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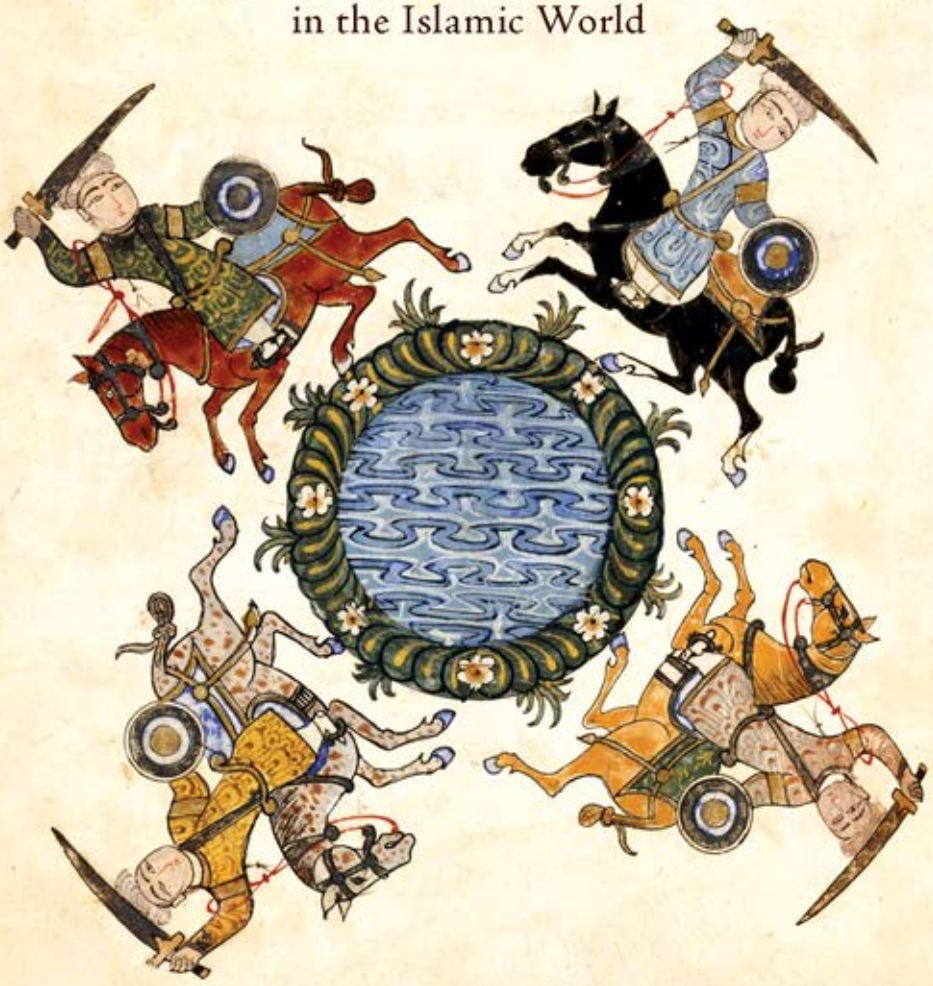
THE OTTOMANS AND THE MAMLUKS

Imperial Diplomacy and Warfare in the Islamic World



CIHAN YÜKSEL MUSLU

Cihan Yüksel Muslu is Associate Professor at the University of Houston and holds a PhD in History and Middle Eastern Studies from Harvard University.

"*The Ottomans and the Mamluks* constitutes a significant contribution to Ottoman historical scholarship and presents a valuable and innovative example of historical and linguistic research. Through a close and extensive reading of narrative and documentary sources, Muslu traces the shifting terms of the Mamluk–Ottoman relationship, tracking the changing diplomatic protocols and language that signalled the growing strength of the Ottomans and the Mamluk responses to the diplomatic challenge . . . Although the diplomatic encounters left few bleeding bodies in the field, Muslu nonetheless conveys the dramatic tension produced by significant diplomatic events at the Ottoman and Mamluk courts."

Amy Singer, Professor of Ottoman History and holder of the Chair in Ottoman–Turkish History at Tel Aviv University

"Dr Muslu uses rigorous and thorough analysis to support her groundbreaking assertion that the relationship between two Sunni Muslim powers, the Ottomans and the Mamluks, was just as complex and varied as between powers of different religions. Her unique periodisation, omitting the final five years of the Mamluk Sultanate (1512–17) and the build-up to the Ottoman takeover of Damascus and Cairo by Sultan Selim I, allows her to demonstrate that the Mamluks were actually dominant over the Ottomans for most of those years, contrary to common scholarly assumptions."

Anne Broadbridge, Associate Professor and Associate Department Chair at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst

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A NOTE ON THE BOOK AND TRANSLITERATION

Those readers interested in further information about the embassies I discuss in the book should consult Appendix III for additional details about these and other cases I was not able to include in the main text.

For Ottoman–Turkish words, modern Turkish spelling and orthography are used.

For the words from the Mamluk context, all transliteration will be eliminated, except for the ayn and hamza.

For the sake of consistency, those words denoting terms, places, and people of the Islamic world (i.e. the Karamanids) that are going to form a part of Ottoman lands (except for Mamluk lands of course), the slightly Turkified version of the common forms in English will be used (i.e. the Karamanids instead of Qaramanids and Karamanoğulları). As for the names of their rulers (i.e. the Karamanids, etc.), the Turkish spelling and orthography is used, considering that eventually they were subdued by the Ottomans.

For the names of the Dulkadirid rulers, forms in English (Shahbudaq, Shahsuwar, 'Ala' al-Dawla) are used, with the exception of Nasir al-din Mehmed Bey. Instead of Muhammad, Mehmed is preferred.

For those words denoting terms, places, and people of the Islamic realm that never formed a part of either the Ottoman or Mamluk lands, all transliteration will be eliminated, except for the ayn and hamza (for instance, Shah İsma'il).

If there is an accepted English name for a city or region, this has been preferred (Damascus, Cairo, etc.). If there is no accepted English rendering for a city or region, then the familiar forms are used, such as Kayseri, Malatya (with one exception: I prefer Constantinople instead of Istanbul).

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Despite the help I received from numerous people and institutions, this book will not be entirely free of mistakes, for all of which I am the only one accountable. As a final note, I emphasize that I am primarily trained in Ottoman studies. I hope that specialists of Mamluk history will regard with compassion the inevitable lapses in my knowledge of this area.

INTRODUCTION

In 1393 the Ottoman ruler Bayezid I (r.1389–1402) gave audience to the Mamluk emissary Amir Husam al-Din Hasan al-Kujkuni[1] in the Ottoman capital Bursa, an ancient city in northwestern Anatolia that flourished under Ottoman rule yet paled in comparison to the Mamluk imperial capital of Cairo.[2] According to a Mamluk source, while accepting the gifts sent by the Mamluk sultan Barquq (r.1382–9 and 1390–9), Bayezid commented that he was Barquq's slave, or *mamluk*.[3] With this exaggerated expression, Bayezid did not display false humility, but instead acknowledged his inferior political status. Despite his rapid expansion into the Balkans and through western and central Anatolia, the Ottoman sovereign was not yet the equivalent of his Mamluk counterpart, who ruled a prestigious regime that had dominated the central Islamic lands since the 1250s. Bayezid's predecessors had merely established themselves as vassals of first the Anatolian Seljuks and then of the Mongol Ilkhanids in northwest Anatolia, which existed as a frontier territory squeezed between the borders of the Byzantine Empire and multiple local Muslim magnates.

Four generations later, Bayezid II (r.1481–1512), Bayezid I's descendant and successor to the Ottoman throne, hosted another Mamluk ambassador in Çöke, a plain near the previous Ottoman capital of Edirne (Adrianople). Both the city and its green surroundings offered Bayezid safe haven from the political intrigues

and frequent plague epidemics in Constantinople, the former Byzantine imperial center and the Ottoman capital since 1453. This ambassadorial audience, which took place in 1485, illustrates a radically different balance of power between the Ottoman and Mamluk rulers than the one in 1393.[4] The Mamluk ambassador Amir Janibak, who arrived during a pause in the Ottoman–Mamluk war that had begun in the spring of 1484, attempted to mend relations between the two courts.[5] He was hosted honorably and properly during his stay, but he quickly understood that there was little hope for him to successfully complete his mission.

An unidentified person in the Ottoman audience asked Janibak, "Who are you (the Mamluks) to rule over the Holy Cities, you sons of Infidels? This rule (or land) is more proper for our sultan [since] he is the son of the sultans and the sultans."[6] Even more telling was the fact that, during this entire exchange, Bayezid II did not utter a word to his visitor. Obviously, much had changed since the days of Bayezid I, who had declared his subservience to the Mamluk sultan. Soon after the Mamluk envoy's return to Cairo, military conflict between the two powers resumed.

These two vignettes, as later discussion will show, illustrate a drastic shift in the political status quo between the Ottoman and Mamluk courts. This shift, during which the Ottomans asserted their power first alongside and then gradually against the Mamluks, revealed itself primarily through diplomatic engagements. This book studies the diplomatic exchanges between the Sunni Muslim Ottomans and Sunni Muslim Mamluks from the 1360s to 1512. It illuminates an era when the first sustained encounters between these two powers gradually deepened into a regional rivalry and gave rise to the construction of a language and a set of behaviors for engagement. By studying the networks of diplomacy between the two leading Sunni Muslim empires of their time, this book attempts to better understand the place of this relationship within the image-making processes and historiography of each power.

An analysis of diplomatic exchanges indicates that the Mamluks factored significantly in the decision- and image-making processes of Ottoman sovereigns during their ascension to power. In an age when

modern means of communication were not available, diplomatic embassies with thoughtfully planned ceremonies, attentively crafted official correspondence, carefully selected gifts, and cautiously prepared ambassadors played critical roles in the expression and dissemination of imperial ideologies between both political centers.[7] In Islamic courts the ceremonies and rituals that revolved around diplomatic encounters not only displayed remarkable regional variety,[8] but also—much like their Western or non-Muslim counterparts—went beyond mere repetitive and unchanging formalities: they served as primary battlefields where formulations of identity and sovereignty clashed, were negotiated, and were reformulated for both external and internal audiences.[9] Although it was different from modern diplomacy, a complex and developed diplomatic culture existed long before resident embassies were established in the eighteenth century.[10] A small misstep in diplomatic ceremonials most likely did not destroy the relationship between the capitals, yet the fact that both Ottoman and Mamluk chroniclers emphasized "the courtly insults" or the incidents during which diplomatic conventions and ceremonials were dismissed (or particularly upheld) reveals the value these societies attached to these ceremonies in their political cultures.[11]

The importance that both powers placed on these diplomatic communications also invites us to question the dominant perspective that Muslim rulers were historically obsessed with the idea of holy war, or *jihad*, which obligated them to exist in a permanent state of conflict with their non-Muslim peers.[12] This perception, which has been especially prevalent among non-specialists, has been particularly shaped by the frequent allusions to the tropes of *jihad* and *ghaza* (initially, an expedition for plunder[13]) in the diplomatic correspondence between Muslim rulers who recognized the powerful influence of these concepts on Muslim audiences and skillfully employed them in legitimizing their regimes and sovereignty.[14] The relationships of these Muslim powers with non-Muslims, however, went beyond warfare based on ideological and religious differences.[15] This oversimplified approach to interfaith contacts leads to the equally erroneous belief that the relationships between Muslim powers did not change, or that their diplomatic contacts were merely

repetitive exchanges to keep up appearances or fulfill formalities while these powers focused on fighting "the infidels." Since both the Ottoman and Mamluk ruling classes adhered to Sunni Islam, their extended and multi-layered interactions confirm the complexity of inter-Muslim contacts. While the Sunni Ottomans crafted their image against the ideologically and geopolitically hostile Catholic Holy Roman Empire, they also crafted rhetorical language against the newly rising Shi'i Safavids under Shah Isma'il (r.1501–24) in Iran based on sectarian differences within Islam.[16] The diplomatic exchanges between the Sunni Ottomans and Sunni Mamluks, however, required a creative combination of diverse tropes and themes for both sides—one that not only sustained communication with but also conveyed superiority over the other. Until at least 1512, Ottoman–Mamluk interactions continued to display the same vitality and volatility they had since the fourteenth century. The relationship between these two Islamic powers should be imagined on a continuum that ranged from peaceful and fruitful contacts to exhausting wars and strategetic alliances, as is the case for most relationships between political powers. It was as complicated as the Ottoman–Habsburg or Mamluk–Crusader associations, and exuded an equally considerable sense of rivalry and competition. Political leaders in every phase of history shared this desire to protect their regimes and surpass their peers, regardless of their religious allegiances.

The Mamluks, the Ottomans, and the World

From the 1300s to 1512, the Ottomans transformed themselves from a minor Anatolian principality into a world power that challenged the venerable Mamluks. The earliest Ottoman–Mamluk diplomatic interactions, which began in the second half of the fourteenth century, should be understood within this context of unequal yet shifting power dynamics between the Ottomans, who attempted to carve a niche for themselves in the eyes of the prestigious Mamluk administration, and the Mamluks, who had built their domestic and international image on a complex yet effective mixture of ideological, political, and historical references.[17]

The earliest Mamluk sultans were slave-soldiers who took over the reign of their prestigious Ayyubid lords who ruled between 1171 and 1250.[18] The first Ayyubid ruler Salah al-din al-Ayyubi (d.1193) came from a Sunni Kurdish family in the service of the Zangids of Aleppo and Musul (the vassals of the Great Seljuks) and left an impressive legacy to his descendants and successors. In 1179 he ended the Shi'i Fatimid presence in Egypt, which had lasted since the tenth century, and recaptured Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187. His particularly celebrated image as a champion of faith was mostly based on his successes against the Crusader kingdoms that had been established after the First Crusade (1095–9) along the eastern Mediterranean coast and in northern Syria. After Salah al-din's death, his Ayyubid successors began to form an army comprised of slave-soldiers. During an extended period of political chaos that followed the death of the Ayyubid sultan al-Salih Ayyub (d.1240), Aybak al-Turkmani (r.1250–7), a commander of slave or *mamluk* origin, became the first Mamluk sultan when he married the Ayyubid child sultan's widowed mother. This marriage, which was an attempt to legitimize his sovereignty, helped the new sultan build relationships with his prestigious patrons.[19] Although Aybak's rule was often plagued by internal strife and chaos, his humble slave origins and subsequent rise to power served as a model for his Mamluk comrades.

After Aybak's reign and at least until the 1390s (or the end of so-called Bahri period of the Mamluk sultanate), attempts were made to institute dynastic succession. In fact, dynastic succession as a principle of political leadership was initially not questioned among the *mamluk* ranks.[20] The Mamluk regime gradually shied away from the dynastic impulse, but never altogether abandoned this principle. During the later Burji (Circassian) regime, the expression "kingship has no progeny" became a popular motto.[21] Thereafter, during times of accession, a Mamluk commander, who was either supported by a strong faction within the military or closely linked to the late sultan through ties of *khushdashiyya* (camaraderie) or patronage, was brought to power by a consensus or a quasi-election.[22] Occasionally, the new sultan replaced the young son of the previous sultan. In fact, he could be a grand amir who the late sultan had appointed as the

atabak (also *atabeg*, the second-ranking military officer of the Mamluk state after the sultan)[23] of his young son before his death.

Although the Mamluk sultans who came to power through this system controlled the lands of Egypt and Syria until the Ottoman conquest in 1517, they were vulnerable to domestic and international criticism because of their non-Muslim slave origins.[24] Keenly aware of their humble beginnings, Mamluk sultans gradually honed a complex image that initially alluded to the glorious memory of their prestigious Ayyubid lords.[25] In a gesture of respect to their predecessor, early Mamluk sultans visited the tomb of their Ayyubid patron al-Salih Ayyub when they ascended to power.[26]

Following in the footsteps of their Ayyubid predecessors, the Mamluks established themselves as champions of their faith.[27] In fact, when faced with the approach of the Mongols in addition to the continuing Crusader presence in the coastal lands, they shouldered the task of fighting off these powers. The Mongols repeatedly attacked Mamluk and Anatolian Seljuk territories in the aftermath of Chingiz Khan's death (d.1224) and gradually encroached upon the politics of Anatolia and Syria. The Mamluks were the first to obstruct the advancement of the Mongols in the battle of 'Ayn Jalut in 1260.

The Mamluk success against the Mongols led various political groups in Anatolia to plead for Mamluk aid against successive Mongol attacks. Since the early thirteenth century, the Anatolian Seljuks who were a branch of the Great Seljuk dynasty in Iran controlled most of Anatolia from their capital, Konya in central Anatolia. The battle of Kösedağ in 1248, in which the Mongols heavily defeated the Anatolian Seljuks in central Anatolia, triggered a process of political disintegration in the region and paved the way to the rise of principalities (including the Ottomans) that had previously recognized Anatolian Seljuk suzerainty. From the 1260s onward, some of these Anatolian leaders—from the defeated Anatolian Seljuk ruler to the leaders of the principalities—sent letter after letter appealing to the Mamluk sultan Baybars (r.1260–77) to end Mongol control of the region.[28] In 1277, Baybars undertook his long-awaited campaign, defeated the Mongol army

near Elbistan, and established Mamluk suzerainty in the region through symbolically loaded actions and ceremonies.[29]

Although Baybars retreated quickly from Anatolia and died soon after his return to Cairo, he still succeeded in establishing a Mamluk sphere of influence in the region.[30] The towns along his route through Anatolia remained under Mamluk control, and they outlined the frontier that would eventually separate the Mamluk sphere of influence from the Ottoman. This zone covered a vast region from the plain of Cilicia (near Çukurova in Turkey) to the west and the Taurus Mountains to the north and extended as far as Kayseri, where Baybars was crowned during his campaign in 1277. It included the urban centers south of Kayseri, such as Elbistan (which was close to the plain where Baybars defeated the Mongols), Malatya, Darende, Behisni, Kahta, Gerger, and Afşin. In this mountainous region, these settlements were connected mostly by passages and gates, such as Darb al-Hadas (a passage connecting Kayseri and Elbistan) and the Cilician Gates (known as Gülek Boğazı in Turkey), that were difficult to control and pass through. With its steep passages and mountains, the region served as a natural border between Anatolia and Greater Syria, and became part of the Mamluk northern frontier. The Mamluks ensured their control of this region by building vassal relationships with semi-nomadic Turkoman groups in the area and by appointing their leaders as Mamluk governors.

Despite its brevity, Baybars' campaign left such a permanent imprint on the region that two centuries later the Ottoman chronicler Neşri wrote a detailed account of the campaign and the subsequent solidification of vassalage ties between the Mamluks and the Karamanids.[31] Soon after Baybars' return to Cairo, the Karamanids not only became one of the most powerful principalities in Anatolia, but their formidable rivalry with the Ottomans also played a significant role in later Ottoman–Mamluk relations. Karamanid rulers later maintained their contacts with the Mamluks and even submitted requests to Cairo for appointments to govern various Anatolian towns.[32]

Some of these semi-nomadic principalities, such as the Dulkadirids and the Ramazanids, were geographically closer to

the Mamluk northern frontier, and the roles they played in the Ottoman–Mamluk relationship cannot be overemphasized, as the following chapters will prove.[33] The Dulkadirids controlled the lands that extended from Elbistan to Antep, including Malatya and Kayseri, though the borders occasionally changed after the end of the thirteenth century. At times they even battled the Karamanids to defend the interests of their Mamluk patrons.[34] For the greater part of their relationship with the Mamluks and later the Ottomans, the Dulkadirids steadily sought for more autonomy. Although almost every Dulkadirid ruler visited Cairo and received the blessings of the Mamluk sultan at the beginning of his rule, these same leaders often refused to obey Mamluk authority as soon as they had an opportunity.[35] The Ramazanids established themselves on the plain of Cilicia with Adana at their center; the region lay slightly west of the Dulkadirid territory with occasionally overlapping borders and conflicting interests.[36]

Besides consolidating their presence in Anatolia, the Mamluks further promoted themselves with consecutive victories against the Crusader kingdoms and local Armenian powers.[37] These military achievements also enabled them to present their leader as a warrior-king (*Heerkönig*).[38] After the expulsion of the Crusaders from the region in 1291 and after the retreat of Chingiz Khan's successors to the affairs of Iran and central Asia, the Mamluks engaged in warfare against non-Muslim powers less frequently, aside from occasional skirmishes with the remnants of the Crusaders in Cyprus and Rhodes.[39] They also occasionally engaged in both diplomatic and military encounters with the successor states of Chingiz Khan and the Timurids, despite the fact that all of these entities had converted to Islam.[40]

While the Mamluk sultans often alluded to their roles as the defenders of Islam, these rulers also increasingly accentuated their positions as the custodians of Mecca and Medina (also called the Two Holy Cities or the Two Holy Sanctuaries of Islam) as central aspects of their images. They called themselves *Khadim al-Haramayn al-Sharifayn* (the Servitor of the Two Holy Sanctuaries) and claimed exclusive rights for the safety of the pilgrimage roads, the annual

preparation and replacement of the *kiswa* (the black textile that covers Ka'ba), the annual *hajj* caravan, and the departure of the richly decorated yet empty palanquin called *mahmal* (or *mahmil*) that led the annual pilgrimage caravan from Cairo.[41] The Mamluk sovereigns fulfilled critical functions in the practice of *hajj*, which was a practice central to the spiritual world of the Muslims, and one of the Pillars of Islam. Among Muslim believers, these symbolic religious tasks honored the sovereigns responsible for them, and would at times foster competition between the Mamluk regime and other Muslim powers, including the Timurids and the Ottomans.[42]

After the Mongol sack of Baghdad in 1258, the transfer of the Abbasid caliphate to Cairo enhanced the prestige of the fledgling Mamluk regime.[43] Despite the gradual erosion of the caliphate's temporal authority since the ninth century and its lack of political power in Cairo, the caliphate occupied a place of some significance in the Mamluk worldview, and the caliphs were considered sources of symbolic authority when they sanctioned Mamluk sovereignty.[44] By re-using some of the architectural forms that had been used for the Abbasid caliphate in Baghdad, some Mamluk sultans further accentuated their associations with the Abbasid heritage.[45] Twice during the long Mamluk sultanate between 1250 and 1517, Mamluk commanders even considered the Abbasid caliph as a viable alternative for the sultanate.[46] On some diplomatic occasions, the Mamluk sultans also asserted that their proximity to the caliph was a sign of superiority and a token of God's blessing.[47]

The caliph's presence in Cairo attached a special status to the Mamluk rulers, even for some Muslim states as far away as western India.[48] For some leaders such as the sultans of Delhi (i.e. Tughlughs) and the Bahmanis, who founded their rule in the Deccan region of India in the mid-fourteenth century, their communication with the sultans of Egypt and the Abbasid caliphs were a matter of political recognition that helped to consolidate their regime.[49] The value that some Muslim sovereigns placed on the letters and titulature they received from the Abbasid Caliph indicates that the Sunni Muslim world still acknowledged its authority.[50] These titles revealed a ruler's status in the international arena while a *tashrif*, a robe of honor

initially sent by the caliph to a ruler, further sealed his sovereignty.[51] Some Muslim rulers boldly challenged the Mamluk sultans for their roles as the protectors of the caliphate.[52]

The Mamluk sultans also embraced *mazalim* sessions as an integral part of their image.[53] Also known as *dar al-'adl*, these sessions were "the structure through which the temporal authorities took direct responsibility for dispensing justice."[54] During these sessions, the Mamluk sultans listened to the grievances of their subjects and addressed their issues, often with the help of legal scholars. Although it probably had precedents in the rest of the Islamic world, it has often associated with Nur al-din al-Zangi (d.1174), the Zangid ruler of Aleppo and Mousul, who was the patron of Salah al-din al-Ayyubi. Since then, it had been followed by the Ayyubids and subsequently by the Mamluks of Egypt and Syria.[55] Particularly for the Mamluk sultans, whose claims to sovereignty were vulnerable to criticism, this institution provided an opportunity for them to present themselves as proper and just Muslim rulers to a public that did not have any ethnic or linguistic ties with their leader. Although these sessions were not compulsory, the practice of *dar al-'adl* definitely belonged to the carefully groomed image of the Mamluk sultans.[56]

The Mamluk sultans also inherited Cairo from the Ayyubids, an imperial capital where the most prestigious Islamic institutions of higher learning (*madrasa*) were located; their architectural and financial patronage of these institutions elevated their status in the Islamic world.[57] While the charitable institutions reinforced an image of a pious and generous ruler, the colleges attracted numerous students and scholars to the Mamluk territories. The mere presence of these well-established thinkers aided the Mamluk sultans in crafting the religious ideology that further legitimized their regimes.[58] Most Mamluk sultans also fostered close relations with and offered patronage to sufis (Muslim mystics), some of whom were not natives of Mamluk society.[59] Additionally, Cairo served as a stage for symbolically loaded religious and secular processions, banquets, and festivals, during which the Mamluk rulers were occasionally present and appeared as generous benefactors of their people.[60]

During every diplomatic encounter between the two lands, the Ottomans contended with this strong and multi-faceted image of the Mamluk sultans and their well-established presence in Anatolia. In the late thirteenth century, the Ottomans first appeared in northwest Anatolia as one of the many frontier vassals of the Anatolian Seljuks. Most former Seljuk vassals were subject to the authority of the Ilkhanid Mongols, who established themselves in eastern Anatolia and in parts of Iran. As long as they paid their annual tributes to these new lords, however, those in western and northwestern Anatolia such as the Ottomans enjoyed more autonomy due to their geographical distance from Ilkhanid political control. In Anatolia, the semi-nomadic and Turkish-speaking Ottomans were surrounded by their superior Muslim peers such as the Germiyanids, who centered in and around the western Anatolian town of Kütahya, and the Karamanids, who recognized Mamluk suzerainty after Baybars' campaign in 1277.[61] Therefore, the Ottomans primarily turned their attention to the relatively defenseless Byzantine lands. In 1326 they adopted the old Byzantine town of Bursa as their capital, and then passed the Strait of Dardanelles to establish themselves in the Balkans. Their interest in the Balkans revealed itself when they carried their capital from the Anatolian town of Bursa to Edirne, a frontier city northwest of Constantinople that served as a gateway to the Balkans.[62]

The Balkan territories seized by the Ottomans had never before submitted to Islamic rule, and these conquests marked the Ottomans' increasing importance in the Islamic world. In 1453 the Ottomans further adorned this image by conquering Constantinople, the Byzantine imperial capital. This essential victory allowed the Ottomans to consolidate their expansion into the Balkans and Anatolia by securing the connection between these two regions in addition to monopolizing the straits that connected the larger Mediterranean basin with the Black Sea region. Beyond any geopolitical gain, the conquest also carried symbolic ideological meaning, since the city had been targeted by numerous Muslim rulers since the rule of the Umayyads in the seventh century. According to some traditions, the conquest of the centuries-old Byzantine capital at the hands of a Muslim ruler was foretold and celebrated by the Prophet

Muhammad.[63] With this process of military expansion, the Ottomans began to increasingly emphasize *ghaza* and *jihad*, concepts on which the Mamluk sultans had also partially based their prestige. Although both terms were used interchangeably in Ottoman–Mamluk diplomatic exchanges, recent studies suggest that the Ottomans gradually formulated a stronger claim on *ghaza* while the Mamluks always emphasized *jihad* as a part of their image.[64]

One significant difference between the Ottoman and Mamluk regimes was that the Ottomans strongly adhered to dynastic succession and did not divide their lands among the progeny of the previous leader. At times of accession, they almost always witnessed fierce struggles among male siblings that often ended with fratricide after one established his authority in the capital.[65] This practice meant that the Ottoman sultans also boasted of the nobility of their regime.

To a great extent, this historical and political background set the direction for the Ottoman–Mamluk relationship during this era. This relationship gradually shaped the politics at the heart of the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean regions, since geopolitical conditions became more volatile in response to the Ottoman expansion and the emergence of new formidable political rivals in the region, such as the Aqqoyunlus and the Safavids in the late fifteenth century.

The Ottoman intrusion into the Mamluk sphere of influence started in the fourteenth century and followed multiple phases of Ottoman advancement and retreat. Nonetheless, the gradual Ottoman regional infringement upon the Mamluks' borders not only brought their rulers into a more intense and increasingly competitive relationship, but also put the powers between these two imperial borders in an unstable position. These powers—the Karamanids, the Dulkadirids, the Ramazanids, and the others—had to closely follow the evolving relationship between the Mamluk and Ottoman capitals. While the Karamanids were subdued by the Ottomans by the late fifteenth century, both the Dulkadirids and Ramazanids remained under nominal Mamluk rule until they were annexed by the Ottoman ruler Selim I (r.1512–20). Until this event, even with their frequently shifting loyalties, these territories served

as a buffer zone between the Ottomans and the Mamluks, particularly as the Ottomans expanded into this frontier region.

The rise of the Aqqoyunlus—first in Diyarbakır and then in Tabriz—brought drastic ramifications for both the Ottomans and the Mamluks in the fifteenth century.[66] The Aqqoyunlus arose from a confederation of tribes in the fourteenth century and lasted until 1502. Under the leadership of the young and ambitious Uzun Hasan (r.1457–78), the Aqqoyunlu polity gradually incorporated the lands of the formidable Qaraqoyunlu power in eastern Anatolia, Iraq, and Iran after 1467. Since the early fourteenth century, the Qaraqoyunlu confederation had been among formidable rivals of the Mamluks and then the Timurids.[67] After eliminating the Qaraqoyunlus, Uzun Hasan also defeated the Timurid ruler Abu Sa'id in 1469.[68] The emergence of this new power was initially welcomed by some European territories—first and foremost the Republic of Venice—that hoped it could offset the powerful Ottoman and Mamluk presence in the region.[69] The efforts of various European powers to build an alliance either against the Ottomans or the Mamluks (or both) were joined by Uzun Hasan, who vied for a chance to penetrate into both territories. This Muslim leader's attempts to collaborate with other Western powers prove the insignificance of religious affiliations or loyalties in the face of political and economic interests. Hasan's ambition troubled the Ottoman and Mamluk Sultans, who rightly considered the Aqqoyunlus a threat to their territories. In addition to endangering their geographical borders, the presence of the Aqqoyunlus complicated the relationship between the two sovereigns since Uzun Hasan (as well as his son and successor Sultan Yaqub, who ruled between 1478 and 1490) skillfully played them against each other.[70]

When the Shi'i Safavids under the leadership of the charismatic Shah Isma'il (r.1501–24) replaced the Aqqoyunlu polity in the early sixteenth century, they inherited the majority of the Aqqoyunlus' geopolitical position and political status while also agitating the relationship between Constantinople and Cairo. The Safavids' adherence to the Shi'i branch of Islam also altered the ideological dynamics between the Ottoman and Mamluk lands where the Sunni

branch predominated. The Ottoman and Mamluk lands adjacent to the Safavid territory were particularly vulnerable to their ideological propaganda and territorial ambitions. For centuries after the retreat of the Fatimids to their original bases in North Africa after 1179, none of these regions had been controlled by a Shi'i ruling class or dynasty, and such a new and powerful Shi'i entity caused major repercussions for the larger Islamic world. The Safavid ruling class pursued a very strict and, at times, intolerant style towards people of other faiths, including the Sunnis. Following in Uzun Hasan's footsteps, Shah Isma'il conducted regular correspondence with multiple European courts, attempting to eliminate the Ottomans, the Mamluks, or both.[71] Ultimately, it was not the ambitious and rapid territorial expansion of Isma'il alone that worried his two Sunni Muslim neighbors, but rather his aggressive ideological stance.[72]

Additionally, the second half of the fifteenth century (when the Mamluk ambassador Janibak visited Bayezid II) witnessed the onset of great political and social upheavals, from the conclusion of the Reconquista in the Iberian Peninsula in 1492 to the circumnavigation of the Cape of Good Hope in 1498. Most of these world events either had major consequences for the Ottomans and Mamluks or were partly motivated by their presence in the eastern Mediterranean and Red Seas, facts which prove the connectedness of these two prominent Sunni Muslim powers with the rest of the world. On the western coast of the Mediterranean, policies set by the King of Aragon Ferdinand V (r.1479–1516) and the Queen of Castille Isabella I (r.1474–1504) before and after the Reconquista triggered a population movement that created enormous consequences for both the Ottoman and Mamluk societies. The Muslim presence in the Iberian Peninsula had been gradually established since the first waves of Muslim attacks in the early eighth century and had lasted under different Muslim powers until 1492. The Reconquista not only seized the kingdom of Granada—the final territory that remained in the hands of the Muslim Nasrid rulers—but also led to the expulsion of most of the Jewish and Muslim populations from the area.[73] These attacks did not entirely end the presence of either group in the peninsula, but they did begin a process of gradual assimilation and

expulsion that lasted at least until the seventeenth century.[74] The expulsion of Jews and Muslims under the rule of Ferdinand and Isabella was not an isolated incident; the Portuguese king Dom Manuel I (r.1495–1521) issued a similar decree in 1496 under pressure from the Spanish Habsburg royal family.[75] Expelled Jewish and Muslim communities arrived in Ottoman and Mamluk territories in waves, while some also found safe haven in North Africa. This population movement not only changed the social makeup of the Ottoman and Mamluk societies, but also influenced the politics of both powers. Additionally, the Nasrids of Granada and the Hafsids of Tunis turned to both the Ottomans and Mamluks for assistance against the powers of the Reconquista.[76]

Fifteenth-century geographic explorations were also partially propelled by the Mamluk monopoly on the only known route to the Indian Ocean and the gradual Ottoman control of the Black Sea and western Anatolian coast.[77] Both Mamluk and Ottoman lands occupied prime geographical locations and lay at the crossroads of transit routes that led to the larger Mediterranean Sea, Black Sea, and Indian Ocean trade systems. Until 1498, ports in the eastern Mediterranean and the Red Sea under Mamluk authority offered the only known connections to the profitable Indian Ocean trade system. Although most powers of the Indian subcontinent also had commercial ties that lay further east, they highly valued their transactions with the West. Under Mamluk domination, Jidda (a port on the Red Sea coast and the closest port to the Muslim Holy City of Mecca) provided an outlet where ships from India and Southeast Asia could access the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, and Syria.[78] Likewise, from its Mediterranean and Black Sea ports, Anatolia provided another land route to Syria and Egypt (and therefore to the Indian Ocean), and was connected to the Iranian trade zones and the rest of the Silk Road.

The commercial transactions between the Mamluk and Ottoman territories had a long history and involved both the direct exchange of local merchandise and the transit exchange of international products. Before the rise of the Ottomans, the Mamluk sultan Qalawun (r.1279–90) had signed treaties with the Byzantine emperor to

ensure the flow of trade between their lands.[79] While imported spices from India and Arabia and high-quality fabrics generally came to Anatolia through Egypt, furs and slaves that the Mamluks depended on for the continuation of their military recruitment system reached the Mamluks through Ottoman lands that were linked to the Black Sea trade.[80] Mastic, the aromatic gum produced on the island of Chios, traveled to Egypt and Syria through Anatolia.[81] While Anatolia regularly bought local sugar, Egyptian cloth,[82] and dyes from Egypt and Syria, Egypt and Syria acquired Anatolia's timber,[83] mohair,[84] metals,[85] alum,[86] and possibly grain.[87] In the latter half of the fifteenth century, at least two cities under Ottoman rule, Bursa and Antalya, particularly flourished as both direct and transit trade centers between the Ottomans and the Mamluks, while the Mamluk city of Alexandria had a *fondaco* (hostel) for the Ottoman merchants.[88]

Although this pattern of commerce fluctuated over the centuries, particularly during times of war, it never disappeared entirely.[89] Despite the consistent economic activity between the Ottoman and Mamluk lands, references to merchants and commerce are usually vague in their diplomatic documents, as the following chapters will attest. While these references confirm the existence of these commercial networks, they do not allow us to estimate the volume of these transactions. Neither do they tell us how often mutual commercial interests and the well-being of traveling merchants were negotiated by ambassadors and the administrations they visited. Nonetheless, these omissions should not lead us to call into question the strong economic relationship between the two powers and the centrality of these transactions for the larger world economy.

The main agents of this intense traffic included local and foreign Muslim and non-Muslim merchants who, with their various religious and ethnic affiliations, exemplified the rich mosaic of Ottoman and Mamluk territories.[90] The presence of multiple European consuls and *fondacos* that served an internationally diverse community of tradesmen in prominent urban centers such as Alexandria and Cairo is a testament to the substantial investments of foreign merchants in Mamluk lands. The Catalan merchants under the protection of the

Crown of Aragon boasted a strong presence in the Mamluk lands until at least the 1430s or until the Crown's policies toward the Mamluk regime changed.[91] Although from the mid-fifteenth century onward the Republic of Venice claimed a substantial share of the eastern Mediterranean trade, an impressive cosmopolitanism prevailed in Mamluk cities: when the Venetian ambassador arrived in Cairo in 1489, he reported "the almost contemporary presence of ambassadors from Florence, Genoa, and Rome" in a bleak tone.[92] Likewise, foreign European merchants, especially Italians, established a strong presence in the Ottoman territories alongside Muslim and non-Muslim local merchants.[93] However, the dependence of foreign merchants on the generosity of the Ottoman and Mamluk rulers to conduct their business in the Black, Mediterranean, and Red Seas did not lead them to adopt a completely conciliatory policy towards their patrons. For instance, the Venetians, whose commercial interests were closely entangled with those of the Ottomans and Mamluks, engaged in expensive maritime wars with the Ottomans at least twice during the second half of the fifteenth century.[94]

This economic network was threatened by the circumvention of the Cape of Good Hope in 1498. After decades of expeditions funded by the Portuguese court, Vasco de Gama's new route became a pillar of the Portuguese king Dom Manuel's politics that targeted the destruction of the Venetian and Mamluk economies.[95] In India, Dom Manuel also hoped to discover a potential new Christian ally that could attack the Mamluks from the rear.[96] Overpowering the Mamluks would have allowed Dom Manuel both economic dominance and access to Jerusalem, but the support of an Indian ally never materialized, nor was the Portuguese navy able to seize complete control of the Red Sea trade. Although the Portuguese did attempt to gain control of this market with attacks on Jidda and on Aden in Yemen, they were thwarted by the Ottoman naval forces dispatched by Bayezid II at the request of the Mamluk sultan Qansuh al-Ghawri (r.1501–16).[97] As early as 1506 or 1507, Bayezid II began to send aid to the Mamluks in order to curtail these Portuguese incursions, but the Portuguese nonetheless extended their sphere of

influence and secured the flow of trade by establishing a series of bases along the coast of the Indian Ocean.

Beyond their commercial ties with other world powers, the Ottoman and Mamluk territories carried spiritual significance for Christians and Jews. While the Ottoman Empire included many early Christian pilgrimage sites within its borders, the Mamluks ruled Jerusalem, the birthplace of both faiths. As a result, both lands received a steady flow of both Jewish and Christian pilgrims in addition to Muslims. The Ottoman and Mamluk lands attracted individuals such as Cyriac of Ancona (born c.1301 and died before 1457), the Christian Italian merchant and traveler who keenly studied the old Byzantine and Greek monuments.[98] While the number of these "antiquarian pilgrimages"[99] was relatively minor compared to the number of spiritual pilgrimages and business trips, their mere existence indicates the centrality of these territories to the self-perceptions of contemporary societies that claim a share of Hellenistic, Roman, or Byzantine heritage.

The affairs in and between the Ottoman and Mamluk lands carried the utmost importance for other regions that pursued international and regional trade and travel, since any political instability in either territory or between the two disrupted the land route connecting the Balkans with Anatolia, Iran, Greater Syria, and Egypt.[100] Such volatility also threatened the eastern Mediterranean ports under the control of either power or hindered the access to the Iranian trade routes that connected Anatolia to the rest of the Silk Road.[101] Any upheaval disturbed the traveling Christian, Jewish, or even Muslim pilgrims whose destinations were at the heart of their spiritual worlds, and any domestic unrest interrupted the transactions of European businessmen who fulfilled the steadily increasing demand for spices and other Eastern products. Any conflict with either the Ottomans or Mamluks increased customs charges for non-local merchants, temporarily suspended their transactions, or annulled the safe-conduct papers that were granted to non-Muslims.[102] Since the Mamluks and the Ottomans were central to the international politics of all powers that pursued higher ambitions in the Mediterranean Sea

and Indian Ocean, any change in Ottoman–Mamluk contacts was closely followed by these other powers.

Overview

Within this complex historical, political, and economic context, the multilayered relationship between the Ottomans and Mamluks began to unfold. From their earliest exchanges in the mid-fourteenth century, the Ottoman and Mamluk sovereigns renegotiated and redefined their images through diplomatic encounters. The purpose of these missions extended beyond the overt messages that were either articulated in the correspondence or delivered orally by an ambassador. The composition of the letters, the titulature and tropes used in the correspondence, the selection of envoys, the behavior and treatment of ambassadors, and the choice of gifts were all as important as the actual messages. An overview of these tools that the Ottomans and Mamluks were familiar with and utilized in their encounters will clarify how this system of communication functioned and contributed to the image-making processes of these sovereigns. The overview in Chapter 1 suggests that the Ottomans initially imitated the Mamluks in their official ceremonies and diplomatic conventions, though they eventually outgrew and transcended the once superior or more prestigious Mamluk model.

As Chapter 2 illustrates, the relationship between the Ottomans and Mamluks displayed remarkable vitality and complexity from its earliest phase until 1402. The earliest Ottoman and Mamluk texts not only showed the Ottoman acknowledgement of Mamluk superiority, but also the Mamluks' growing awareness of the Ottomans and their military successes in the Balkans and Anatolia. The loyal and regular visits of Ottoman embassies to the Mamluk capital after almost every military success, the respectful tone of early Ottoman correspondence, and the impressive selection of gifts proffered to the Mamluk sovereigns all testify to the vital symbolic and regional importance of the Mamluk court to its younger counterpart. Despite their higher status, the Mamluks carefully followed the growing Ottoman presence along their own northern frontier in Anatolia

while putting on a guise of indifference. After the Ottoman attacks to the northern Mamluk frontier in Syria in 1399, however, the Mamluk rulers became more overtly concerned about the potential threat of an intrusive Ottoman polity. This early phase of contacts became a critical period for the formation of the Ottoman image at the Mamluk court as well as for the evolution of Ottoman–Mamluk diplomatic discourse.

Chapter 3 demonstrates how the days following the major waves of Timurid attacks between 1384 and 1404 and the battle of Ankara (1402) brought new domestic and international challenges for both regimes. Pressured by these serious concerns, some of which challenged and even damaged their images in the international arena, both the Ottomans and the Mamluks maintained their diplomatic contacts with each other. While the Ottomans under the leadership of Mehmed I (r.1413–21) and Murad II (r.1421–44 and 1446–51) continued to pay their respects to their Mamluk counterparts with regular diplomatic embassies, they also sought further recognition from the Mamluk court. With one of the most elaborate Islamic chancery offices at their service, the Mamluk sultans Faraj (r.1399–1405 and 1405–12), al-Mu'ayyad Shaykh (r.1412–21), Barsbay (r.1422–38) and Jaqmaq (r.1438–53), whose reigns predominantly overlapped those of Mehmed I and Murad II, refined their perception of the Ottomans with every piece of news they received from Ottoman territories and responded by increasingly elevating their titulature.

Chapter 4 will explore how the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453 and the ambitious politics of the young Ottoman ruler Mehmed II (r.1444–6 and 1451–81) started a new chapter in the Ottoman–Mamluk relationship. Expressing himself primarily through diplomatic missions, Mehmed demanded a different type of recognition from the Mamluk court. His main counterparts, Sultans Inal (r.1453–61), Khushqadam (r.1461–7), and Qaytbay (r.1468–96), did not submit to Mehmed's appeals, although each negotiated with Mehmed in different ways. During this later phase, the two powers devised competitive rhetorical tropes that were communicated to each other's courts primarily through diplomatic

correspondence, gifts, and ceremonies. At a time when the Ottomans asserted their superiority in almost every corner of the known world, these two powers challenged each other by questioning the other's right to sovereignty while claiming the exclusive right to lead the Islamic world. While their religious rhetoric had once served as a unifying factor, in the second half of the fifteenth century even their shared faith presented another opportunity to express rivalry or to bolster claims for superiority. The way by which the Ottomans and Mamluks recast this well-known trope in a new competitive manner proves their plasticity in this setting.

As Chapter 5 illustrates, in a physical manifestation of this charged diplomatic atmosphere, the two imperial armies exhausted each other in a long war between 1485 and 1491.[103] Despite the common perception that wars bring about a complete cessation of communications, this war between the Ottoman ruler Bayezid II and the Mamluk sultan Qaytbay presented new and creative opportunities to sustain the network between them and contributed to the complex process of the refinement of mutual perceptions.[104]

Chapter 6 studies the final 30 years of the Ottoman–Mamluk relationship until the death of Bayezid II in 1512. During this time of counterclaims and challenges, it was still Bayezid II to whom the Mamluk sultan Qansuh al-Ghawri first appealed for naval assistance in 1507 when the Portuguese navy approached the Arabian Peninsula and the Red Sea. Despite the increasing volatility of their diplomatic encounters and after an inconclusive and exhaustive war, the Ottoman and Mamluk rulers allied against a common enemy that threatened their shared political and economic interests. With his request, Qansuh al-Ghawri opened new horizons for Bayezid, who seized this opportunity to become involved in the politics of the profitable Indian trade system. In the coming decades after 1512, the Indian Ocean would witness a significant power struggle between the Ottomans and the Portuguese that grew out of this initial request for aid.[105]

The decision to study the multiple phases of this relationship from its inception until 1512 and to exclude the final five years preceding the fall of Mamluk regime to the Ottomans in 1517 is primarily a

practical one, since a study that would include the final five years would undoubtedly produce a second volume. By omitting these years, the book also argues for an alternative to a common trend in Ottoman–Mamluk studies. Most scholarly studies to date have emphasized moments of conflict—particularly military campaigns—between the two empires before proceeding teleologically to the Ottoman conquest of Egypt.[106] This focus on the ultimate Ottoman victory neither acknowledges the ideological and political superiority of the Mamluks for the greater part of their long relationship with the Ottomans, nor accommodates the plasticity, flexibility, and adaptability of their mutual communications. One way to see the richness of their interactions is to turn our attention to the earlier diplomatic engagements that both the Ottomans and Mamluks tirelessly maintained under any conditions. Until the rise of the Shi'i Safavids, the Ottomans molded their image in the Islamic world in response to diverse factors and political actors such as the Timurids, but also in the light of the Mamluks' strong presence—a presence that quickly disappeared in the primary sources after 1517.

CHAPTER 1

THE TOOLS OF DIPLOMACY

> The reach of Bayezid began to extend far into the lands of Rum. He became so well-known for his jihad against non-Muslims that he gained a great reputation. Al-Malik al-Zahir (Barquq) wrote him letters, sent him gifts, and sent him commander after commander (as ambassadors). He also sent Ibn al-Sughayr, the head of the doctors, to Bayezid. Since no rulers remained who had not sent letters and gifts to the Ottomans, al-Malik al-Zahir, the ruler of Egypt, feared for his ruin. He (Barquq) said that "I am not afraid of Timur because everyone will help me against him. Rather, I am afraid of Ibn 'Uthman (the Ottomans)," I (the author) heard Ibn Khaldun[1] saying. He (Barquq) repeatedly said, "for the ruler of Egypt there was no fear except from Ibn 'Uthman[.]"[2]

As the above passage implies, diplomatic exchanges were not merely routine missions, but rather served as seals of acknowledgement from the sender that recognized the recipient's sovereignty and political authority. By sending his emissaries to the Ottoman court, the Mamluk sultan Barquq recognized the Ottomans' status in the international arena—a status that would gradually increase from the fourteenth century until 1512.

This passage from Ibn Bahadur does not reveal, however, how different components of these missions contributed to this process of

diplomatic acknowledgement. Although every mission had a specific and immediate task to discuss or negotiate, it often conveyed indirect yet equally important messages that were primarily disseminated through correspondence, gifts, envoys, and ceremonies such as ambassadorial audiences.[3] The fifteenth-century Mamluk historian Ibn Taghribirdi (d.1470) revealed the widespread recognition of these elements—at least in Mamluk society—when he repeated the old proverb, "The strength and greatness of a king is known from three things: his letter, his envoy, and his gift."[4] Contemporary Ottoman texts expressing parallel sensitivities have not yet emerged, but it is reasonable to assume that the Ottomans embraced similar principles.

When the Mamluks—the leading sovereigns of the Sunni Muslim world and the eastern Mediterranean—and the Ottomans—a minor but growing principality along the frontiers of the Byzantine Empire—initiated their earliest diplomatic contacts, they used envoys, gifts, letters, and ceremonies to disseminate and negotiate their imperial ideologies. Every individual or item that accompanied, welcomed, or hosted a diplomatic mission contributed to the non-verbal communication of diplomacy, and these elements often completed the actual message or enhanced its effect on its recipient.[5]

A closer look at the practices of the Ottoman and Mamluk courts, however, reveals the striking inequality between the established character of Mamluk court etiquette and the developing quality of the Ottomans during the period under investigation. The Mamluks relied on a stable body of regulations that was primarily inherited from their Ayyubid predecessors when they took over the Ayyubid imperial capital, Cairo.[6] The architecture of the ceremonial spaces in their citadel–palace—which had been constructed by the Ayyubids—was also deeply influenced by the traditions of the Great Seljuks.[7] Additionally, the possible Mongol influence on early Mamluk ceremonials should be taken into consideration, as well as other sources that made additional references to diverse Muslim and non-Muslim traditions.[8] The Mamluk sultans and their advisors merely modified this deeply-rooted framework to fit their changing political conditions and needs.[9]

During this period the Ottomans moved their capital three times—to Bursa, Edirne, and finally Constantinople—while the Mamluks remained in Cairo, a fact that also reflected the disparity between the settled Mamluk institutions and the emerging Ottoman ones. With each new capital and palace, the Ottomans further refined their court etiquette and ceremonies. They gradually built their own equivalents of the Mamluks' institutions and constructed parallel ceremonies, often by emulating other Islamic courts and by assimilating practices from the lands they conquered.[10] Although Ottoman rituals and institutions shared a number of characteristics with Mamluk practices, they were also strongly inspired by the Timurids.[11] During its second phase of construction after 1468, the Topkapı Palace in Constantinople served as a stage for the reformulation of Ottoman rituals and imperial ideology,[12] and this phase of reformulation had not yet ended in 1512. By this time, however, the Ottomans had clearly devised their own body of distinct regulations and conventions that carried traces of Islamic, Byzantine, and even Central Asian nomadic traditions.[13] To trace the gradual divergence of Ottoman and Mamluk ceremonials, as well as interpret the diplomatic interactions that will be discussed in the following chapters, an overview of their mutual diplomatic repertoire is necessary. This overview traces the typical sequence of a diplomatic mission, beginning with the selection of an ambassador and ending with his return home.

The First Step: Selecting an Ambassador

> For an embassy a man is required who has served kings, who is bold in speaking, who has traveled widely, who has a portion of every branch of learning, who is retentive of memory and farseeing, who is tall and handsome, and if he is old and wise that is better. If a boon-companion is sent as an envoy he will be more reliable; and if a man is sent who is brave and manly, skilled in arms and horsemanship, and renowned as duellist, it will be extremely good, for he will shew the world that our men

> are like him; and if an ambassador be a man of noble family that will be good too, for they will have respect for his ancestry and not do him any mischief; and he should not be a wine-bibber, a buffoon, a gambler, a babbler or a simpleton. Very often kings have sent envoys bearing gifts of money and valuables and sued for peace and shewn themselves weak and submissive; after giving this illusion they have followed up by sending prepared troops and picked men in the attack and defeating the enemy. The conduct and good sense of an ambassador are a guide to the conduct, wisdom, judgment, and greatness of his king.[14]

Although this passage from Nizam al-Mulk (d.1092), who established an almost legendary reputation as the experienced vizier of the young Seljuk Sultan Malikshah, was produced nearly three centuries before the first diplomatic exchange between the Ottomans and the Mamluks, it offered a timeless guide for a ruler choosing his diplomatic representatives. The fact that this guide appeared in a book that belonged to the same genre as *Mirror for Princes*—an advice book for rulers—revealed the intention of the wise vizier: to warn kings to select their envoys wisely. The brief section on the qualities of ambassadors in the encyclopedic chancery manual of the Mamluk scholar and secretary al-Qalqashandi (d.1418) also suggested that these principles resonated with fifteenth-century Mamluk perceptions.[15]

Rulers selected their envoys carefully.[16] In an age when modern means of communication were not available, the Ottoman and Mamluk sovereigns relied on their diplomatic representatives for a number of crucial tasks, from transmitting their images to negotiating treaties. The envoys sustained communications between the courts, carried oral messages (some of which were entrusted to them in confidence), and protected the honor of their sovereigns. While some served as mere messengers, a number gathered intelligence.[17]

Beyond their loyalty to their rulers, envoys ideally possessed linguistic competence and social skills. An envoy who knew the language of the court he visited was more likely to succeed there,[18]