6th/12th century onward, the term came to refer specifically to the weekly complaint courts that some rulers held in the so-called *dār al-‘adl* (house of justice). Remember that the 711 protest coincided with governor’s Monday inspection parade, which, according to al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418), were customarily followed by a *mazālim* session. I have suggested previously that the protest could be understood as an attempt to lodge a *mazālim* complaint face-to-face with the governor in circumvention of official screening procedures.⁵⁶⁰ What the account presented by al-Jazarī* seems to do with the 711 protest is to integrate it within a wider narrative that highlights the problem of inaccessibility and the citizens’ right to lodge complaints with their rulers through the procedure of *mazālim*, a right that was denied by Karāy but eventually acknowledged and restored by his successor.

vii. Authorial agency and the Syrian school: conclusions from the 711 protest

How do the findings of the preceding sections of this examination correspond with the concept of the Syrian school? This concept was described in detail in the Chapter 1 and can be summarised by the three following points: First, apart from being historians, the authors of the Syrian school were all trained in the science of *ḥadīth* and were connected through the local scholarly milieu. Second, these chroniclers of the late 7th/ 13th and early 8th/14th centuries all wrote variations on the same model of historiographical representation, i.e., the locally focused annalistic chronicle composed of *ḥawādith* (events) and *wafayāt* (obituaries) introduced by Sibṭ Ibn Jawzī in the middle of the 7th/13th century. Third, their connectedness is evident in the fact that they borrowed heavily from each other’s works with or without acknowledgement and often appear as each other’s editors and compilers.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁶⁰ See above, 110-111.

⁵⁶¹ See above, 24-25.

On the one hand, it is beyond debate that the authors we examine here live up to the first and second criteria: they were all *ḥadīth*-scholars and they all subscribed to the *ḥawādith/wafayāt* scheme. With regard to their connectivity, the various narratives of the 711 protest contain several examples of borrowing and supposed paraphrasing between the accounts, which echoes the third criterion.

On the other hand, the present examination also shows that connectivity and textual overlaps does not exclude individual authorial agency. The four authors in group A were not simply transmitting the same shared information; each of them evidently chose to use this information in pursuit of a specific authorial agenda, which raises the question of how far we should push the idea of a coherent school of historiography.

This is perhaps most clear when we compare the account of al-Birzālī with that of al-Jazarī*. The relationship between these two authors was particularly close: Li Guo has established that al-Birzālī was a lifelong informant and colleague of al-Jazarī and he also edited the latter's works posthumously.⁵⁶² Nevertheless, when we compare their respective accounts of the 711 protest, we see that this relationship does not prevent the two authors from crafting two different narratives: while al-Birzālī presents an account of causality and divine intervention, al-Jazarī* portrays a detailed overview of both local and imperial politics.

Moreover, their two junior colleagues, al-Dhahabī and Ibn Kathīr, evidently chose to follow the account presented by al-Birzālī, even though they both knew al-Jazarī and his work.⁵⁶³ In this regard, Ibn Kathīr apparently chose to emphasise the divine intervention aspect of al-Birzālī's account by omitting all references to the coup against al-Nāṣir. Furthermore, regarding the question of Ibn Taymiyya's involvement in the arrest of governor Karāy, we see yet another discrepancy that separates him from al-Dhahabī. While Ibn Kathīr uses his version of the protest to promote the image of the politically engaged Ibn Taymiyya, al-Dhahabī is silent on this matter and seems to refute it actively elsewhere in his writings. In conclusion, we can say that while the social and textual connectivity of these authors merits the label *group* or *school*, this should not lead us to neglect the examination of their works as reflections of personal choices and agendas.

⁵⁶² For details on this relationship see Guo, 1998, Chapter 3.

⁵⁶³ Proof of their knowledge of al-Jazarī's work can be found in their obituaries of him. See Ibn Kathīr *al-Bidāya* vol. 8 pt. 16, 289, al-Dhahabī, *Dhayl Tārīkh al-Islām*, 453–454 and al-Dhahabī, 'Dhayl al-'Ibar', 114.

III. The Events of 711/1311 from a Contemporary Egyptian Perspective

The preceding section was concerned with examining the discrepancies between the Damascene accounts of Karāy's arrest. While this examination shows how differing authorial agendas affected the narratives about the 711 protest, it also underlined that the authors in Group A shared a common attachment to a *local* understanding of contemporary politics. They agree that the main political challenge of the year 711/1311 was the relationship between Karāy and the local population of Damascus, although al-Jazarī* does acknowledge the wider political struggles in the Mamluk Empire. Moreover, they all highlight the agency of the Damascene citizens in alleviating the tax burden, albeit in different ways. In this section, we switch from a predominantly *local* to a predominantly *imperial* perspective on the events that took place in Damascus in 711/1311 by looking at a group of contemporary accounts written by Egyptian authors with military rather than religious background.

The central imperial event of this year was the arrests within the officers' corps that the sultan ordered in the fall of 711/1311. These arrests are mentioned with differing degrees of detail by all the Damascene authors, but they are clearly marginal in comparison to their local events perspectives. By contrast, the group of Egyptian sources, identified for our purposes as Group B, are much more concerned with this purge and its effect on Karāy's arrest, and hardly mention the protest and the wider tax conflict in Damascus. In general, this is not surprising since we could expect Egyptian authors from the military class to be far better informed about politics on the imperial level as opposed to local politics in Damascus. However, because at least two of the three authors were in fact aware of what went on in Damascus, we must consider their silence on these local events as a conscious omission.

i. Ibn al-Dawādārī

We begin by examining the description of Karāy's arrest provided by Ibn al-Dawādārī (d. after 736/1336) in his chronicle *Kanz al-Durar fī Jamī' al-Ghurar*. This account is extremely relevant as a comparison with the Damascene accounts since the author claims to have been present in Damascus before, during and after the arrest of the governor. Ibn al-Dawādārī was the son of a Mamluk amir and presumably the holder of an office

related to the military.⁵⁶⁴ In his chronicle, he tells us that in 710/1310 he had arrived in Damascus as part of the retinue of his father, Jamāl al-Dīn ‘Abd Allah al-Dawādārī (d. 713/1313), who had been appointed as the city’s new *miḥmandār* (bearer of the protocol), the officer in charge of receiving and accommodating official guests.⁵⁶⁵ In a preface to the events of the year 711/1311, Ibn al-Dawādārī relates that he was present at Karāy’s arrest because of his father’s position:

As for Karāy [his arrest] was on Thursday the 23rd of the said month [Jumādā I]. The servant and author of this book was present during this and saw it and did not hear about it.⁵⁶⁶

Ibn al-Dawādārī’s narrative of Karāy’s rule begins with the last 24 hours before his arrest. He describes that the sultan’s *dawādār* (lit. inkwell bearer – a master of ceremonies), Amir Sayf al-Dīn Arghūn, suddenly arrived from Cairo without prior warning. Both al-Dawādārī’s father and governor Karāy were alarmed at Arghūn’s appearance despite their guest’s explanation that he was only bringing an honorary robe (*khil‘a*) for the governor.⁵⁶⁷ The author explains that in hindsight their fears were indeed justified. On the night of his arrival, Arghūn set up a secret meeting with the resident amirs to plan Karāy’s arrest.⁵⁶⁸ The following day, while hosting a banquet for his officers and guests, Karāy was surrounded by Arghūn and his allies, who put him in chains and send him off to prison at the castle of Karak.⁵⁶⁹

While Ibn al-Dawādārī’s devotes three full pages to Karāy’s arrest, other details about the governor’s rule in Damascus, such as the protracted negotiations surrounding the 711 tax, are completely absent from his account. Moreover, he omits any reference to the protest itself, the arrests of the *khaṭīb* and the subsequent decrees from the sultanic chancery, all of which loom large in the local civilian sources. This discrepancy is surprising in so far as we could expect an author so close to the arrest to know about violent confrontations between the governor and the civilian population, especially one

⁵⁶⁴ Unfortunately, the biographical information on Ibn al-Dawādārī is so scarce that we cannot determine the exact course of his career path.

⁵⁶⁵ See Bernard Lewis, 'Ibn Al-Dawādārī', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 3*, ed. B. Lewis et al. (E. J. Brill, 1986), 744. According to Ibn al-Dawādārī, his father also briefly held the position *shadd al-dawāwīn* – overseer of the *diwān*. However, this does not fit with the information from other sources I have examined.

⁵⁶⁶ al-Dawādārī, *Kanz* vol. 9, 213.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.* vol. 9, 213–214.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 215.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 216.

that took place in front of the governor's entire retinue during the weekly inspection parade in Sūq al-Khayl.

One explanation for the omission of this event, of course, could be that Ibn al-Dawādārī was trying to protect Karāy from criticism; after all, the governor was the superior of the author's father. However, it seems unlikely that Ibn al-Dawādārī should have harboured concerns for Karāy's reputation since his general portrayal of the governor is more neutral than sympathetic. The more likely explanation would seem to be that he simply did not find these events important enough to mention. In other words, whatever grievances the local population of Damascus might have had with the arrested governor could have been ignored by Ibn al-Dawādārī because he found them either irrelevant or at best inferior to the imperial dramas and intrigues of intra-Mamluk politics, which he strove to capture in minute detail. Consequently, the story of Karāy becomes a parenthesis subsumed under the larger story of the sultan al-Nāṣir and the challenges he faced at the beginning of his third rule.

We can see this clearly if we return briefly to the introduction of the 711 entry in the *Kanz*, where Ibn al-Dawādārī dedicates a long initial passage to describing how al-Nāṣir decided to move against his viceroy Baktamur al-Jūkandār and his accomplices:

Our lord the sultan, may God perpetuate his reign, had been made wise by experience, and had again come to fear the poison of the scorpion [...] Among those who were made the object of his anger he did not disgrace anyone who had dignity (*hurma*), except as retribution for a previous harm and misdeed. Anyone who is of a contrary opinion his judgement is faulty (*'ajaz*) [...] The biggest proof of this is that anyone who approached him with ill intend (*bi-sū'*) was destroyed [...].⁵⁷⁰

In this introduction, the author frames the events of 711/1311 first and foremost as an account of how the young sultan initiated his third reign with the resolve of a statesman rather than the complacency of a child monarch controlled by his amirs. It is only after these lengthy descriptions and justifications of the sultan's concerns about mutiny that the narrative zooms in on the situation in Damascus during Jumādā I/September–October.

To summarise, we can say that despite his proximity to the situation, Ibn al-Dawādārī presents the arrest of Karāy as the unequivocal result of the purge. However, the question remains: is his presentation of Karāy's arrest simply coloured by the fact

⁵⁷⁰ al-Dawādārī, *Kanz* vol. 9, 212–213.

that this author was surrounded by the military aristocracy and a mere visitor in Damascus? In the case of the Damascene authors, we saw that unlike Ibn al-Dawādārī, they were in fact stakeholders in the protest and had direct reasons for focusing on it. In addition, we can point to two characteristics of Ibn al-Dawādārī's work that could explain why he foregrounds the imperial dimensions and ignores local events.

First, the focus on the actions of the sultan is not surprising in so far as Ibn al-Dawādārī framed the entire final section of the *Kanz* (the section which covers the period 699–735/1299–1335) as a biography of al-Nāṣir, who he portrayed as the sovereign who created peace and stability after century upon century of war and unrest in the Islamic world. Ulrich Haarmann provides two different titles for this section, the original being *al-Nūr al-Bāṣir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir* (*The Clarifying Light Regarding the Life of al-Malik al-Nāṣir*). This was changed to *al-Durr al-Fākhir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir* (*The Splendid Pearls of the Life of al-Malik al-Nāṣir*).⁵⁷¹ What we are dealing with is a work centred on al-Nāṣir and possibly even presented to the sultan by the author himself.⁵⁷² This evidently affects his presentation of political events in the provinces and hereunder Karāy's arrest, which is reduced to the decision of the sovereign.

Second, we should note that Karāy's arrest provides an ample opportunity for the author to present himself and his father at the centre of events. Haarmann points out that elsewhere Ibn al-Dawādārī tries to make his chronicle more unique and interesting by pretending to quote his father or another of his associates when he is really quoting from an existing chronicle.⁵⁷³ By focusing on the military aspect of Karāy's arrest, Ibn al-Dawādārī not only favours intra-Mamluk politics, but also highlights himself and his father as key witnesses and participants in the events of the day.⁵⁷⁴ Meanwhile, his narrative is completely devoid of any non-military actors – no judges, scholars or common people whatsoever are given any role.

In contrast to Ibn al-Dawādārī's tendency towards self-promotion, Haarmann argues that the author al-Jazārī only lets himself or his friends and relatives speak 'when it comes to illustrate contemporary events, which are of unquestionable objective relevans for historians, and to render them more concrete'.⁵⁷⁵ While it is true that no

⁵⁷¹ See Haarmann, 1969, 80–81. For the portrayal of al-Nāṣir bringer of peace, see al-Dawādārī, *Kanz* vol. 9, 384–387 and Clifford, 2013, 180.

⁵⁷² Haarmann, 1969, 82.

⁵⁷³ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁵⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.* NB: I have translated the quote from the original German.

autobiographic references are found in al-Jazarī*'s or any of the other Damascene sources' narratives of the 711 protest, it would be a mistake to acquit them completely of self-promotion through their narratives. If we expand the scope slightly to include not only the authors themselves and their immediate family, we see that they are all engaged in self-promotion on behalf of their own community. Moreover, they emphasise the significance of the 711 protest and underline the role of local religious scholars, such as al-Qazwīnī and al-Tūnisī, while simultaneously relegating the Mamluk military aristocracy to the margins. In this sense, the social world portrayed in their works is the inverse image of the Mamluk-centric world of Ibn al-Dawādārī. In other words, all of the accounts that we have examined so far can be read as self-representations either of the author personally or of the social milieu and world in which he lived.⁵⁷⁶

The same can be said when we compare the descriptions of Damascene city space found in the narratives of Group A with those in the account of Ibn al-Dawādārī. All four authors in Group A, al-Jazarī*'s in particular, present their readers with a vivid picture of Damascus intra-muros, including the names of the madrasas and special sections of the Umayyad Mosque where the tax negotiations took place. By contrast, Ibn al-Dawādārī's Damascus as presented in the 711 entry in the *Kanz* is restricted to the suburb of barracks and amiral palaces near the Maydān al-Akhḍar on the slopes of the Barāda river northwest of the walled city. We have already seen in Chapter 3, that this area was developed by the military aristocracy of the late Ayyubid and early Mamluk periods into what Julien Loiseau calls '*la ville de cavaliers*'.⁵⁷⁷ What we have seen above is that this impression is certainly reinforced by Ibn al-Dawādārī.

In this sense, we can say that the authors in Group A and Ibn al-Dawādārī also display radically different views of where the political centre of Damascus was located. The Damascene scholars emphasise the mosque and madrasa district east of the citadel, while Egyptian officer focuses on the detached army quarters in the northwestern suburbs. Within the respective chronicles, the geography of narrative thus corresponds completely with the author's choice of focus. In a wider perspective, we can see how the

⁵⁷⁶ The Syrian historian's tendency to highlight and promote his own community is also registered in two studies of Syrian historiography in the 10th/16th and 12th/18th centuries, respectively. See Amina A. Elbendary, *Crowds and Sultans: Urban Protests in Late Medieval Egypt and Syria* (Cairo: AUC Press, 2016), 93–94 and Dana Sajdi, 'Peripheral Visions: The Worlds and Worldviews of Commoner Chroniclers in the 18th Century Ottoman Levant' (Columbia University, New York, 2002), Chapter 2.

⁵⁷⁷ Julien Loiseau, *Les Mamelouks – XIIIe–XVIe Siecle* (Paris: Editions du SEUIL, 2014), 216.

two political poles that were drawn up in Chapters 3 and 4 (the Umayyad Mosque and the military suburbs near the Sūq al-Khayl) are hierarchised through narration.

ii. Baybars al-Manṣūrī

We now move on to two additional accounts of Karāy's arrest written from an Egyptian military perspective, but by authors who were somewhat farther away from the events in Damascus. What becomes evident here is that the foregrounding of the sultan's purge and marginalisation of the civilian Damascene perspective is not unique to Ibn al-Dawādārī, but shared in different degrees by other authors who resembled him in terms of socio-political and geographical background. Let us begin with the account provided by the Mamluk officer and short-term viceroy of Egypt, Baybars al-Manṣūrī (d. 725/1325), who describes the events of 711/1311 in his *Kitāb al-tuḥfa al-mulukiyya fi al-dawla al-Turkiyya*. As mentioned in Chapter 1, al-Manṣūrī was an active political player in 711/1311 since he was appointed as viceroy of Egypt in this year following al-Nāṣir's purge and the arrest of Baktamur.⁵⁷⁸ We now consider how this fact influences his depiction of the events in question.

Al-Manṣūrī's *Kitāb al-Tuḥfa* distinguishes itself from Ibn al-Dawādārī's *Kanz* in so far that it actually acknowledges Karāy's political problems in Damascus. When mentioning the governor's appointment, al-Manṣūrī makes the following remark: 'he ruled it [Damascus] for a short period but the people received hardship from him none the less'.⁵⁷⁹ In contrast to the *Kanz*, we see here at least a cursory interest in the ruling style of the governor. Later, al-Manṣūrī even highlights that the governor's arrest happened as a direct result of a complaint about his tyrannical way of governing:

In this year he [al-Nāṣir] sent Amir Sayf al-Din Arghūn the *dawādār* to Damascus to seize Amir Sayf al-Din Karāy when the people complained about the weight of his oppression, his tyranny (*jūr jīratihī*) and the abusiveness of his rule. He was seized at his table after he had adorned the honorary robe of his sultan.⁵⁸⁰

In comparison with Ibn al-Dawādārī, al-Manṣūrī is more attentive to the plight of the Damascenes and acknowledges the significance of popular feedback in the political changes of 711/1311 on a par with what we saw in the Damascene sources in Group A.

⁵⁷⁸ See above, 32.

⁵⁷⁹ al-Manṣūrī, *Kitāb al-tuḥfa*, 227.

⁵⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 228.

However, the comparison between the *Tuḥfa* and the Damascene chronicles should not be pushed too far. Unlike the Damascene chroniclers, al-Manṣūrī does not use the story of Karāy’s arrest to underline the agency of Damascene civilians, but rather as a means to highlight the benevolence and justice of al-Nāṣir and the bad character of Karāy. The governor is not connected explicitly to Baktamur’s coup, but his abuse of the Damascene population and his arrest is presented in the context of other examples of bad governance and nefarious stratagems that preceded al-Nāṣir’s 711 purge. Apart from Baktamur’s coup plans, we hear how the reigning governor of Gaza, Amir Quṭlūqtamur (d. ?), was dismissed for neglecting his duties:

This was because our lord the sultan had found out that the said Quṭlūqtamur had neglected the safeguarding of the coastal plains to such an extent that Frankish pirates had begun to covet it [...].⁵⁸¹

As in the case of Karāy, al-Manṣūrī underlines that Quṭlūqtamur was deposed due to the sultan’s timely and diligent intervention for the sake of his subjects. That this is the key message of his purge-narrative, including the arrest of Karāy, is spelled out in unambiguous terms in the concluding comment on the arrests of 711/1311. Here, the author includes two stanzas from a panegyric poem written by the 4th/10th century poet al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965) to his patron the Hamdanid prince of Aleppo Sayf al-Dawla (d. 356/967)⁵⁸²:

By the grace of God what a heroic king, he seizes the lions in their thicket and shows his inner qualities⁵⁸³ in their jumps. And this is the meaning of the words of al-Mutanabbī. (Poetry)

Mighty fear deputised for you and

/

*awe for you wrought more than the heroes achieved*⁵⁸⁴

And when those mentioned went into the trap, they were sent to the citadel of Karak.⁵⁸⁵

These concluding lines of al-Manṣūrī’s account constitute a parallel to the scorpion parable that Ibn al-Dawādārī used in his description of the purge: it underlines that the

⁵⁸¹ Ibid., 227.

⁵⁸² See the Introduction in *Poems of al-Mutanabbī A Selection*. Arthur J. Arberry, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1967).

⁵⁸³ The Arabic word used is *thanyātahu* – literally, his folds.

⁵⁸⁴ Poem 12 v. 7, 70 in Arberry (transl.), 1967. My italicization.

⁵⁸⁵ al-Manṣūrī, *Kitāb al-tuḥfa*, 228.

point of the narrative is to praise the sultan for his wisdom, courage and proficiency as ruler. In this context, the situation in Damascus is presented in vague terms as part of a larger catalogue of political problems that the sultan corrected in this year. As in the case of al-Dawādārī, this narrative links up with the overarching intention of the work in which it is incorporated. As noted by Li Guo, the slim volume that constitutes *Kitāb al-tuḥfa* (219 printed pages in the 1987 edition) is not an abridged version of al-Manṣūrī's universal chronicle *Zubdat al-Fikra fī Tārīkh al-Hijra*, as Claude Cahen believes. Rather, it is 'another original work on the reign of the Sultan al-Nāṣir Muhammad Ibn Qalāwūn'.⁵⁸⁶ Like the final volume of the *Kanz*, *Kitāb al-tuḥfa* is primarily aimed at depicting and praising al-Nāṣir and according to Abdelḥamīd Ṣāliḥ Ḥamdān, the editor of the 1987 edition, it was most likely intended as a present for the sultan himself.⁵⁸⁷ The story of the purge that includes Karāy's arrest is thus employed to fit this particular authorial agenda.

As in case of Ibn al-Dawādārī, we should also acknowledge that al-Manṣūrī was also pursuing a narrower personal goal with his work. But unlike al-Dawādārī, he had more than the claim to be an eyewitness to the events to hang his hat on. As mentioned above, al-Manṣūrī was in fact the amir who was appointed as viceroy of Egypt when Baktamur was arrested. In his account, he describes this process in the following words:

He rewarded with the position of viceroy the slave of his grace, the one who had grown up under the charity of him and his father, Baybars al-Dawādār, the compiler of this *sīra* and the relator of these reports, and he honored me with the designated robe of honour [...].⁵⁸⁸

According to the editor, Ḥamdān, al-Manṣūrī began to write *Kitāb al-tuḥfa* around 709/1310 and finished it in its present form around 711/1311, the year he was appointed as viceroy.⁵⁸⁹ His work is not simply a tribute to the sultan, it is also a self-portrait of the author at the peak of his power. In this light, we can say that al-Manṣūrī had obvious self-serving reasons for framing the victims of the purge as negatively as possible, in Karāy's case by including references to his dictatorial rule in Damascus. This would indirectly help him frame himself as part of a new, sound and incorrupt Mamluk

⁵⁸⁶ Guo, 1997, 17.

⁵⁸⁷ al-Manṣūrī, *Kitāb tuḥfa*, Introduction by the editor, 14.

⁵⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁵⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

leadership emerging from the political fray of the 711/1311 purge. Thus, the situation in Damascus remains instrumental for a purpose, one which is centred elsewhere.

Unfortunately for al-Mansūrī, his appointment as viceroy was short-lived. He was accused of treason, arrested and sent off to Karak in 712/1312, much like the victims of the purge. He was released and had some of his wealth restored in 716/1316, and according to Ḥamdān, made one abortive attempt to continue to write the *Kitāb al-tuḥfa* around 721/1321. But the work that has come down to us still ends with his glory days in 711/1311.⁵⁹⁰

iii. *al-Yūsufī (via al-‘Aynī)*

We conclude this section with a look at a third Egyptian account of Karāy’s arrest, which most likely stems from the *Nuzhat al-Nāṣir fī Sīrat al-Malik al-Nāṣir (The Spectator’s Stroll through the Biography of al-Malik al-Nāṣir)*, which was most likely written by an Egyptian officer in the *ḥalqa* (non-Mamluk auxiliary forces) by the name of Mūsa Ibn Muḥammad Ibn Yaḥyā al-Yūsufī (d. after 755/1355). As explained in Chapter 1, our access to this work is somewhat problematic: save for a short manuscript containing entries for the years 737–73, the *Nuzha* has only survived in the form of quotations in later chronicles. Therefore, the descriptions of the events of 711/1311 examined here are edited quotations from the *Nuzha* presented by the Egyptian chronicler Badr al-Dīn al-‘Aynī (d. 855/1451) in his chronicle *‘Iqd al-Jumān fī Tārīkh Ahl al-Zamān*.⁵⁹¹

We should be aware that we are dealing with al-Yūsufī’s account as it was curated by al-‘Aynī, who we cannot hold accountable for his selections and arrangements of al-Yūsufī’s material since we lack the original text. However, in the present context, there are two main reasons to emphasise al-Yūsufī over his curator, al-‘Aynī. First, al-Yūsufī appears to be al-‘Aynī’s sole source and is apparently quoted directly: the passage in al-‘Aynī’s *‘Iqd* that describes Baktamur’s coup and Karāy’s arrest spans some four pages and consists exclusively of quotes from either *ṣāḥib kitāb sīrat al-Nāṣir* (the master of the biography of al-Nāṣir) or *al-Rāwī* (the relator/narrator), both of which are monikers by which al-‘Aynī habitually refers to al-Yūsufī.⁵⁹²

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁹¹ See above, 32-33.

⁵⁹² The excerpt in question takes up four pages in the printed edition. al-‘Aynī, *‘Iqd* vol. 5, 252–256. For more details on the al-‘Aynī/al-Yūsufī connection, see above, 32-33 and Donald P. Little, ‘The Recovery of a Lost Source for Bahri Mamluk History: Al-Yūsufī’s *Nuzhat Al-Nāṣir Fi Sīrat Al-Malik Al-Nāṣir*’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, no. 1 (1974): 42–55.

Second, the account of Karāy's arrest in the *Iqd* is, as far as I have been able to establish, the only version that presents a vindictive picture of Karāy while strongly incriminating the sultan. The attitude toward al-Nāṣir that we find in this particular passage corresponds with Donald P. Little's general characterisation of the *Nuzha* as a portrayal of the sultan as 'a tyrant, ruthless, scheming and brutal'.⁵⁹³ Therefore, while al-ʿAynī might very well have shared this conviction, we have ample reason to expect that what he presents are relatively direct quotes from al-Yūsufī.

In what we can now assume with relative certainty is al-Yūsufī's version of the events of 711/1311, Baktamur and the coup makers are presented as the heroes and governor Karāy is cast as nothing more than an innocent victim of the sultan's paranoia. The narrative begins with a description of how Baktamur assembled his closest confidants and expressed his concern about al-Nāṣir's treatment of the Mamluk elite after his return to power in 709/1310:

Verily the Amir Baktamur al-Jūkandār, when he saw what happened with the amirs, and that his respect (*ḥurma*) had shrunken, feared for himself, and so he summoned Butkhās⁵⁹⁴, who had been the governor of Safad, and others whom he kept close, and he said to them: you know⁵⁹⁵ what the sultan did to the amirs, for among them are some to whom he gives what they deserve and some to whom he does not give what they deserve. I am afraid of him, and I don't know what to do? And so they said to him: by God we all feel that way [...]⁵⁹⁶

The group then rallies the support of the governors of Safad and Gaza. However, according to this version, Karāy disassociates himself from the plotters and actively tries to dissuade Baktamur from pursuing the matter:

As for Karāy, the governor of Damascus, he sent a message to him (Baktamur) and said: My brother, I know what happened to others than you, and they were stronger than you, so do not let this enter your mind for it will

⁵⁹³ Little, 1974, 54. Little even suggests that the work was so critical that al-Yūsufī took pains to conceal his own identity lest he incur the wrath of one of al-Nāṣir's sons; hence, al-ʿAynī's lack of awareness of the authorship. See Little, 1974, 48.

⁵⁹⁴ Sayf al-Dīn Butkhāṣ was governor of Safad for six years during the first decade of the 8th/14th century. See al-Ṣafadī, *A'yan* vol. 1, 678–679.

⁵⁹⁵ The Arabic text could be saying either 'allamtuhum / 'allamtahum / 'allantihim (' l m in form II perf. 1. or 2. sing. m. / 2. sing. f.) 'I told them / you told them'. I have chosen to regard the *h* as typing error since 'alamtum (' l m in form I perf. 2. sing. m. pl.), 'you have learned/come to know', makes more sense in this context as the speaker is directing his words directly towards a group.

⁵⁹⁶ al-ʿAynī, *Iqd* vol. 5, 252.

destroy you and it will destroy us with you. For he [al-Nāṣir] is the son of our master (*ustadh*) and he has seized the kingdom and is afraid.⁵⁹⁷

Karāy's warning is followed by a long description of how al-Nāṣir learned of the coup and resolved to have Baktamur and the governors of Syria arrested. Whether or not al-Yūsufi includes the 711 tax as a reason for Karāy's fall is unclear since al-ʿAynī switches to the account of Ibn Kathīr when relating the actual arrest of the governor.⁵⁹⁸ But from the sections of the *Nuzha* that al-ʿAynī does quote, we get the distinct impression that Karāy was arrested as a suspected co-conspirator despite his active refusal to participate in the coup. In this regard, the account of al-Yūsufi follows the other Egyptian accounts in foregrounding the purge over any local problems that could have occurred as a result of Karāy's rule in Damascus.

However, unlike the previous two narratives, the purge in this narrative is not couched as an occasion for the author to praise the sultan – quite the contrary. The initial reason behind Baktamur's coup is cast as a reaction to the sultan's unfair treatment of his amirs. Tellingly, it is not loyalty or affection for al-Nāṣir but fear of the sultan's reaction that prevents Karāy from joining the coup. The alleged letter from the governor helps to consolidate the image of the sultan as a fearful and erratic usurper. We should remember that al-Manṣūrī depicts the fear that the sultan inspired in positive terms; through the use of al-Mutanabbī's poetry, he likens this fear to the awe inspired by a mighty king. By contrast, the fear harboured by the amirs in al-Yūsufi's account is not awe but rather fear instilled in others by a man driven by desperation and paranoia.⁵⁹⁹

As was the case with the other two Egyptian sources, al-Yūsufi's account of the purge betrays the contours of the wider scope of the work. But unlike them, he evidently aims to portray al-Nāṣir in a most unfavourable light. The sultan is presented as the erratic tyrant who has alienated the population and abused members of the Manṣūriyya corps by taking away their rights, although the narrative does not state what these rights were. Consequently, the coup is portrayed as a widely supported attempt at restoring

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., 257. Interestingly, al-ʿAynī does not include the reference to Ibn Taymiyya's involvement in the 711 protest even though he quotes from Ibn Kathīr. We can speculate that he relied on a copy of *al-Bidāya*, which, like the Berlin Manuscript mentioned above, lacked this reference.

⁵⁹⁹ The contrast between their portrayals of the sultan can also be illustrated by comparing their descriptions of Baktamur's incarceration. Al-Manṣūrī points out that al-Nāṣir made the prisoners' stay at Karak as comfortable as possible; in contrast, al-Yūsufi simply states that Baktamur was kept imprisoned until his death. While both authors acknowledge that the sultan sent his former viceroy to prison, the former emphasises the sultan's compassion, while the latter portrays the incarceration of Baktamur as an indirect death sentence.

balance. As for Karāy, he is simply caught in the crossfire between the coup makers and the sultan.

iv. Prepared or paranoid? Debating the merits of Sultan al-Nāṣir

For the authors in Group B, the 711 protest, to the extent that they knew about it, must have been an insignificant event compared with the dramatic intrigues that characterised the Mamluk elite, especially the circles close to al-Nāṣir in the period where he was consolidating his position as sultan for the third time. In this context, Karāy is cast as nothing more than a small piece of a large puzzle that circles around the question whether al-Nāṣir was a good or bad ruler. In the first two accounts presented in Group B, the sultan is cast as the wise sovereign who incarcerates a few ‘bad apples’ among his officers for the sake of stability, with wide backing among the Mamluk elite. Karāy is, first and foremost, one of the bad apples. In the third and final account, the situation is put on its head: The sultan is the villain and the coup makers are acting out of justified concern for their lives, while Karāy becomes an innocent victim of an autocrat’s increasing paranoia. All the narratives in Group B betray a view of contemporary politics that is permeated by a centre-periphery dynamic. The centre of most, if not all, political change is the imperial capital of Cairo and the decisions taken there reverberate like ripples, causing local change throughout the provinces. This runs counter to the general tendency in the Damascene narratives, which maintain a continuous focus on the importance of local events and portray interference from Cairo not simply as *action* but as a *reaction* to the request of the Damascenes.

IV. The Perspective of the Scholar-Bureaucrat

Until now we have seen how the story of Karāy was presented by two groups of authors who hailed from two different geographical and educational/occupational backgrounds: the Damascene scholar-chronicler vs. the Egyptian military-chronicler.

In this section, we regard the story of Karāy from the perspective of the learned civilian administrator working within Mamluk administration and confine ourselves to examining the account of one author, Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl Ibn Aybak al-Ṣafadī (d. 1363/764). The son of a Mamluk, Al-Ṣafadī was born in 696/1296 and grew up to become a bureaucrat in the Mamluk administration as well as a famous litterateur and

biographer.⁶⁰⁰ Throughout his life he worked in the offices of the Mamluk chancery, including in Damascus (731–739/1331–1339 and 760–763/1360–1363). The account we examine here is the biography of Sayf al-Dīn Karāy found in al-Şafadī’s biographical dictionary of his prominent contemporaries, *A ‘yān al- ‘Aşr wa-A ‘wān al-Naşr*. This work begins with people born in al-Şafadī’s birth year of 696/1297; he seems to have worked on it towards the end of his life in the late fifties and early sixties of the 8th/14th century. Many of the approximately 1800 biographies found in this work are revised and augmented versions of the entries found in al-Şafadī’s other and much larger biographical dictionary that he worked on throughout his adult life and called *al-Wāfi bil-Wafayāt*⁶⁰¹. *Al-Wāfi* does include a biography of Karāy,⁶⁰² but it is far less detailed than the one found in the *A ‘yān*. This examination deals solely with the latter.

Al-Şafadī’s account of Karāy’s arrest includes a detailed description of the 711 protest shows strong linguistic similarities with the versions of both al-Birzālī and al-Jazarī*.⁶⁰³ However, after this, he includes an equally detailed description of how Karāy was innocently arrested in connection with the coup because of his ties with Baktamur. His account of Karāy’s arrest reads like a combination of the narratives found in Groups A and B.

However, al-Şafadī’s version is not simply a cross between the Damascene and Egyptian perspectives. In general, he seems much less concerned with foregrounding either Damascus or Cairo or the agency of either the Damascene citizens (with or without the help of God) or the sultan. Instead, he follows his own agenda – presenting a complex portrait of Governor Karāy.

i. Al-Şafadī and his local and imperial connections

We begin by looking at al-Şafadī’s narrative in light of his background, which can partially explain his take on the story of Karāy. Around 1317/717, before the young al-Şafadī joined the ranks of the chancery clerks, we find him in Damascus as a student of disciplines such as grammar, *adab* and *ḥadīth*. Here, he made connections with local

⁶⁰⁰ Donald P. Little, 'al-Şafadī as a Biographer of His Contemporaries', in *Essays on Islamic Civilization*, ed. Donald P. Little (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishing, 1976), 191–210, 206–207.

⁶⁰¹ Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Şafadī, *al-Wāfi bil-Wafayāt 25 Vols.*, ed. M. A. al-Bakhīt and M. al-Hiyārī (Stuttgart: Frantz Steiner Verlag, 1993).

⁶⁰² al-Şafadī, *al-Wāfi* vol. 24, 331–333.

⁶⁰³ For similarities with other accounts of the 711 protest, compare, e.g., al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtafi* vol. 4, 21 ll. 6–8 with al-Şafadī, *A ‘yān* vol. 4, 152 ll. 15–17 and al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1435 ll. 15–1436 l. 1 with al-Şafadī, *A ‘yān* vol. 4, 153 ll. 5–8.

scholars, including Ibn Taymiyya and the young al-Dhahabī.⁶⁰⁴ Furthermore, beyond the restricted case of the 711 protest, we find evidence in all parts of the *A'yān* and *al-Wāfi* that suggest that he had personal contact with al-Birzālī and al-Jazarī as well as access to their respective writings.⁶⁰⁵ Moreover, as was the case with the authors in Group A, we can also point to personal connections between al-Şafadī and the leader of the protest, the *khaṭīb* Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī. As explained in Chapter 4, al-Şafadī both corresponded and spoke directly with al-Qazwīnī and composed a lengthy panegyric poem for him around 732/1332.⁶⁰⁶ As for the other named individual involved in the protest, Majid al-Dīn al-Tūnisī, al-Şafadī seems to have arrived in Damascus too late to study under him, since al-Tūnisī died in 718/1318.⁶⁰⁷

In light of his Damascene connections, it would be tempting to regard al-Şafadī's narrative simply as an extension of the accounts in Group A. However, al-Şafadī's narrative is clearly also influenced by his background within the state administration, which expands his attention beyond Damascus. He comments extensively on Karāy's complex character, describing him as both a pious and zealous administrator and an impatient hothead. Most prominently, he draws on the testimony of a chancery employee from Safad called Najm al-Dīn al-Şafadī (d. 723/1323)⁶⁰⁸ under whose command al-Şafadī worked in the early 720s/1320s. According to the author, his former boss had worked for Karāy in Safad and was brought to Damascus as the governor's chief accountant in 711/1311.⁶⁰⁹ He quotes Najm al-Dīn for descriptions of how Karāy initiated a broad evaluation of the local ledgers in Damascus as well as information on his relationship with other amirs in and beyond Damascus and his arrest and deportation.

To summarise, we can say that both al-Şafadī's connection to the state bureaucracy (including Karāy's former secretary) and his connection to the scholars of Damascus are visible in his account of the events of 711/1311. He undeniably recounts the dramatic protest narrative found in the Damascene sources with all their attention to the amount of the tax requested by the governor and the relics used by the protesters, but he is also

⁶⁰⁴ Little, 1976, 206. Franz Rosenthal, 'Al-Şafadī', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 8*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 759–60.

⁶⁰⁵ al-Şafadī quotes al-Birzālī's works more than fifty times in the *A'yān* and also includes alleged oral testimonies from him. See Little, 1976, 201–202.

⁶⁰⁶ See above, 159. For examples of his correspondence with al-Qazwīnī, see al-Şafadī, *A'yān* vol. 4, 496–498; for his use of al-Qazwīnī as a source, see al-Şafadī, *A'yān* vol. 5, 10.

⁶⁰⁷ The biography of al-Tūnisī in the *A'yān* does not mention any student–teacher relationship between the biographer and biographee. See *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 32–34.

⁶⁰⁸ For his biography, see *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 232–244.

⁶⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, 152.

attentive to and inclusive of the perspectives of non-local observers. Apparently, he saw no contradiction in including both the local and imperial dimensions of Karāy's rule and demise.

That said, of course, al-Şafadī's depictions of the 711 protest and the arrest of Karāy are not determined completely by his background and the array of sources and informants available to him. As with the previous authors, we must also take into consideration the question of his authorial agenda.

ii. Temper, passion and sense of duty: a psychological portrait of Karāy

In general terms, we can say that the chosen excerpt from al-Şafadī's *A 'yān* differs from the previous sources in so far as it does not present the account of the 711 protest as part of a chronological overview of the events of the year 711. Instead, the narrative of the protest is inserted as one anecdote among many in the biography of governor Karāy. When reading this particular description of these events, we need to consider first and foremost how al-Şafadī used anecdotes in his biographies. In this regard, we are fortunate to be able to consult and compare with a recent article by Stephan Conermann.⁶¹⁰ This article examines the biography of another 14th century governor of Damascus, Amir Sayf al-Dīn Tankiz al-Ḥusāmī (d. 740/1340), which can be found in *al-Wāfi bil-Wafayāt*. On the background of Tankiz's biography, Conermann writes the following about al-Şafadī's use of anecdotes:

Within al-Şafadī's *Wāfi* these short, entertaining, and amusing anecdotes have the function of emphasizing certain features and characteristics of historic figures [...] On the one hand they give us information about al-Şafadī's idea of Tankiz' character. On the other hand they provide us with an interesting and entertaining biography of the governor. In general, one should be very careful when it comes to reconstructing reality from this material. We never know whether the picture the author draws in his text is real or just the result of his imagination.⁶¹¹

With regard to the 711 protest, we can safely say that this event was not purely the result of the author's imagination, since it is confirmed in several of the sources previously

⁶¹⁰ Stephan Conermann, 'Tankiz Ibn 'Abd Allāh Al-Ḥusāmī Al-Nāşirī (D. 740/1340) as Seen by His Contemporary Al-Şafadī (D. 764/1363)', *Mamluk Studies Review* 2 (2008): 1–24.

⁶¹¹ Ibid., 17–18. A very similar conclusion is reached by H. E. Fahndrich with regard to the biographical dictionary *Wafayāt al-A 'yān* of Ibn Khalikān (d. 681/1282). See Hartmut E. Fahndrich, 'The Wafayāt Al-A 'yān of Ibn Khallikān: A New Approach', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 93, no. 4 (1973): 432–445, 442–443.

examined. Even so, we should still heed this warning, since a closer examination of al-Şafadī's text shows that he arranges the anecdote in a way that departs from his sources, which seem to be the protest narratives of al-Birzālī and al-Jazarī*. As we shall see, these changes reflect on and underline the wider message inherent in his biography of Karāy. One of the significant changes that al-Şafadī makes in his protest narrative concerns the use of dialogue; here, Conermann's reservations about trusting al-Şafadī are even more pronounced:

In his biographies al-Şafadī often puts words into the mouths of people. Everything in these scenes, from their setting to the dramatis personae, can be an invention of the chronicler. Normally, he just wants to bring out a very complex and complicated relationship between two or three persons.⁶¹²

What this article suggests is that each anecdote, especially those that contain dialogue, should be examined in light of the biography into which it is inserted.

Before we examine al-Şafadī's presentation of the 711 protest, we need to consult his portrayal of Karāy as a whole in order to determine what general character traits the author attributes to his biographee. We should note that because the biographies of Tankiz and Karāy are drawn from two different biographical dictionaries written by al-Şafadī, we cannot assume that the same conclusions apply to both. However, the following examination demonstrates that Karāy's biography does support Conermann's conclusions.

In al-Şafadī's work, the governor is not cast as the vicious tyrant we saw in al-Manşūri's narrative. Nor is he presented as a man of 'base character and meanness of spirit', which we saw in al-Jazarī*'s version.⁶¹³ Instead, al-Şafadī gives us a more complex psychological portrait of a man caught between two dominant drives: his temper and his dedication to service.

On the one hand, Karāy is portrayed as a man completely controlled by his emotions. Al-Şafadī mentions his propensity for anger:

⁶¹² Conermann, 2008, 19.

⁶¹³ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1439.

He was severely awe-inspiring, slow to calm down if angered and to repent, reckless in the pursuit of his goals, and flew up quicker than his flies.⁶¹⁴ If he got angry there was no stopping his anger [...]⁶¹⁵

Later, the author also adds a description of the amir's insatiable appetite for intercourse, which underscores his impulse-driven character:

He had 4 wives and 30 concubines, and if he went on a hunting trip he had his women follow him because he could not stand patiently abstaining from intercourse [...]⁶¹⁶

On the other hand, the author complicates the portrait by stating that Karāy, despite his temper, was also a God-fearing, righteous and incorruptible man:

Nonetheless he was strong in faith, grand in his protection (*madīd al-Ṣiyāna*) [...] and of modest spirit and he did not eat from another's wealth as much as a grain, and did not accept gifts from anyone.⁶¹⁷

Hereafter, the positive side of Karāy's personality is illustrated in an anecdote where al-Ṣafadī describes how the amir entered the service of al-Nāṣir when he marched out of Karak in 709/1310. According to this anecdote, Karāy offered to capture and hold Gaza in order to aid the advance towards Cairo. Al-Ṣafadī commemorates this event in a poem that praises Karāy's qualities as a ruler and strategist. The poem is composed of two verses, each of which contains a paranomastic pun on the name of the governor that al-Ṣafadī spells as *Karā'ī*, i.e., with the insertion of a *ḥamza* between the *alif* and *ya*.

Karā'ī is he who sends sleep (*al-karā*) to our eyelids / and gathers all the property after it had been dispersed

He advised the sultan to guard Gaza / and in all my life I never saw a point of view like that of Karā'ī (*ka-ra'ī Karā'ī*).⁶¹⁸

To summarise, al-Ṣafadī's biography presents us with an amir who is both a stubborn and passionate hothead and a diligent, strategic and zealous ruler. The story of Karāy's brief tenure in Damascus, to which we now turn, is in essence the story of how the clash

⁶¹⁴ *Aṭyār min dhabābihi*. This whole passage is written in rhyming prose and the exact meaning of this sentence is unclear. But the imagery seems to suggest that the amir was roused to anger more easily quicker than a fly takes flight.

⁶¹⁵ al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān* vol. 4, 150.

⁶¹⁶ Ibid. vol. 4, 154.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid. vol. 4, 150. This last comment echoes al-Birzālī's statement of Karāy's incorruptibility. See al-Birzālī, *al-Muqtaṭf* vol. 4, 6.

⁶¹⁸ al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān* vol. 4, 52.

of these two sides of his character antagonised the Damascene population and brought about his demise.

According to al-Şafadī, the problems in Damascus caused by Karāy's combination of temper and sense of duty started well before the 711 protest. The first example he provides describes that the governor swore on divorce from his wives that all apprehended thieves would have their hand cut off if they stole the sharia minimum (*al-niṣāb al-shar'ī*).⁶¹⁹ According to al-Şafadī, this decision weighed on the people (*faḍāqa al-nās minhi*). This anecdote has Karāy, to the dismay of his subjects, interfering with the dispensing of justice, and echoes two themes evoked in the character description: his stubbornness and diligence.⁶²⁰

Al-Şafadī continues with a similar anecdote from Damascus. Karāy sent for a group of secretaries, including the aforementioned Najm al-Dīn al-Şafadī, from Homs, Gaza and Safad. Their job was to go over the ledgers of debt and credit in the city and highlight any inconsistencies. Without specifying how or why, al-Şafadī adds that the decision also angered the local population.⁶²¹ If we are to regard al-Şafadī's version of Karāy as a tyrant, it is not in the sense of an arbitrary ruler who bends the law to his own purpose, but rather in the sense of a strict and overzealous ruler who rejects local customs and overturns existing administrative practices in order to pursue his own idiosyncratic goals.⁶²²

In the case of the 711 protest, we can see how al-Şafadī rearranges the narrative in order to underline Karāy's stubborn determination and his anger towards anyone who opposed his decisions. The most evident shift in this direction can be found in the description of the verbal intervention of the *ḥājib*, Amir Sayf al-Dīn Quṭlūbak, at the

⁶¹⁹ Ibid. vol. 4, 152. This anecdote requires two clarifications. *Al-ḥallaḥ bil-ṭalāq* (swearing an oath of divorce) denotes a practice of showing one's determination in pursuing a certain matter. Karāy is saying that if he does not succeed in getting all thieves punished with amputation, he will divorce his wives, i.e. that he will do his utmost to get this punishment implemented. *Al-ḥallaḥ bil-ṭalāq* is still used in Arabic today. See e.g., Husein Almutlaq, 'A Sociolinguistic Study of Terms of Oaths in Jordanian Arabic', *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 3, no. 21 (2013): 225–228, 227. As for the juridical aspect of *sariqa* (theft), *al-niṣāb al-shar'ī* (the sharia minimum) is the definite minimum value in stolen currency or goods that can be punished by amputation. According to the Encyclopedia of Islam, the Ḥanafī law school set the minimum at 10 dirhams, whereas the Mālikīs and Shāfi'īs set it between ¼ of a dinar and three dirhams. See Willi Heffening, 'Sariqa', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 9*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997), 62–63.

⁶²⁰ al-Şafadī indirectly suggests that before Karāy's arrival, Damascus had some form of generally accepted practice for punishing thieves that did not include amputation when the minimum sum was involved. However, I have found no references in the Damascene sources to back this up.

⁶²¹ al-Şafadī, *A'yān* vol. 4, 152. The term used for the work these secretaries did is *'amal al-ḥisāb fī al-zanājīr* and the ledger referred to is called *al-'alāma*.

⁶²² Since this anecdote is not mentioned by the other sources, it is difficult to determine whether it is anything more than a dramatic element introduced by al-Şafadī.

beginning of the protest. Such an intervention is also found in the version of al-Jazarī*, who presents the *ḥājib* as the first amir to speak in Sūq al-Khayl. The first group to complain are a group of lepers, orphans and blind people, and the *ḥājib*'s response to them is conciliatory:

The first to plead before their arrival [i.e., the arrival of the procession led by al-Qazwīnī] were the blind because they [Karāy's men] had registered their *awqāf* for taxation, and they complained about the four-month levy, and so the *ḥājib* said to them: your matter has been settled (*qad inqadā shuglukum*). After them came the writhing lepers and so the *ḥājib* replied to them as he dismissed them: your matter has been settled. [...].⁶²³

According to this account, it was only after this scene that the protesters led by al-Qazwīnī arrived and were beaten by the governor's guard.

Al-Ṣafadī also ascribes the words 'your matter has been settled' (*inqadā shuglukum*) to the *ḥājib*, but here they are transformed into a dismissive message directed towards the protesters led by al-Qazwīnī, not a merciful gesture towards a vanguard of lepers

He [Karāy] said: what is this? Then they [the officers] said to him: the beneficiaries of the *awqāf* and properties and the beneficiaries of salaries from the mosque who have come because of what has been imposed on them. He said: Turn them away and tell them that the matter has been settled (*al-shughlu inqadā*). Then came the amir Sayf al-Dīn Quṭlubak Ibn al-Jashankīr, the *ḥājib*, who knew the character (*khalq*) of the governor, and so he said: in the name of God turn back for your case has already been settled (*fa-qad inqadā shuglukum*). Then they said: the Qur'ān cannot be dismissed. Then he said: turn back and if not it will not be good for you [...].⁶²⁴

Compared to al-Jazarī*, al-Ṣafadī removes the element of pathos from his account. Instead of retracting part of the tax claim, the *ḥājib* here warns or threatens the protesters to give up their endeavour because he knows Karāy's character (*khalq*). In light of the

⁶²³ al-Yūnīnī, *Dhayl*, 1435. [...] *wa-kāna min qabli wuṣulihim awal man istighātha al-'amiyyān kawna annahum katabū awqāfahum wa-shakū min jibāyyat 'arba'at shuhūr, fa-qāla lahum al-ḥājib: qad inqadā shughlukum, thumma jā 'ū min ba'dihim al-judhamā' wa-taḍawwarū faradda 'alayhim al-ḥājib: qad inqadā shughlukum, taswīfan bihim [...]*

⁶²⁴ al-Ṣafadī, *A'yān* vol. 4, 153. [...] *fa-qāla: māhadhā, fa-qālū lahu: arbāb al-awqāf wa-al-amlāk wa-arbāb al-rawātib 'alā al-jāmi' jā 'ū bi-sabbab al-muqarrar 'alayhim, fa-qāl raddūhum wa-qul lahum al-shughl inqadā, fa-jā 'a al-Amīr Sayf al-Dīn Quṭlūbak Ibn al-Jāshankīr al-ḥājib wa-huwwa ya'rif khalq al-nā'ib fa-qāla: bismillah irja 'ū fa-qad inqadā shughlukum, fa-qālū: al-muṣḥaf mā yuradd. fa-qāla: irja 'ū wa-illā mā huwwa jayyid lakum [...]. NB: The transcription in this and the preceding footnote are intended to provide the reader with a more detailed picture of the similarities and differences between the two quotes on both the semantic and syntactic levels.*

previous descriptions provided in the governor's biography, we can infer that what is meant by his *character* is his combination of a fiery temper and an unwillingness to change his mind.

This scene, which seems to be borrowed from the narrative by al-Jazarī*, has been changed in order to exemplify the psychological dynamics that permeate al-Ṣafadī's entire portrayal of the governor. This is not to say that al-Jazarī*'s dramatisation of the *ḥājib*'s intervention could not be every bit as fictitious; rather, the point is that al-Ṣafadī's apparent use of the former's account shows us how malleable this anecdote is in the hands of an author seeking to make a different point.

Looking at the further course of al-Ṣafadī's narrative of the 711 protest, we can see that he inserts two additional dramatic passages of dialogue that are not found in any of the Damascene sources. First, the *ḥājib*'s warning provokes the following response from the protesters: 'the Qur'ān cannot be disregarded (*al-muṣḥaf mā yurādd*)'.⁶²⁵ By letting the protesters refer directly to the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān, which was carried as part of their procession, al-Ṣafadī highlights the protesters as a group presenting their complaint on the basis of religious authority.

Second, Al-Ṣafadī also puts words into the mouth of the aforementioned Shāfi'ī grammarian and Qur'ān recital expert Majid al-Dīn al-Tūnisī. As shown above, all the Damascene sources agree that Karāy summoned al-Tūnisī and accused him of organising the protest together with al-Qazwīnī. However, only in al-Ṣafadī's version does al-Tūnisī answer Karāy's accusations with the words 'shut up, you unbeliever (*uskut, kafarta*)'.⁶²⁶ This quote emphasises the same theme as the protesters' reply to the *ḥājib*, but in even clearer terms: in the eyes of the protesters, Karāy is not only dismissing the authority of the Qur'ān of 'Uthmān, his actions are tantamount to apostasy.

Keep in mind that earlier in his biography of the governor, al-Ṣafadī underlined Karāy's piety by saying that 'he was strong in faith' (*ilā innahu kān shadīd al-diyāna*)⁶²⁷ as well as his concern for the punishments stipulated by sharia. These dialogue passages seem less like a direct indictment of Karāy and more as a way for the author to dramatise the anger which the Damascene protesters harboured against him. To be sure, the anger and frustration are also evident within the Damascene narratives as well as the narrative

⁶²⁵Ibid., vol. 4, 153.

⁶²⁶ Ibid.

⁶²⁷ Ibid., vol. 4, 150.

of al-Mansūrī. However, al-Şafadī's adds and additional layer of drama to the situation by letting the protesters express their opposition to Karāy in such stark terms.

As do the other authors, al-Şafadī continues his account of Karāy's fate with a description of how Amir Sayf al-Dīn Arghūn arrested him ten days after the protest. But unlike the others authors, he also recounts Karāy's fate after his incarceration. He writes that the governor complained about his incarceration at Karak to the sultan, who pardoned him with the following words:

He has committed no offense against me save for being the *khushdāsh*⁶²⁸ of Baktamur al-Jūkandār, and when I seized him I feared lest he should turn but verily his mind is strong (*fa-inna nafsahu qawiyya*) [...] ⁶²⁹

In contrast to the accounts in Group A, al-Şafadī's biography partially exonerates the governor by stating that he did not harbour ill will towards the sultan in the first place, but also lets the sultan make the final character evaluation of Karāy.

As a final note on al-Şafadī's portrayal of the governor, it is worth noting that the image presented here is contradicted elsewhere in his oeuvre. As mentioned above, there are no significant discrepancies between the presentations found in *al-A'yān* and *al-Wāfi* save for the length and detail of the former. However, there are a lot of differences to be found when we look at another of al-Şafadī's works titled *Tuḥfat dhawī al-albāb fī-man ḥakama Dimashq min al-khulafā' wa-al-mulūk wa-al-nuwwāb* (*The gift of the possessor of understanding regarding the caliphs, kings and governors who ruled Damascus*).⁶³⁰ The *Tuḥfa* is an *urjūza* poem spanning 708 lines⁶³¹ that lists and describes the rulers of Damascus from the Islamic conquest in 14/635 until the late 760s/1360s. The image of Karāy presented here is decisively less positive than what we have seen above:

Then came Karāy after this – to govern her and so the path became difficult

He was most generous to the Turks – putting on the table pyramids of *ḥalwā*

⁶²⁸ *Khushdāshiyya* denotes the solidarity between Mamluks who trained and lived together as recruits.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, 155.

⁶³⁰ Şalāḥ al-Dīn Khalīl ibn Aybak al-Şafadī, 'Tuḥfat Dhawī al-Albāb fī Man Ḥakama Dimashq Min al-Khulafā' wa-al-Mulūk wa-al-Nuwwāb', in *Umarā' Dimashq fī al-Islām wa-Huwwa Yataḍaman 'Dhikr Man Walā Imrā' Dimashq fī al-Islām Aw Dakhalahā Min al-Khulafā' wa-Ghayrihim Murtabīn 'alā Hurūf al-Mu'ajjam' wa-urjūzat 'Tuḥfat Dhawī al-Albāb Fī-Man Ḥakama Dimashq Min al-Khulafā' wa-al-Mulūk wa-al-Nuwwāb'*, ed. Şalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, (Damascus: al-Majma' al-'Ilmī al-'Arabī, 1955), 106–69.

⁶³¹ The name is derived from the metre *rajaz*. The poem is of the *urjūza*-type known as *musdawij*, which is a build-up of first and second half-lines that rhyme. See Manfred Ulmann, 'Radjaz', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam 2nd Edition Vol. 8*, ed. C. E. Bosworth et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 375–78.

But his character was mean – the evil of [his] maliciousness could not be extinguished

And so his time ran out quickly – and his governorate did not last more than half a year.⁶³²

Since the *Tuḥfat dhawī al-albāb* continues up to the 760s/1360s, al-Ṣafadī must have composed it around the same time as *al-A'yān*, but as we see here, the image of Karāy is changed. In this poem, we are told that Karāy's generosity, which is praised in *al-A'yān*, was reserved for the Turks (the Mamluks). Moreover, in contrast to the praise of his diligence as ruler and his strength of his faith that we found in *al-A'yān*, the author here describes Karāy as vicious.

Following Conermann, we can say that in the hands of al-Ṣafadī, the 711 protest is first and foremost one of many tools used to emphasise certain features and characteristics of Governor Karāy as al-Ṣafadī chose to portray him specifically in the *al-A'yān*. That is, Karāy was a mixed character who was not essentially evil or tyrannical, but who was caught between his own choleric stubbornness and his sense of duty. However, this conclusion that appears in the *al-A'yān* did not stop al-Ṣafadī from changing this portrait for the worse elsewhere in his writings.

V. Conclusion

The contemporary sources offer widely differing explanations of why and how Sayf al-Dīn Karāy al-Manṣūrī was arrested in Jumādā I 711/September 1311. In Group A, Al-Birzālī, Ibn Kathīr and al-Dhahabī claim that he fell because of the complaints of the oppressed Damascenes; however, al-Birzālī later adjusts this claim somewhat. Al-Jazarī* agrees that Karāy was an oppressive governor, but explicitly states that he was arrested because of connections to the coup. This, however, does not mean that al-Jazarī* downplays the agency of the Damascene community in negotiating the tax; it simply means that he frames the tax and Karāy's arrest as two separate events.

In Group B, al-Dawādārī argues that Karāy fell because of his involvement in the coup orchestrated by the viceroy Baktamur. Al-Yūsufī agrees, but claims that the governor was in fact innocent. Al-Manṣūrī emphasises the repercussions of Karāy's tyrannical rule in Damascus, but also associates him with the coup makers. In contrast to the authors in Group A, none of the writers in Group B pays much attention to the

⁶³² al-Ṣafadī, 'Tuḥfat Dhawī', 160.

protest: it is either ignored or referenced in vague terms that direct no attention towards the political situation on the ground in Damascus. Finally, al-Şafadī presents the argument that Karāy lost control of Damascus because of his temper, but that he was also brought down because he was suspected of participating in the coup, a crime for which he was later acquitted by the sultan.

Judging from these eight narratives, it seems safe to say that the governor was caught in the intersection between local and imperial politics: he apparently antagonised his subjects and was also associated, willingly or unwillingly, with a plot hatched by his old barrack comrades. It is impossible for us to get closer to the historical Karāy and determine which specific factor led to his fall, but through the stories of his demise we have instead come closer to something much more interesting, that is, the worldviews and agendas of the individual authors who narrated his fall from grace.

Starting with the macro-political perspective, we can say that the Egyptian authors in Group B were concerned with the case from the imperial perspective. Karāy is interesting to them in so far that he can be connected to the coup against al-Nāşir, and his fate is imbedded in the portrait of the sultan. Al-Dawādārī and al-Manşūrī use the story of the governor in order to show how proficiently and fairly the sultan reacted to an impending coup that threatened to nip his third reign in the bud. Meanwhile, al-Yūsufī employs Karāy in a narrative aimed at casting the sultan as a paranoid and fearful usurper who incarcerates his own officers even if they actively distance themselves from any form of rebellion.

Furthermore, we have seen that there is a strong degree of self-promotion inherent in both al-Manşūrī's and al-Dawādārī's use of this narrative. The former, who replaced Baktamur al-Jūkandār as viceroy of Egypt, uses the arrest of Karāy and the accusations of tyranny raised against him as part of a strategy to present the political situation prior to the purge of 711/1311 as dangerous and ridden with abuse. In this way, he is able to position himself as part of the new and more righteous administration that emerged after the arrests.

Politically speaking, al-Dawādārī was a much more marginal figure than al-Manşūrī: he did not, as far as we can tell, reap any personal benefit from the purge. We should remember, however, that this author repeatedly foregrounds himself and his father as eyewitnesses and participants in the political events of the day.

Last, we have seen that in the Egyptian works the importance of Damascus, the site of the governor's arrest, is downplayed. In al-Dawādārī's narrative, the city

functions as a one-dimensional backdrop for internal Mamluk struggles that are completely detached from local society and confined to the north-western extra-mural suburbs. By contrast, the narrative of al-Manṣūrī does recognise and comment briefly on local Damascene politics. Nevertheless, the city remains a remote nondescript place whose inhabitants and their vaguely defined problems can be used as part of an indictment against Karāy and by extension the other amirs with whom he was incarcerated. Instead, both these narratives convey a picture of Cairo as the epicentre of political power personified by the sultan and those close to him.

The relationship between Cairo and Damascus is turned on its head in the Damascene narratives in Group A that adopt a micro-political perspective. This is not to say that Damascus is portrayed as a ‘counter-capital’, but simply that the Damascene perspective is consequently foregrounded at the expense of a Cairene perspective. Here, Karāy’s primary function is to act as the antagonist to the population of Damascus. In all narratives in this group, the case of the protest and Karāy’s subsequent arrest are used to exemplify local engagement and civilian resistance against tyranny. Whereas the 711 protest might have been but a brief display of protest against Mamluk policies, the chroniclers we have examined made sure to capture and retain it as a testimony to local political agency. By contrast, the sultan as a political agent is cast as remote sovereign who intervenes on behalf of his subjects when called upon and less like the epicentre around which all political power revolves. Politics as far as the Damascenes were concerned is primarily the day-to-day negotiations of the local elites in Damascus, not the intrigues of the court in Cairo.

However, while all the Damascene narratives follow this general path, they differ with regard to the specific details pertaining to the governor’s arrest. In the work of al-Birzālī, we see God presented as the active ally of the local population who heeds the call of the oppressed. The same can be said for Ibn Kathīr, but with the addition of the direct intervention of Ibn Taymiyya and the omission of al-Birzālī’s partial retraction of the divine intervention claim. In the narrative of al-Jazarī*, the causality between the protest and the arrest is replaced with a more complex and detailed narrative. First, his version shows how local actors applied gradual diplomacy and pressure to bring Karāy to the negotiating table. According to this version, the sultan does not arrest Karāy on his own volition, but only after the Damascenes had in fact solved their problems themselves by causing Karāy to suspend the tax claim. Second, this version offers the story of how the dialogue between ruler and ruled, including the civilian population’s

lodging of complaints, is temporarily suspended under Karāy and reestablished after his arrest.

Based on this background, we see the contours of distinct Egyptian and Syrian, or rather Damascene, ways of writing about 8th/14th century politics that reflect a split between an imperial and localised angle. However, as we have also seen, this split does not mean that these two groups are completely coherent internally. The Egyptian sources in Group B are divided on the question of the legitimacy of the arrests carried out in 711/1311. While there is no major political conflict in Group A, we still see individual prerogatives and disagreements come to the fore within the narratives of the Damascene scholars. Consequently, the authorial agency of the Damascene scholar-chronicler cannot be understood by treating his narrative simply as part of a larger uniform school. It is true that a local Damascene outlook was common to them, but this does not account for all aspects of their narratives.

Finally, we have al-Şafadī's biography of Karāy, in which the story of the 711 protest and his arrest constitutes a dramatic sub-component of his psychological portrait of the ill-fated governor. He is clearly drawing on both local Damascene sources as well as inside information in the Mamluk state administration and seems less concerned than the previous authors with the question of the local vs. the imperial angle. Instead, we find here an example of how past events are placed in a literary model other than the chronicle. The anecdotes pertaining to Karāy's rule and arrest are arranged side-by-side in order to paint a full and consistent picture of a governor who fell as a result of his personality and the anger that he provoked among his Damascene subjects as well as his connections at court. Moreover, when we compare al-Şafadī's narrative of the 711 protest with that of al-Jazarī*, we can see that al-Şafadī makes changes in the narrative in order to support the underlying claims of the biography that he is crafting. Perhaps we can conclude, with specific reference to al-Şafadī's narrative, that the Egyptian/Syrian distinction within the historiography in the Islamic Middle Period needs to be expanded to encompass a third category—historical narratives crafted by the learned bureaucrat.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

Viewed from the age of worldwide electronic communication, when local protests can spread across state borders and topple governments and protesting symbols can turn overnight into global icons of dissent, historical protests in the pre-modern Islamic world and beyond might feel dull in their often modest scope and limited reach and bland in their use of symbols. One example that could certainly fuel this feeling is the following description of what the French historian André Raymond calls the ‘almost immutable scenario’ of urban protest in 18th century Cairo:

The crowd rushes to the Grand Mosque, occupies the minarets from which inflammatory appeals to resistance are heard, to the rhythm of the beating of drums, forces the souqs and shops to close, gathers in the great court and in front of the gates, calls forth the shaykhs and vigorously demands that they intervene with the authorities so that the wrongs of which they complain are redressed; a procession is formed; the ulama are placed at its head often more dead than alive, and it heads for the Citadel to present the situation to the authorities. If a favorable response is given, the shaykhs are made its guarantors, and it is upon them that the task, sometimes delicate, of calming the demonstrators and getting them to disperse falls. Difficult moments for the ulama, who risk being blamed by the population for betraying its interests, and of being suspected by the emirs of exciting the fever of the people secretly.⁶³³

While such a scenario can provide a useful framework for identifying protests within the vast corpus of pre-modern Arabic sources, it fails to capture the political nuances, symbolic meanings and complex patterns of narrative transmission that make pre-modern protests a fascinating topic, even to the contemporaries of the Arab Spring and the Guy Fawkes masque.

By privileging the dynamic aspect of protesting over the immutable and the specific case over the general scenario, this thesis has attempted give room to the nuance, variation and meanings inherent in the 711 protest. Admittedly, a cursory comparison between Raymond’s scenario and the 711 protest does show some similarities. First, we find the same pattern of movement from the Grand Mosque to the Citadel. Second, we

⁶³³ André Raymond, *Artisans et Commerçants Au Caire Au XVIIIe Siècle* (Damascus: Institut Francais de Damas, 1973), vol. 2, 432. NB: The translation from the original French is from a quotation in Edmund Burke III, 'Understanding Arab Protest Movements', *Arab Studies Quarterly* 8, no. 4 (1986): 333–345, 339. I have checked Burke’s translation against the original.

clearly see that local *'ulamā'* assume the leadership of the protest on popular demand and put themselves at risk of punishment by the authorities. However, the analytical shortcomings of the 'immutable scenario' can be illustrated through another and slightly more detailed glance. First and foremost, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī, the leader of the 711 protest, is presented by contemporary sources as an active leader, not as a 'half dead' hostage. Also, the 711 protest did not erupt spontaneously: it was postponed for several days and carefully fit into the ceremonial calendar of Damascus as a result of careful planning by the *'ulamā'*. Third, the protesters' use of symbolic objects and their choice of protest route evoke broader patterns of Damascene political culture and indicate that the protest was a premeditated act of communication.

In other words, what we discover by merely scratching the surface of the 711 protest is that it was a political event endowed with a complexity that cannot be captured in a general scenario. Only through a careful analysis that strikes a balance between a narrow and a broad historical perspective can we begin to understand the acts of medieval protesters. This is what this thesis has sought to do.

The previous four chapters presented a detailed analysis of the 711 protest and placed it in a number of different contexts—the political, ideological, religious, spatial and literary. Each chapter has followed one or more of the four thematic strands that were introduced in Chapter 1. Through this analysis, we have begun to understand the 711 protest as a complex political event in its own right, and used it as a prism for observing different aspects of political culture in Damascus and in the Mamluk Empire at large.

Chapter 2 was primarily concerned with combining the first and second of the four strands. With regard to *socio-political contingency*, this chapter demonstrated that the 711 protest was not a spontaneous outburst of popular rage managed involuntarily by fearful *'ulamā'* with the aim of preventing regular riots. Instead, it was a pre-meditated form of negotiation arranged and executed by leading *'ulamā'* and ordinary civilians as part of a wider negotiation of the 711 tax. The protest was staged at a crucial point when the tax negotiations had reached a deadlock. While it did not result in an immediate solution, it conjured up the spectre of local opposition, which was used afterwards to pressure the recalcitrant governor to re-open the negotiations. Examining the 711 protest through the prism of local contingency thus demonstrates that pre-modern protests were not a phenomena *sui generis* that emerged without warning and interrupted the 'normal'

situation; they should rather be thought of as the continuation of ‘normal’ politics by other means.

By contextualising the 711 protest beyond the political microcosm of Damascus in the early fall of 711/1311, this chapter also demonstrated that this protest was connected to a number of recurring conflicts over *nafaqa*-taxes that were imposed during the second half of the 7th/13th century in Damascus as well as in Cairo. The fact that none of these earlier conflicts provoked organised street protests, as was the case in 711/1311, was explained in two ways: by comparison to earlier tax campaigns in Damascus, we concluded that the conflict in 711/1311 was characterised by a particular lack of proportion between the seriousness of the situation and the amount of money demanded by the Mamluk state. In contrast to earlier cases from Damascus, say, the Muqarrar al-Khiyāla of 700/1300, the sources give the impression that the threat of invasion in 711/1311 was relatively low while the sum which was initially demanded in this particular year, 750.000 dirhams, was much higher than the demands in previous years.

In comparison with the situation in Egypt, we saw that the Muqarrar al-Khiyāla provoked confrontations between civilians and soldiers that never amounted to regular protests. This difference was attributed to the difference in the intensity of sultanic power that distinguished the capital of Cairo from the provincial cities of Syria. Mounting a demonstration in the capital would most likely have been a much riskier endeavour due to the heavy military presence. Moreover, protesters could have run the risk of being seen as rebelling directly against the sultan per se, not against an administrative decision carried out by one of his deputies, which might have caused the sultan to take much more severe measures than merely jailing the protest leaders for a night, as happened with al-Qazwīnī in Damascus. As this analysis demonstrated, we need to look not only to other protests to understand protests as a phenomenon. We also need to search out cases where corresponding situations did not amount to a full-scale protest to understand how and why medieval people took to the streets to express their claims and grievances.

The emphasis on pre-meditation and conscious arrangement in the 711 protest was further strengthened when we moved on to the second thematic strand, *the multiplicity of symbolic meaning*. Here, we narrowed our scope to examining the symbolic objects that gave the 711 protest its particular visual profile: the Qur’ān of ‘Uthmān, the Sandal of the Prophet and the caliphal banners from the Umayyad Mosque. We noted that all of these objects had specific ritual functions around 711/1311: the Sandal facilitated symbolic proximity to the prophet and the Qur’ān granted divine protection against

communal hardship. The banners crowned the *minbar* from where congregational Friday sermon was given, and similar black banners were used for honouring military and civilian elites. By choosing these objects, the protesters were connecting their claims against governor Karāy with the general repertoire of ceremonial practices that dominated the religious, social and political life of their city.

The connection to the city was further underlined when we noted that by the beginning of the 8th/14th century the Sandal and the Qur'ān were primarily localised symbols of Damascene communal identification. In the case of the Sandal, we saw that this relic epitomised the specific local worshipping culture centred on the Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Ashrafiyya, a flagship of Damascene *ḥadīth*-scholarship and primary site of the wider cult surrounding the prophet Muhammad. In this light, the wielding of these objects could also be seen as appeals to a local identity or a form of pre-modern local patriotism. In addition, we observed that both the Qur'ān and black caliphal banners were used in other acts of social regulation, such as censoring wine and hashish consumption and corruption. The banners can even be indirectly linked to later Syrian cases where the idea of a politically potent caliphate was propagated as an alternative to the Mamluk sultanic order. The use of these objects in a protest procession also links with a broader conception of these objects as embodying or representing an Islamic moral order with social and political relevance. This concept of an Islamic moral order, expressed by the parading of symbolic objects, was then connected to the more general discussions about fiscal justice in Islam that characterised the *nafaqa*-conflicts of the 7th/13th century. According to the chronicles, the earlier demands for *nafaqa* taxes were resisted by a set of juridical arguments against discretionary taxation on civilians grounded in the distinction between individual and collective duties in Islam.

As demonstrated here, appeals to sharia justice, as defined in legal terms, were the primary weapon against tax oppression prior to 711/1311. In this light, the protesters of 711 could have been connecting with this wider discourse through extra-judicial appeals to the perceived ideal Islamic order of the early *umma* by singling out a set of clear references to the collective memory of the Islamic *umma*: the sandal worn by the prophet during his night journey (*al-mi'rāj*), the Qur'ān codified during the rule of the rightly guided Caliphs and the victorious banners from the Abbasid revolution.

Within a wider context, we should also read the 711 protest as part of a fundamental process of negotiating the relationship of power between the sultanic state and local society. If we follow the arguments of Bourdieu, Wacqaunt and Farage, who

claim that shaping people into taxable subjects is one of the fundamental social practices of claiming state power, the 711 protest can be viewed as part of a protracted conflict about exactly how much ‘statelike’ behaviour the Mamluk sultans could get away with.⁶³⁴

The conceptual approach of Chapter 3 was also based on the second thematic strand, *the multiplicity of symbolic meaning*, but here we shifted focus away from *what* the protesters did to the symbolic meaning of *where* they did it. The chapter demonstrated that the 711 protesters’ choice of route and destination was informed by a wish to imitate the spatial practices of the Mamluk state and its Ayyubid predecessors, thus making their very act of marching a symbolic challenge through imitation.

The 711 protesters marched through the area of Taḥt al-Qal‘a (Below the Citadel) ending up in Sūq al-Khayl (The Horse Market) northwest of the Citadel. The same choice of route and destination can be observed in at least three later protests (743/1342, 749/1348 and 754/1353) and three lynching parties (730/1330, 756/1356–57 and 799/1397). In order to account for the use of these spaces by more than three generations of Damascene protesters and lynch mobs, Chapter 3 began with a detailed comparative examination of how medieval sultanic rulers of Syro-Egypt presented their claims to power through alterations and additions to the existing urban fabric of Damascus, Aleppo and Cairo. This examination demonstrated that between the 6th and 8th/12th and 14th centuries these three cities saw a consolidation of the ruler’s symbolic presence within the urban landscape through the fortification of urban citadels, and equally important, through the development of the areas that lay immediately beneath their gates, towers, ramparts and moats. These adjacent areas gradually became a stage for ceremonial performances (military parades, polo games, executions, *mazālim* courts) by which sultans and princes asserted their claims to power. During the Ayyubid and Mamluk periods, the Sūq al-Khayl emerged as a specific delineated ceremonial space within Taḥt al-Qal‘a and gradually became the center of these manifestations of power.

As argued in Chapter 3, choosing Taḥt al-Qal‘a and Sūq al-Khayl as a protest venue had the practical advantage that one could count on confrontation with the representative of the state, especially as the protest was tailored to coincide with a military parade regulated by official protocol. However, what we can conclude by

⁶³⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, Lois J. D. Wacqaunt, and Samar Farage, 'Rethinking the State: Genesis and Structure of the Bureaucratic Field', *Sociological Theory* 12, no. 1 (1994): 1–18, 6.

looking at 8th/14th protests in light of the historical development of this space is that predictability alone cannot account for this choice. Instead, this choice must also be understood as a symbolic gesture in and of itself. When the protesters who marched against Karāy's tax in 711/1311 or those who marched in 753/1354 for their right to erect a congregational mosque decided to march to Taḥt al-Qal'a in formation and with powerful symbols (banners, relics) on display, they were expressing criticism of a perceived fault of the ruling establishment by co-opting the stage of state power and disputing the ruler's exclusive right to control the performances that took place there. In several cases, the deputies of the sultan responded to these challenges by enforcing their control of Sūq al-Khayl with violence.

André Raymond rightly observed that many pre-modern Arab protest processions seem to repeat the movement back and forth between mosque and citadel. This thesis demonstrates that this habit deserves examination as more than a predictable immutable choreography. Indeed, Chapter 3 demonstrated that choices regarding space were equally deliberate and symbolically complex as the choice of props, paroles and gestures.

The similarities in citadel formation and urban development across the region make it highly likely that similar dynamics between official ceremonial geography and protest behaviour could be found in Cairo, Aleppo and other cities in the region. A full regional comparison exceeded the scope of the Chapter 3 and the thesis as a whole, but it is a potentially fruitful subject of a comprehensive study of space, ceremony, protest and violence across the Medieval Muslim world.

In the broader field of Mamluk Studies, the comparative approach to citadel zones that Chapter 3 presents also constitutes a viable strategy for pursuing Steenbergen's processual approach to the study of the Mamluk State as a set of structural effects created through a number of social practices that include the creation of 'political distinction'.⁶³⁵ Although they are highly diverse, the practices of altering physical spaces and 'performing' in them that this chapter analyses all work according to the logic of creating distinctions. Certain spaces were carved out of the urban landscape and designated as *sultanic* and/or *military* space; this designation was reinforced through ceremonial practices. In this light, the way the protesters of 711/1311 and the succeeding decades confronted their governors should also be seen as conscious challenges (though not

⁶³⁵ Jo Van Steenbergen, "'Mamlukisation' Between Social Theory and Social Practice: An Essay on Reflexivity, State Formation, and the Late Medieval Sultanate of Cairo", ASK Working Papers (Bonn, Annemarie Schimmel Kolleg, 2015), 34.

direct declarations of war) against the Mamluk cultivation of statehood by inscribing physical distinctions into the urban landscape and reinforcing them through repeated ceremonial performances.

Citadels and their surrounding spaces also give us the opportunity to view the Mamluk sultanate in a historical context that stretches beyond the period between 648 and 922/1250 and 1517. Chapter 3 demonstrated that the Mamluk period patterns of urban development and ceremonial practice in Taḥt al-Qal‘a were in fact continuations of Zangid and Ayyubid practices that the Mamluk sultans and their deputies absorbed and integrated into their own language of power. Moreover, while it lies beyond the scope of this thesis, Julien Loiseau’s observation that the Ottoman Topkapi Palace in Istanbul featured a market square known as ‘Tahtekale’ suggests that citadels and citadel zones constitute a topic that can be studied across the entire Middle Islamic Period.⁶³⁶

Chapter 4 continued the discussion of the symbolic importance of space by focusing on another pivotal stage for ceremonial manifestations of power and devotion: The Umayyad Mosque of Damascus. This chapter demonstrated that while the Umayyad Mosque was not as physically present in the accounts of the 711 protest as Sūq al-Khayl was, the protesters relied heavily on symbols associated with the mosque and the ceremonies that it housed: the Qur’ān of ‘Uthmān and the Banners of the Caliphs, which were located around the mosque’s *minbar* and central *miḥrāb*. Among these symbolic references we also included and highlighted the figure of the *khaṭīb* of the mosque because of his pivotal liturgical performance as leader of the Friday congregational ceremony.

Through an analysis of several parallel cases from the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries, the chapter demonstrated that the Umayyad Mosque was used as a stage for political communication by both rulers and ruled, but also frequently as a communal site of negotiation and social interaction. As a form of proto-public space, the mosque embodied a ceremonial and political culture that was centred around two-way communication and negotiation about the relationship between the city and its rulers. The Umayyad Mosque’s culture stood in stark contrast to that of Taḥt al-Qal‘a, the unequivocal space for manifestations of state power asserted through military might. By presenting symbols tied to the mosque in the Taḥt al-Qal‘a, the protesters of 711 could have intended to incorporate into their procession a dialogue between two spaces and

⁶³⁶ Julien Loiseau, *Les Mamelouks–XIIIe–XVIe Siecle* (Paris: Editions du SEUIL, 2014), 225.

their associated cultures, thereby adding yet another layer to this example of the complex symbolic practice that constitutes protesting.

In the second part of this chapter we zoomed in on the figure of *khaṭīb* and shifted from the second to the third thematic strand—*the complexity of agency*. Noting that not only al-Qazwīnī but also earlier *khaṭībs* had functioned as intercessors for their congregation, we concluded that the al-Qazwīnī leadership of the 711 protest must have been partially motivated by the fact that intercession and intermediation were part of the un- or semi-official mandate of the *khaṭīb*ship. However, by combining these observations with an examination of a number of political, social and theological circumstances surrounding both the office of the *khaṭīb* and the scholar al-Qazwīnī personally, we demonstrated that al-Qazwīnī’s leadership of the protest was most likely more than an automatic (or, as Raymond suggests, involuntary) act of duty. The cases of the deposition of Ibn al-Muraḥḥil in 703/1303 and al-Subkī in 743/1342, and the critique of al-Qazwīnī in 709/1310 demonstrated that command of the *khaṭīb*ship in 8th/14th century Damascus was deeply affected by the wider power struggles among the ‘*ulamā*’, which sometimes even included broader sections of the common population. These cases also suggested that the partisan boundary between the *ḥadīth*-oriented traditionalists and the adherents of Ash‘arī rationalist theology (*kalām*) was a recurrent fault line along which disputes over the *khaṭīb*ship were structured.

That the protest in 711/1311 had the *khaṭīb* of the Umayyad Mosque as its leader should not be explained simply as a manifestation of an intrinsic protesting paradigm that prompted scholars to arbitrate between rulers and ruled. It should also be interpreted as a deliberate manoeuvre of positioning by a particular individual, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī. As his biography demonstrates, al-Qazwīnī was skilled operator in the fields of local and imperial politics. His involving himself and his office in a very public struggle against fiscal tyranny would have been an excellent way to entrench himself in the office and ward off any criticism that might bring his suitability for the *khaṭīb*ship into question, as some partisans of Ibn Taymiyya had apparently done in 709/1310.

Looking at al-Qazwīnī’s participation in the 711/1311 through a prism that takes into account both the institutional agency inherent in his office and his personal capacity to act within a socio-political field clearly demonstrates the problem in explaining ‘*ulamā*’ leadership of protests as the politics of timid reluctance or as the result of a veritable hostage situation. Admittedly, most ‘*ulamā*’ were not revolutionaries, and we have no indication that al-Qazwīnī had any such inclinations. Nevertheless, his decision

to head the protest procession must have relied on a careful consideration of his own position in Damascene socio-politics and of the potential advantages and dangers that such an endeavour could entail. By adopting this multi-faceted approach to agency, we are able to penetrate the layers of pre-modern protests that appear static and immutable and tend to reduce the actors to manipulated pawns in a fixed game.

Like the citadel and its adjacent parade grounds, the central congregational mosque was an omnipresent feature in Syro-Egyptian cities of the Mamluk and broader Middle Islamic Period. While only a few congregational mosques were as iconic as the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus, they were all proto-public spaces that housed devotional ceremonies and socio-political negotiations like those identified and examined in Chapter 4. Exploring strategic alterations of liturgical elements like *al-du‘ā’ lil-sultān* and the appropriation of communicative platforms like the *minbar* would thus constitute another potentially fruitful area for a comparative cross-regional study of the connection between political culture, urban space and ceremonies. Including the space of the mosque in such a study could even avert the danger of ‘ruler-centrism’ inherent in studying citadels and military parade grounds alone.

Chapter 5 continued the discussion around agency but in combination with the 4th thematic strand—*partiality of representation*. Unlike the previous chapters, which sought to examine the 711 protest through the prism of contemporary narrative sources, this chapter set about to examine the prism itself, starting with the local narrative sources and gradually expanding the scope to encompass accounts from across the Mamluk Empire. In this process, Chapter 5 drew on the ‘actor-centred’ approach that has characterised recent studies on Mamluk historical writing. To this current trend, the chapter adds the insight that comparison of chronicle entries related to one single year gives us the opportunity to observe the respective authors’ working with a set of ideas and imbedding them into their text. The narratives that resulted from these authorial processes were not simply representations of contemporary politics; they *were* contemporary politics in so far as they could support the cause of either the author himself, his associates or his patron.

The first group of authors examined were those whose protest narratives provided most of the empirical basis for the previous three chapters: al-Jazarī*, al-Birzālī, al-Dhahabī and Ibn Kathīr. In the previous chapters, the accounts of these four authors were compared primarily in order to determine the plausibility of the 711 protest as a socio-political event and to corroborate various details around the immediate context, the

behaviour of the protesters and the outcome of their intervention in Sūq al-Khayl. The examination in Chapter 5 found that while their accounts of 711 protest include the same basic elements, each author had shaped his particular account according to a set of specific ideological and religious concepts that echoed the wider scope of his work. The starkest contrast within this group is between the account of al-Jazarī* on the one hand and the accounts of al-Birzālī, Ibn Kathīr and al-Dhahabī on the other. Al-Jazarī* portrays the protest as part of a complicated political struggle with ties to Cairo, from which the Damascene civilians (the scholars in particular) emerged as skilled negotiators who had succeeded in navigating the tempestuous waters of imperial politics to their own benefit.

The other three accounts are variations on the same account (most likely that of al-Birzālī). The accounts in this group emphasise a more primitive causal logic in so far as the plight of the Damascene protesters is resolved through divine intervention on their behalf. Moreover, while these accounts include a transcendental component that is entirely missing from al-Jazarī*, they are completely silent about the connection between the 711 tax conflict and the wider political situation in the Mamluk empire. In these accounts, the events remain a local struggle between the Damascene community and their immediate ruler, the governor Karāy. While all four accounts show the Damascenes emerging victorious from the struggle over the tax, the latter three portray them as Muslims who were saved by faith and prayer, rather than their ability to navigate within a regional political landscape. The Damascene narratives can be subdivided once more by taking into account the final feature that sets apart Ibn Kathīr's account from all the others: his insistence on involving Ibn Taymiyya in the affair of the tax. As demonstrated through further references to Ibn Kathīr's work, the choice of including Ibn Taymiyya in the affair was consistent with Ibn Kathīr's general tendency to emphasise the socio-political agency of this *shaykh*, a tendency that was met with opposition from other members of Ibn Taymiyya's circle and even, it would seem, from the later copyists of Ibn Kathīr's work.

This analysis demonstrated that the Damascene accounts of the 711 protest were the product of deliberate authorial processes through which the chroniclers shaped the event into a narrative that confirmed a set of pre-conceived notions about politics and supported the wider ideological and theological trajectories of their works.

In a wider perspective, we see that even brief narrative accounts about protests, even when they largely confirm the same details about *what* the protesters did, *where*

they did it and *why*, should never be treated simply as ideologically innocent records of socio-political phenomena. Even when he is quoting earlier accounts almost ad verbatim, the author demonstrates his own agency through omissions, additions and his choice of focus. This is what makes the craft of the medieval historian into a form of political practice in its own right: chronicle entries make up a small component of larger representations of the author's view of the world and his own place in it.

This point was further accentuated when the chapter shifted from the strict focus on Damascene chronicles towards a regionally comparative examination of 8th/14th representations of the events of the year 711. This comparison found that the Egyptian accounts in the chronicles of al-Dawādārī, al-Manṣūrī and al-Yūsufī/al-ʿAynī pay almost no attention to the 711 protest or the matter of taxes in general. At first glance, this was not all that surprising since the protest seems to have been a very local event that did not coincide with protests in other cities. However, the omission of the protest became more conspicuous when we found that one of the Egyptian chroniclers, al-Dawādārī (at least according to his own account), was present in Damascus when the protest took place but apparently chose not to report on it. As for al-Manṣūrī, his 711 entry was found on further inspection to include general references to Karāy's treatment of his Damascene subjects, but again he apparently did not think to elaborate on the exact events. The protest was a dramatic highpoint of the Damascene 711 entries, but in the Egyptian accounts it is reduced at best to a side note. The real drama in these accounts revolves instead around the arrest of Governor Karāy. We saw that al-Jazarī* takes into account the political turmoil of 711 and the Sultan al-Nāṣir's purge among the higher ranks of his late father's officers corps. The Egyptian accounts are entirely focused on this turmoil from an imperial perspective: here Karāy is but one among many victims of the sultan's manoeuvres. Instead of evaluating the influence of Karāy on the local situation in Damascus, these accounts are primarily concerned with debating whether or not his arrest and the arrests of other governors and high ranking amirs was just, or whether the sultan was acting on baseless accusations with the aim of concentrating power in his own hands.

In a final shift of focus, the chapter included within its scope the biography of Karāy written by an author whom we can place 'in between' the Egyptian and the Damascene context: the chancery secretary and biographer al-Ṣafadī. However, al-Ṣafadī does not simply present an account that balances the local and imperial perspective, he unites them into a narrative that is not concerned with either the political

agency of the Damascenes (with or without divine help) or the justifiability of al-Nāṣir's policies against his opponents (real or accused). Instead, al-Ṣafadī's interest revolves around the figure of Karāy, who is rendered as an almost tragic figure who falls victim to his own bifurcated personality, which incorporates equal measures of responsible sense of duty, uncontrollable rage, passion and stubbornness.

This thesis has demonstrated that protests are complex socio-political phenomena. The investigation of such protests must take into account complex political situations on several levels, multiple layers of meaning and the balance between individuals, their positions in society and the expectations of their peers. However, the enticing multiplicity of angles from which we can approach a protest procession must not blind us to the fact that the authors, through whose eyes we regard the socio-politics of the past, were themselves socio-political actors whose representations of events were partial and always in the process of instrumentalising the events we study for their own ends. We should be cautious, of course, when we train our analytical apparatus on, say, the protest behaviour, snippets of dialogues and causal connections that chroniclers present. For instance, the cautious approach applied in this thesis has consisted of careful and constant contextualisation. But *partiality of representation* also gives us a unique opportunity to examine the worldviews of these authors. In this context, protests, which are by nature dramatic, confrontational and permeated with symbolic meaning, might prove to be a particularly fruitful vantage point from which to access the mental worlds of medieval chroniclers.

Figures 1 – 7

Figure 1: Damascus⁶³⁷

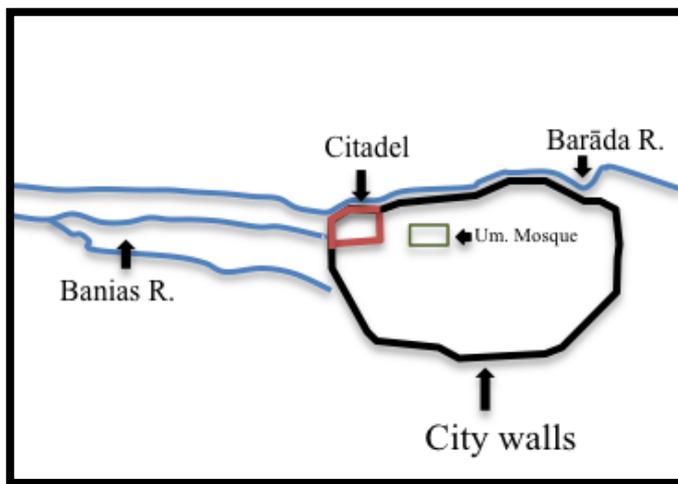
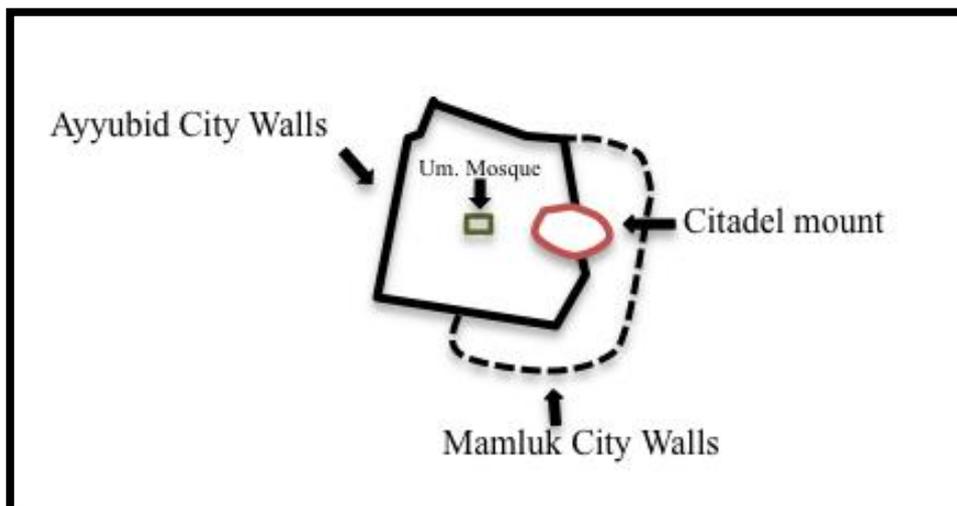


Figure 2: Aleppo⁶³⁸



⁶³⁷ Based on 'Damas, XIII^e siècle (Figure 2)' in Garcin et al., 2000. Not to scale.

⁶³⁸ Based on 'Alep, XIII^e–XV^e siècles (Figure 2)' in Garcin et al., 2000. Not to scale.

Figure 3: Cairo⁶³⁹

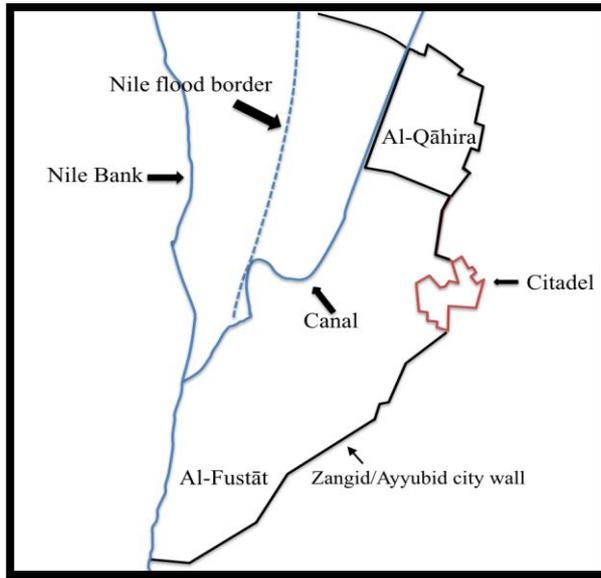
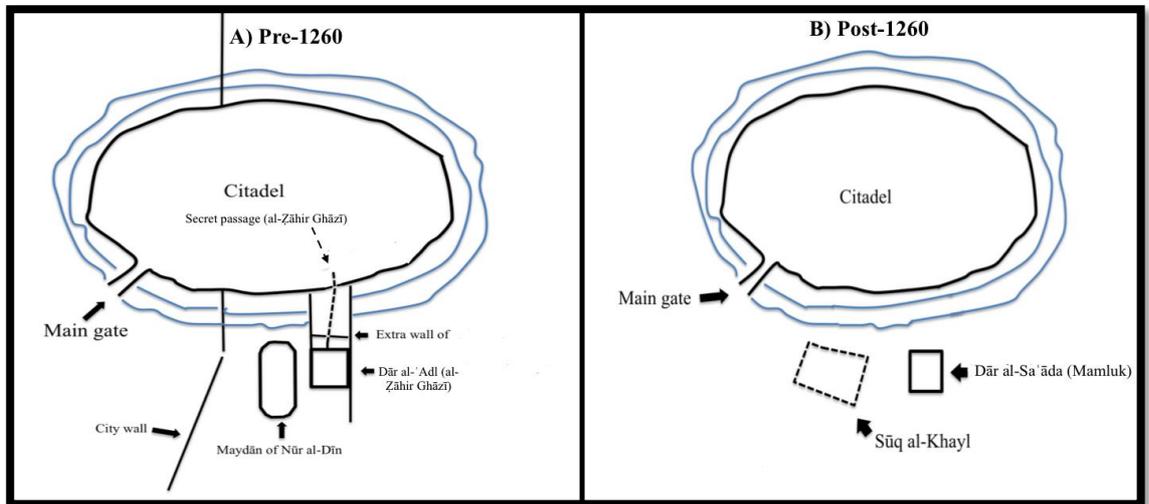


Figure 4: Aleppo, citadel close-up⁶⁴⁰



⁶³⁹ Based on 'Fustāt-Le Caire, XI^e-XII^e siècles (Figure 3)' in Garcin et al. 2000. Not to scale.

⁶⁴⁰ Based on Figure 2 in Rabbat, 1995, 9. Not to scale.

Figure 5: Cairo, citadel close-up⁶⁴¹

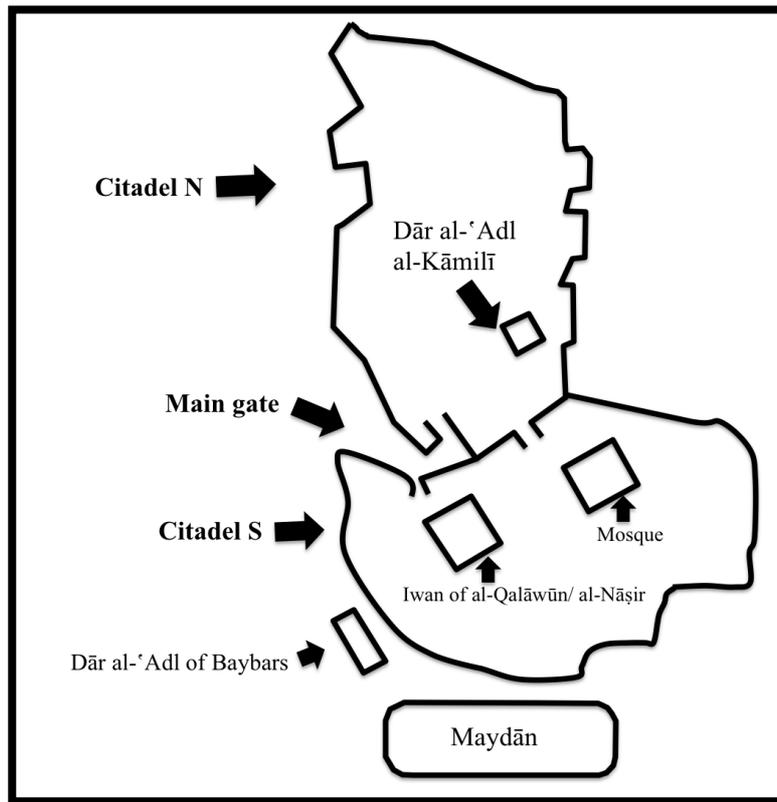
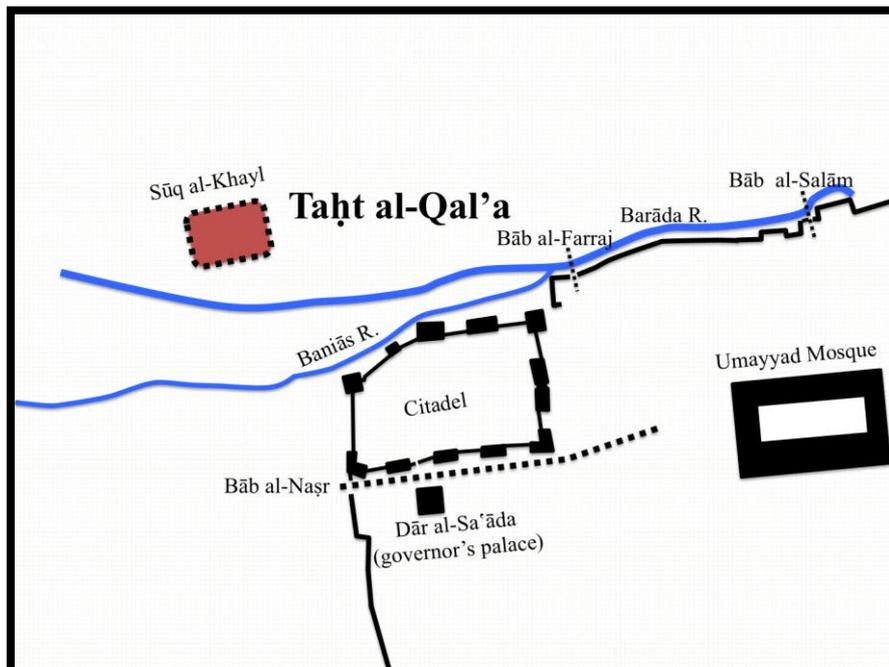


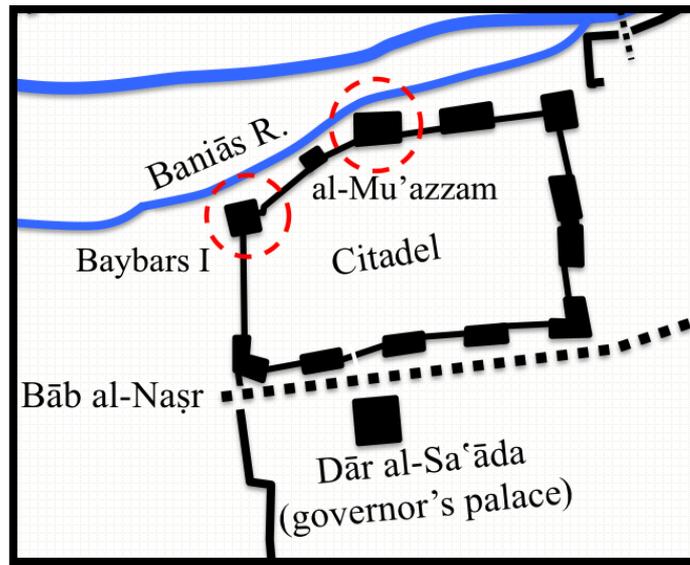
Figure 6: Damascus, citadel close-up⁶⁴²



⁶⁴¹ Based on Figure 3 in Rabbat, 1995, 11. Not to scale.

⁶⁴² Based on Figure 1 in Rabbat, 1995, 8. Not to scale.

Figure 7: Damascus, citadel with pavilion locations⁶⁴³



⁶⁴³ Based on Figure 1 in Rabbat, 1995, 8. Not to scale.

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