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RALF ELGER, UTE PIETRUSCHKA (eds.)

MARGINAL PERSPECTIVES  
ON EARLY MODERN OTTOMAN CULTURE  
Missionaries, Travelers, Booksellers

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Marginal Perspectives on Early Modern Ottoman Culture:  
Missionaries, Travellers, Booksellers

ORIENTWISSENSCHAFTLICHE HEFTE

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Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Regionalstudien – Vorderer Orient, Afrika, Asien  
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Herausgeber

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## Preface

The papers published in this volume date back to a conference entitled “Middle Eastern Literatures of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. A Departure towards Modernity?” organized by the Oriental Institute of the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, which took place in March 2010 in the Leucorea in Wittenberg. This more or less rhetorical question could not be answered in a satisfactory way, but notable considerations were offered by the participants of the conference. Not only foreign interventions like Napoleon’s military expedition to Egypt in 1798, but also the Ottoman state’s reforms and high intellectual culture on the other hand should be considered as potential fields of modernization that influenced especially the margins of Ottoman society and culture. The papers of this volume deal with people acting in these margins, be it geographically or socially.

Michael Kreutz discusses in his paper the impact on Ottoman culture caused by the reception of European Enlightenment ideas by Christian Greek intellectuals that were Ottoman subjects and in some cases rose to high positions in the empire. Certainly they had some influence in the Ottoman Balkans, *i. e.* a marginal region, but we do not know exactly how this movement was noticed in the centre of the Ottoman Empire.

Other representatives of a new trend in European intellectual history (“Geistesgeschichte”) were the Moravian pietists who lived for several years in Egypt and were integrated to a certain extent into the local society. These Moravians also became part of the history of Arabic literature, as is shown in Arthur Manukian’s and Christian Mauder’s articles.

Much has been said about European travellers in the Ottoman Empire, but mostly from a Europe-centered perspective. Felicita Tramontana, like the other authors in our volume trained in Oriental languages, adopts a different approach. She follows some travellers who described aspects of the Ottoman legal system. These Europeans were neither fully integrated in the Ottoman culture, nor were they mere outside observers. The question arises, whether they caused changes in the Ottoman legal procedures and/or legal norms.

A highly intriguing case of a marginal figure is the Syrian book collector Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ presented by Boris Liebrecht. He did not manage to be mentioned in one of the biographical collections of his period which defined the group of central people in Ottoman literary culture. His library contained sophisticated works in addition to books which are often misleadingly called “popular.”

The papers in this volume provide innovative research. They may also in one way or the other add to the debate about 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman “modernity” that will keep the interested scholarly community busy for several years to come.



The editors wish to express their gratitude to all institutions which enabled the organization of the conference, for a generous grant especially the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, and the Leucorea in Wittenberg. The former secretary of our institute, Ms. Cornelia Brandt-Springsits, and the former student assistant Mr. Daniel Brenn contributed immensely to the success of the conference. Last, but not least, we have to thank Mr. Daniel Haas for his invaluable editorial assistance. Finally, the editors wish to express their gratitude to the “Orientwissenschaftliche Hefte”, especially Prof. Dr. Burkhard Schnepel and Dr. Hanne Schönig, for publishing this volume.

Ralf Elger  
Ute Pietruschka

Halle, December 2012

## Some Glimpses of the “Greek Enlightenment” in the Ottoman Empire and Beyond

Michael Kreutz

The Greek Enlightenment may be a quite marginal development when regarded within the wider frame of the Ottoman Empire as a whole. Its existence, however, did not go unnoticed in the center of the Empire. This paper will focus on the perception of political and philosophical ideas flourishing in Central Europe during that period and its embedding into specifically Greek cultural surroundings. The role of Greece as an Ottoman province will also be treated, giving an idea about the entanglement of early modern Greek and Ottoman history under the aspect of transmitting ideas of the Enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> In this context it is noteworthy that the agents of the Greek Enlightenment were often men of the church who promoted some modernist ideas but were not full-fledged philosophers of the Enlightenment comparable to their counterparts in the West.<sup>2</sup>

One of the outstanding exponents of modern Greek Enlightenment is **Eugenios Voulgaris** (1716-1806), born in Corfu, who worked as a teacher at several colleges in Greece. In 1775 Catherine the Great appointed him archbishop in the Russian diocese of Kherson. He died in Petersburg in 1806.<sup>3</sup> Voulgaris’ importance for the Greek intellectual history – he was a forerunner of what is called “Greek Enlightenment” (Διαφωτισμός) – compels us to illuminate his development more closely.

During his time as a teacher in Ioannina, Voulgaris translated the writings of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, Christian Wolff and John Locke into Greek. As a disciple of Locke, he rejected the Aristotelianism of Theophilos Korydaleus (d. 1645) and his philosophical-scientific school which aimed at separating philosophy and theology.<sup>4</sup> Voulgaris translated works of other French philosophers into

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<sup>1</sup> About the entanglement of modern Balkan and Middle Eastern history see Kaser, *The Balkans*; Cvetkovski, *In oriens lux*; see also my paper: *Greek Classics*.

<sup>2</sup> “Ο Διαφωτισμός ήταν βέβαια τὸ προῖον μιᾶς μακράωνης διαδικασίας στὴ Δύση καὶ ἡ στάση τοῦ ἀπέναντι στὴ θρησκεία διαμορφώθηκε βασικὰ ἀπὸ τὴν κατάσταση τοῦ Δυτικοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ,” Makrides, *Ὁρθόδοξη Ἐκκλησία*, 166.

<sup>3</sup> Sartori, *Übersicht*, 195. According to Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός*, 15, 94, Voulgaris appears to be “ἡ παλαιότερη διαπρέπουσα φυσιογνωμία ἀνάμεσα σ’ ἐκείνους ποὺ μνημονεύσαμε ὡς ἐκπρόσωπους τοῦ ἐλληνικοῦ Διαφωτισμοῦ.” Roudometof, *From Rum Millet*, 21, calls Voulgaris an “ex-liberal turned conservative.”

<sup>4</sup> Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie*, 61. It is not entirely clear whether we can determine the early Greek Enlightenment with Korydaleus, cf. Turczynski, *Gestaltwandel*, 26.

Greek first and foremost during his stay on Mount Athos between 1753-58<sup>5</sup> when he used to teach in the Athos Academy (“Athonias”) at Vatopedi monastery where he – in addition to rhetoric and theology – intended to put forward logic, science and metaphysics. Versatile as he was, he also translated Virgil into Greek.<sup>6</sup> As a true innovator he opened the curriculum at his school to the modern mind even if his later resignation meant the end of the experiment of giving the hesychastic-oriented monks a modern education.<sup>7</sup>

His ideas caused discontent among the Academy which prompted him to move to Constantinople where he spent some time before, urged by the Patriarchate because of his growing anti-Ottoman attitude, he left the city continuing his way to Europe. Via Romania, he travelled to Leipzig around 1765 where he spent the following seven years along with some time in Halle and Berlin – all three cities were centers of German Enlightenment.<sup>8</sup> Voulgaris visited the court of Prussia’s King Frederick II where he may have met Voltaire. Whether he ever did remains unknown. In any case he knew about the French language, because by 1768 he had translated into Greek Voltaire’s *Essai historique et critique sur les dissensions des Eglises de Pologne* (in Greek: *Δοκίμιον ιστορικὸν καὶ κριτικὸν περὶ τῶν διχονοιῶν τῶν ἐν ταῖς Ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Πολωνίας*) which deals with the Orthodox minority in Poland. In his observations Voulgaris blames the anti-Christian tendencies of Voltaire, but supports his criticism of the Roman primacy claim and compares the situation of the Orthodox minority in Poland with that of the Greeks under the Ottomans.<sup>9</sup>

While in Leipzig, where both a Greek and a Russian community existed,<sup>10</sup> he was invited to Russia and entered the service of the Russian Empire.<sup>11</sup> Other than that, Voulgaris translated Herder whom he possibly had heard of at Catherine’s court. At that time, Herder’s teacher August Ludwig Schlözer as well as other German scholars like Wilhelm von Humboldt, Barthold Georg Niebuhr and

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<sup>5</sup> Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός*, 146-8; Demos, *Enlightenment*, 534.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, 533. Voulgaris’ *Logic* (1766) was met with great applause, Iken, *Leukothea*, 7; cf. Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός*, 150.

<sup>7</sup> Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie*, 59-60; cf. Ainian, *Συλλογή ανεκδότων συγγραμμάτων*, 54-64; Cvetkovski, *In oriens lux*, 182-3; about the carriers of Balkan Enlightenment see Turczynski, *Gestaltwandel*, 35; Namowicz, *Mittel-, Ost und Südosteuropa*, 39.

<sup>8</sup> Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός*, 149.

<sup>9</sup> Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie*, 347; Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός*, 150.

<sup>10</sup> Leipzig at that time attracted Russian students as later Göttingen, Berlin or Marburg did, see von Rauch, *Voraussetzungen*, 19.

<sup>11</sup> Makrides, *Orthodoxie und Politik*, 113. The exact date when he took up office remains unclear, see Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός*, 150.

Christian Wilhelm Dohm used to be the court’s guests.<sup>12</sup> Since he had earned the favor of the empire in 1775, Voulgaris became archbishop of the Russian diocese of Kherson/Slavyansk – located in an area inhabited by Greeks – which had been established especially for him. There he intensively devoted himself to further translations of Voltaire.<sup>13</sup> In Moscow in 1805 he published his Introduction into the Philosophy of ‘s Gravesande (*Εισαγωγή εις την Φιλοσοφίαν του Γραβεζάνδου*), a Dutch philosopher and mathematician. One chapter in the book is dedicated to reflections on freedom.<sup>14</sup>

Voulgaris was not a great reformer and as a man of the church, in his book *Concerning the System of the Universe* (*Περί Συστήματος του Παντός*, Vienna 1805) he rejects the Copernican view in favor of Tycho Brahe.<sup>15</sup> The Greek Church in general wielded the idiom of anti-secularism and generally opposed the spreading of modern French ideas whose secularism questioned their own hegemony.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, Voulgaris had a long-lasting impact on later generations. Among his students was Athanasios Parios (*ca.* 1721-1813) who worked from 1771 as head of the Athonias. He called himself a “pious philosopher” (εὐσεβῆς φιλόσοφος) and anonymously wrote a treatise under the title *Christian Defense* (*Χριστιανική ἀπολογία*) in which he strongly turned against the ideas of Voltaire and Rousseau.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, he was a great admirer of the Russian Empress Catherine and praised her patronage of Voulgaris.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Iggers, *European Context*, 238-9, 241; Heyer, *Orientalische Frage*, 432; Mühlpfordt, *Hellas als Wegweiser*, 260. Schlözer (1735-1809) is usually also regarded as the father of Russian historiography, see Turczynski, *Gestaltwandel*, 45.

<sup>13</sup> Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός*, 150-1. Kherson belonged to the newly conquered parts of Russia where a Greek presence was regarded as essential, see Makrides, *Orthodoxie und Politik*, 91. Local ruler was Potemkin, the diocese’s see was Poltova, *cf. ibidem*, 114 and Kappeler, *Rußland*, 106.

<sup>14</sup> “Υποτίθησιν οὖν ἡ ἐλευθερία τὴν τοῦ ποιεῖν δύναμιν τοιαύτην ἀλλ’ οὖν, οἷαν ἄνευ τοῦ διορισμοῦ τῆς θελήσεως, μηδὲν παράγειν ἀποτέλεσμα,” see Voulgaris, *op. cit.*, 38. According to Voulgaris, God alone disposes of absolute and unlimited freedom, *loc. cit.* He dedicated more than one book to Catherine, see Makrides, *Orthodoxie und Politik*, 108.

<sup>15</sup> Demos, *Neo-Hellenic Enlightenment*, 535.

<sup>16</sup> Hourani, *Kultur und Wandel*, 181-2. In his translation of Catherine’s *Nakaz*, *Instruction of a New Code of Law*, published in 1771, Voulgaris expressed his vision that one day the Greek nation will live under both the rule of an enlightened absolutism and the natural law, see Makrides, *Orthodoxie und Politik*, 103; Turczynski, *Gestaltwandel*, 32. In 1793, Patriarch Neophytos condemned Voltaire, the freemasonry, Rousseau and Spinoza as well, see Clogg, *Elite and Popular Culture*, 79.

<sup>17</sup> Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie*, 354, 358-60. Parios was a leader of the hesychasmic so-called Kollyvades Movement of Mt. Athos, referring to the boiled wheat (κόλλυβα) prepared for memorial service. The movement advocated the ancient practice of frequent Communion and sparked a controversy in the 1750s which shook the entire Orthodox Church and was probably the biggest debate after the Hesychastic Controversy. Parios himself published in 1802 a famous book called *Objection against the Irrational Zeal of Europe’s Philosophers* (*Αντιφώνησις πρὸς τὸν*

Another name that should be mentioned in this context is **Theodoros Anastasios Kavalliotis** (1718-89) who might have been a student of the great Voulgaris, although it is not entirely clear.<sup>19</sup> His philosophy might be influenced via Voulgaris by Germany's Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716) and Christian Wolff (1679-1754). Like Voulgaris, Kavalliotis was a cleric in the service of the Church and like Voulgaris he stressed the importance of ancient Greek studies. In 1743 Kavalliotis began to teach at the so-called New Academy. His persecution by ecclesiastical authorities due to his ideas is probably nothing but a legend.<sup>20</sup> Kavalliotis was from Moschopolis, a stronghold of Hellenized Albanian-Christian population where few (also Hellenized) Vlachs and Slavonians used to settle. This area was an important point of cultural transfer where several multilingual lexicons were released.<sup>21</sup> Another contact of Voulgaris, Nikephoros Theotokis (1731-1800), was a decades-long friend and succeeded him as archbishop of Kher-son/Slavyansk in 1779. He supported a modern Greek education and published a large volume on Voltaire in 1794 which had a strong impact on Greek educational thought.<sup>22</sup>

Another translator of Voltaire was **Nikolaos Karatzas** who translated Voltaire's *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations* and *Le siècle de Louis XIV* into Greek.<sup>23</sup> Karatzas belonged to the *Fanariots* whose advent dates to the fall of Constantinople in 1453. The name *Fanariots* goes back to *Fener* (Gr. *Fanari*), the Istanbul neighborhood where Greeks settled mainly after the Ecumenical Patriarchate had been forcibly relocated by the Ottoman authorities. They formed the civil society which in the 17<sup>th</sup> century supplanted the old aristocracy and constituted a wealthy caste who obtained political functions within the Ottoman Empire. Also many of the lay people who elected the Synod – which in turn elected the Patriarch – were *Fanariots* who in less than a century took control of the patriarchy.

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παράλογον ζῆλον τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς Εὐρώπης ἐρχομένων φιλοσόφων), see Patapios / Chrysostoms, *Manna*, 28; Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός*, 5.

<sup>18</sup> Makrides, *Orthodoxie und Politik*, 106.

<sup>19</sup> The information that Kavalliotis is said to have studied with Voulgaris in Ioannina is from one of Kavalliotis' students, see Peyfuss, *Akademie von Moschopolis*, 118; cf. Tabaki, *Rhigas Vélestinlis*, 52.

<sup>20</sup> Peyfuss, *Druckerei von Moschopolis*, 152-3; *idem*, *Akademie von Moschopolis*, 117-18.

<sup>21</sup> Koliopoulos, *Η πέραν Ελλάς*, 98, 103, 158. Other sources identify Moschopolis as an entirely Aromanian settlement, see Bardu, *Aromanian Writers*, 93. Current research points out that this was part of a Greek *Frühbauflärung* which dates back to not later than the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, see Chisacof, *Zagora*, 283.

<sup>22</sup> Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός*, 89, 94, 235. About the Theotokis' influence, Dimaras writes that "Μὲ τὸ βιβλίον τοῦ γὰρ τὸν Βολταῖρο εἶχε μίαν πολὺ σαφεῖ ἐπίδραση στὴν ἐξέλιξη τῆς ἐλληνικῆς σκέψης, πρὸς μίαν ἀρνητικὴν κατεύθυνση," *op. cit.*, 159. Both were probably the most famous Greeks in Russia of their time; see Makrides, *Orthodoxie und Politik*, 113-15.

<sup>23</sup> Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός*, 151; Papoulia, *Από την αυτοκρατορία στο εθνικό κράτος*, 176-7; cf. also Chasiotis, *Η Ανατολική Ομοσπονδία*, 17.

Later, some of the local families gained high office in the Empire, especially in the Balkan provinces.<sup>24</sup>

Some *Fanariots* collected vernacular poetry which has come down to us in a number of collections, the so-called *mismagiés* which played an important role in popularizing ideas of the Enlightenment.<sup>25</sup> One collector was **Athanasios Psalidas** (1767-1829) a former pupil of Voulgaris.<sup>26</sup> In 1792 he published together with Ioannis Karatzas the *Results of Love* (*Έρωτος Αποτελέσματα*), printed in Vienna. It is made up by a prose text which contains numerous verses of folk poetry.

Another collection called *School of Delicate Lovers* (*Σχολείον τῶν ντελικάτων έραστῶν*) was published in 1790 by **Rigas Ferraios Velestinlis** (1757-98). This man of Vlach extraction was 1785 active in *Fanariots* groups in the service of Prince Alexander Ypsilantis, the Grand Dragoman of the Sublime Porte. Having absorbed ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, which he attempted to transmit to Southeastern Europe, he became a poet of national liberation.<sup>27</sup>

Around 1790 he went to Vienna where he published books, maps, and songs, partly based on translations.<sup>28</sup> One of the translations is based on Rétif de la Bretonne’s book *École des amants délicats*, a collection of thirteen stories of which Rigas translated six freely into Greek and took them as a starting point for his novel *School of Delicate Lovers*. He enriched the story with poetry from

<sup>24</sup> Dieterich, *Geschichte*, 157.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Chatzipanagioti-Sangmeister / Kappler, *Thoughts*, 219-21; cf. Kappler, *Okzident und Orient*, 249. The term *mismagiés/metzmouádes* (μοσμαγιές/μετζμουάδες) goes back to the Turkish *mecmua* which is derived from the Arabic *maǧmū‘a* (“collection”).

<sup>26</sup> Psalidas was Voulgaris’ student at the priests’ seminary of Poltova and dedicated his scripture *Αληθής ευδαιμονία: ήτοι βάσις πάσης θρησκείας* (Vienna 1791) to Catharine, see Makrides, *Orthodoxie und Politik*, 106. Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός*, 155, states that “Το παράδειγμα του Βούλγαρη το ακολούθησε ένας νεός, ο Αθανάσιος Ψαλίδας, που επιθυμούσε να αρέσει τόσο στον Βούλγαρη όσο και στην αυτοκράτειρα. Σε ένα φιλοσοφικό έργο αφιερωμένο στην τελευταία, σημειώνει τον Βολταίρο ανάμεσα στους εχθρούς της θρησκείας. Από εδώ και πέρα τα πράγματα είναι καθαρά: την τελευταία δεκαετία του αιώνα, έχουμε μιá ολόκληρη σειρά από έργα, από το οποία μερικά άμεσα εμπνευσμένα από το Πατριαρχείο, όπου ο Βολταίρος δέχεται βιαιότατες επιθέσεις.”

<sup>27</sup> Zelepos, *Ethnisierung*, 47; Kitromilides, *Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy*, 280.

<sup>28</sup> Sugar, *Southeastern Europe*, 258. According to Pencker, *Grammatik*, suppl., 13, we find among his publications a translation of the *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis* by George Konstantinos Sakellarios which was never completed since a huge part of the manuscript was burned when Rigas was taken into custody; a translation of *L’έcole des amants délicats* by de la Bretonne (see above); a large map of Greece in twelve pieces; a book called *Anthology of Physics* (*Φυσικής Απάνθισμα*) which deals with natural phenomena; a treatise on tactics; patriotic songs and a manifesto; a map of Constantinople (1796); an atlas on the *Anacharis* waterplant; a translation of a work by Jean-François Marmontel; and, finally, his own journal.

*mismagiés* which he encased with sentiment. It has not been entirely elucidated which parts came from his own pen and what was adopted from the *mismagiés*, but there is no doubt that Rigas made use of the collections of songs which were circulating at his time.<sup>29</sup>

The translation of de la Bretonne is significant because the work of Rétif had some innovative aspects. Especially marriage and its justification as a love match which rises above class boundaries are discussed by these stories, binding it up with a social revolutionary approach. Many saw Rétif as popularizer of new liberal ideas of his time which threads through the whole translation: All texts in the *Σχολεῖον* breathe a liberal ethic and the spirit of the *fraternité* as well as the *égalité* of the people. Rigas in his *Σχολεῖον* describes the ultimate objective of man as happiness (εὐτυχία, εὐδαιμονία), as a means he notes common sense (ορθὸς λόγος), education (φωτισμὸς τοῦ νοῦ), love (ἔρωτας) and virtue (ἀρετή).<sup>30</sup> It is thus a manifesto of the Greek Enlightenment, combining rationalism with emotional sentiment.<sup>31</sup>

Rigas' translation was meant to popularize the ideas of the Enlightenment and gained a wide circulation.<sup>32</sup> Stylistically, Rigas aligned the translation to the Greek language while himself emerging as a first language reformer.<sup>33</sup> According

<sup>29</sup> Pistas, *Η Πατρότητα τῶν στιχουργήματων*, 393; Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικὸς Διαφωτισμὸς*, 251; cf. also Kappler, *Okzident und Orient*, 250. It deals *inter alia* with a young man, a *νέος ἐξωμερίτης* ("young provincials") called Ziakó (Jacques) who travels to Paris where he experiences different adventures. The story corresponds to the one of de la Bretonne (*Le petit Auvergnat*, 2 vols.) (Pistas, *op. cit.*, λγ'). About the popularity of love songs in Greek circles this time, see Dieterich, *Geschichte*, 165. Reprints were published in 1869 and 1876, see Branouses, *Πήγαι*, 131, quoted after Pistas, *op. cit.*, 26 n. 1. The title is probably inspired by one of the French stories, which is in the original: *Les contemporaines ou aventures des plus jolies femmes de l'âge présent, recueillies par N. \*\*\*\*\*,* Leipzig 1780, vol. A'/B', *ibidem* 394 n. 1. See also Tabaki, Rhigas Vélestinlis, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικὸς Διαφωτισμὸς*, 251. Marriage is also the main topic of the *Contemporaines*. Pistas, *Η Πατρότητα τῶν στιχουργήματων*, μς', μζ'. In addition to some French novels, Rigas intended to translate Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois*. A map of the Balkans and Asia Minor coast was decorated with antique coins and a portrait of Alexander the Great, thus anticipating the "Great Idea." Xydis, *Nationalism*, 228.

<sup>31</sup> As Tabaki, Rhigas Vélestinlis, 1, states: "D'un côté, nous assistons dans le premier exemple donné au déploiement du credo des Lumières: la foi en l'égalité humaine, le culte de la raison, le désir ardent pour faire disparaître les préjugés de toute sorte. De l'autre côté, dans le second exemple bien des motifs préromantiques apparaissent, comme la nuit, la sensibilité, l'amour, l'abondance de larmes."

<sup>32</sup> *Eadem*, 6; cf. Chourdakis, *Παιδαγωγία και Διαφωτισμὸς*. Unfortunately, this book was not available to me.

<sup>33</sup> Dieterich, *Geschichte*, 157. A contemporary of Kolettis, the poet Panayotis Soutsos (1806-68), of *Fanariot* origin, insisted on the return to ancient Greek, see Xydis, *Modern Greek Nationalism*, 242. The way to language reform was paved by Voulgaris who used to write in both classical Greek and a (in his own words) "semi-barbarian" (τὴν μιζοβάρβαρον) language, see Iken, *Leukothea*, 7.

to the Hellenist Triantafyllides the translation is adequate to the “living language type” between the vernacular (which dates back to the Attic language) and the archaic educated language of his time which is chiefly epitomized in folk songs.<sup>34</sup> Major figures of the Greek Enlightenment made use of the vernacular language in order to expand mass education.<sup>35</sup> Rigas’ political convictions – as reflected in his publications – start from a natural law model (φυσική δικαιοσύνη) and emphasize the mutual assistance between the citizen and social solidarity. Rigas also tried to introduce a new element into poetry, namely the liberal-patriotic enthusiasm for political freedom what was rather remote from the older poetry of Fanariots.<sup>36</sup> Rigas’ wakening call “On, you sons of the Hellenes! On, the proposed hours of glory,” is modeled on the French Marseillaise as many folk songs were under the influence of ideas of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era.<sup>37</sup>

Allegedly, Rigas also founded a revolutionary secret society before he was arrested by Austrian authorities in Trieste 1797. The questioning protocols of the Austrian police show how dangerous the authorities regarded his activities.<sup>38</sup> Rigas testified that he had been copying 1,200 portraits of Alexander the Great in order to disseminate them among the Greek community.<sup>39</sup> Rigas, influenced by Rousseau and Voltaire, was the first advocate of a Greek nation-state which is inspired by antiquity. His idea of a large Balkan state where the Greeks play a leading role is also very much taken on by later apologists. Rigas sought to create a new empire encompassing not only the Greek people; he was a forerunner of

<sup>34</sup> Pistas, Η πατρότητα των στιχουργήματων, λθ'. The creative period of Rigas coincides with the beginning of the philological and political work of Korais, see Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός*, 257. On the historical roots of modern Greek, see Hatzidakis, *Einleitung*; Babiniotis, *Linguistic Approach*; Hering, *Auseinandersetzungen*.

<sup>35</sup> It is remarkable that the movers and shakers of the liberation movement were not from Constantinople but from the Empire’s Balkan provinces: Rigas was born in Thessaly, others who followed his track, came from Macedonia, Chios, Crete etc.; cf. Dieterich, *Geschichte*, 164, 173; Hering, *Auseinandersetzungen*, 125. Also Byzantine literature was translated into the vernacular. As Puchner reports, the medieval *Errotokritos* was published in Vienna in 1818 in a “*Fanariot*” version written by Dionysios Foteinos and extended with songs similar to the *mismagiés*, see Puchner, *Studien*, 404.

<sup>36</sup> Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie*, 364.

<sup>37</sup> The anonymous Greek author of the *Hellenike Nomarchia* (*Ελληνική Νομαρχία*), an anti-clerical and nationalist pamphlet published in Italy in 1806, mocked Greek students outside Greece for their heavy consumption of those shoddy romances which were so popular in Greece and France, see Clogg, *Elite and Popular Culture*, 82. The pamphlet itself is influenced by French revolutionary ideas, see Kitromilides, *Νεοελληνικός διαφωτισμός*, 366.

<sup>38</sup> Zelepos, *Ethnisierung*, 47; Dieterich, *Geschichte*, 174; Legrand, *Documents inédits*, 58-66.

<sup>39</sup> See the questioning protocols in Legrand, *Documents inédits*, 62. About the meaning of Alexander the Great for the political rhetoric of that time see my paper: *Inszenierte Wiederkehr, passim*. Rigas in his charta defines the borders of Greece (*Ellados*) as well as in his *Ymno petriotiko* where he addresses the idea of a *Graikia*, see Koliopoulos, *Η πέραν Ελλάς*, 43.



the *megali* idea, the imperialist project of a Greek empire comprising the entirety of Asia Minor as well as Syria and the Balkans. Rigas modeled his own constitution after that of the French one of 1793 which was the most liberal of all French constitutions,<sup>40</sup> but probably was more influenced by political romanticism and not eligible for the requirements of a modern state.<sup>41</sup>

The Greek Church attacked Rigas's pamphlet *The New Political Administration* and issued a circular which shunned French culture as a symbol of much-hated liberalism.<sup>42</sup> His efforts paved the way for a Greek constitutionalism which attained maturity when Jeremy Bentham, chairman of the London Greek Committee who was influenced by Montesquieu, became involved in drafting a constitution for Greece which was to be granted independence in 1833. But before, in 1822, Bentham's efforts led to the Constitution of Epidaurus (the city located on the Peloponnese had already been freed) which was primarily a signal to the European powers that Greece was willing to establish a government that is capable of working within the framework of European political culture.<sup>43</sup> As a representative of a "Mediterranean nationalism" Bentham together with his representative Edward Blaquiere tried to make the countries of the Mediterranean Sea find their way to independence in a spirit of both liberalism and nationalism.<sup>44</sup>

The end of the *Fanariots* came with the Greek War of Independence. Alexandros Ypsilantis, the Russian Tsarist's adjutant and himself of *Fanariot* extraction, had sparked off the Greek insurgency in the Danube region in 1821. The subsequent turmoil on the Peloponnese started the eight-year liberation struggle of the Greeks against the Ottomans and mobilized a wave of passionate sympathy in

<sup>40</sup> Roudometof, *From Rum Millet*, 29: "In Riga's own work, Hellas appears as the secular, liberal facet of the Rum millet, the product of an intellectual mutation caused by the reception of the Enlightenment into the Ottoman Balkans."

<sup>41</sup> Papouliá, *Από την αυτοκρατορία*, 178-9. "Δεν είναι τυχαίο ότι κατά τα μέσα του 19ου αιώνα, μετά τους αγώνες για την ανεξαρτησία, διατυπώνονται τόσο στην Σερβία όσο και στην Ελλάδα προγράμματα που έχουν ως σκοπό την απελευθέρωση και την ενότητα όλων όσων ανήκουν στην ίδια εθνική κοινότητα, όπως το Načertanije [a secret imperialist program for the Serbs written by Ilija Garašanin in 1844 – M. K.] και η Μεγάλη ιδέα," *op. cit.*, 212, *cf.* Matl, *Südslawische Studien*, 67; Hösch, *Geschichte*, 155. On the German transmission of ideas of romanticism within the Balkan Enlightenment, see Kitromilides, *The Enlightenment*, 59. For the Romanian region it is noted that "the whole generation of 1848, directly or indirectly know the Herderian ideology about language and folklore," see Duțu, *Bildung*, 113.

<sup>42</sup> Xydis, *Nationalism*, 229.

<sup>43</sup> Rosen, *Bentham, Byron, and Greece*, 4, 96-7. The English poet Edward Trelawny who has been travelling to Greece where he received a copy of the constitution reports that Greek civilians who did not benefit from the liberation of their country got incited by the *Fanariots* to assert their claims, see Trelawny, *Records of Shelley*, vol. 2, 161.

<sup>44</sup> Dimaras, *Ζητήματα της Νέας Φιλολογίας*, has pointed to the fact that "Η ψυχή του νέου ελληνισμού γεννήθηκε μέσα στην Τουρκοκρατία." (quoted after Dimadis, *Greek Historical Novel*, 266, n. 1).

Western Europe and the U. S.<sup>45</sup> While the English Philhellenes recruited from among Bentham’s supporters were critical of church-set, the London Greek Committee rather envisaged a church reformist action in liberated Greece.<sup>46</sup> In the course of the national awakening when the Greek intelligentsia increasingly turned away from church-influenced thinkers and a new generation of young intellectuals like Theofilos Kairis (d. 1853) and Adamantios Korais (d. 1833) were at loggerheads with the church.<sup>47</sup>

From a Western perspective, 19<sup>th</sup>-century Southeast Europe was regarded as an area of transition and hardly as a part of Europe proper.<sup>48</sup> Although in its largest part an Ottoman colony for about 400 years, it was not cut off from Western influences of the Enlightenment. As it could be shown, there were ways both from Western Europe to Greece as well as even to Istanbul via the *Fanariots*.

However, one must come to the conclusion that the Greek Enlightenment has failed insofar as neither secularism nor the prerequisites of a modern liberal democracy have a strong standing in present-day Greece. The reasons go beyond this paper but they are at least partly to be found in the religious background: While in the West ideas of Enlightenment occurred in a mostly protestant surrounding, the Greek culture and national identity is inextricably linked with Christian Orthodoxy which might be less applicable to furthering ideas of

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<sup>45</sup> Hösch, *Geschichte*, 168.

<sup>46</sup> The London Greek Committee used to cooperate with the English missionary societies aiming at not only refreshing Hellas with English utilitarianism but also modeling it according English piety. When the first Bible delivery arrived, Stanhope uttered: “These Bibles will save the priests the trouble to enlighten the darkness of their faithful flock.” Heyer, *Orientalische Frage*, 29; see also St. Clair, *That Greece might still be free*, *passim*.

<sup>47</sup> Podskalsky, *Griechische Theologie*, 385; Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός*, 151. Korais (who studied Helvetius and the scepticists Hume and Voltaire) had a special interest in the American Constitution (as reflected in his dialogue *On Greek Interests*). It comes at no surprise that he was an admirer of George Washington and Benjamin Franklin. He also met Jefferson personally and corresponded with him about the future of Greece. In 1821 Korais published his *Political Counsels* on natural law and social contract, etc. He regarded the middle class as the central pillar of the new society and advocated a combination of freedom and justice, see Xydis, *Nationalism*, 230-1. Concerning the correspondence with Jefferson, see *Bulletin of the Bureau of the Rolls and the Library of the Department of State, Washington, D. C., 1894-1903*, vols. 6, 10; Korais, *Jefferson–Korais Correspondence*, *passim*.

<sup>48</sup> Diner, *Zweierlei Osten*, 112-13. The French Ministère des affaires étrangères regarded the following areas as part of the “Orient”: “Egypte Nubie et Arabie du Nord; Syrie et autres provinces et Iles de la Turquie Asiatique; Constantinople; Romélie (Thrace, Bulgarie, Macédoine, Thessalie); Valachie et Moldavie; Bosnie et Serbie; Albanie; Crète (Ile de Candie); Royaume de Grèce; Iles Ioniennes.” (Ministère des Affaires Etrangères [Paris], *Mémoires et documents, Sous-Série Turquie*, vol. 20, fol 4r.)

Enlightenment,<sup>49</sup> since both orthodox Christianity and Islam share a worldview much fixated with the other world.<sup>50</sup>

Also than that the Greek as well as other societies born out of the former Ottoman Empire never succeeded in overcoming a siege mentality (thus the popular saying that the Greeks are a “brotherless people”, ἀνάδελφος λαός).<sup>51</sup> Therefore, the political culture forms, to echo Fareed Zakaria, a rather illiberal democracy nurtured by a strong anti-Western attitude so prevalent in the Orthodox Church.<sup>52</sup> This is well reflected by the fact that carriers of Enlightenment in Greece were often linked with the Church and did not necessarily identify with the ideas they were so eager to spread.

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<sup>49</sup> In the words of Kitromilides, *The Enlightenment*, 54: “[...] the reception of the Enlightenment in Southeastern Europe was an embattled process and met with powerful structural and cultural resistances.”

<sup>50</sup> “Das Besondere an Europa ist, dass sich die Askese im Mittelalter und in der Renaissance mehr und mehr veräußerlicht: Seelenheil kann durch ein von Sparsamkeit und praktischer Tätigkeit bestimmtes Leben erlangt werden. Im Islam und der byzantinischen Variante des Christentums gibt es keine vergleichbare Wendung; in Europa haben vor allem die Mönchsorden dazu beigetragen. Zu der – im Vergleich mit anderen Religionen – ausgesprochen extrovertierten Haltung gehört außerdem eine gewisse Distanzierung von der Natur. Der Mensch empfindet sich nicht in erster Linie als Naturwesen, sondern (um eine biblischen Ausdruck zu gebrauchen) als ‚Haushalter‘ mit dem von Gott erteilten Auftrag, die Natur klug zu verwalten, sie aber auch zum eigenen Nutzen zu gebrauchen.” Cohen, *Die zweite Erschaffung*, 140-1.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. the statements by the Lebanese writer Adonis, see Ajami, *Dream Palace*, 114-16.

<sup>52</sup> *The Encyclopedia of Greece and the Hellenic Tradition* notes under the lemma “Anti-westernism” (written by V. N. Makrides) that Greece must be regarded as a “torn country,” so that “[i]ts political and economical elites are pro-Western, but its history, culture, religion and tradition are essentially non-Western.” Therefore it comes to no surprise that xenophobia, anti-semitism and anti-americanism are extraordinarily thriving in contemporary Greece. The Greek political analyst Andreas Andrianopoulos speaks of a “victim culture,” see Andrianopoulos, Review; Zakaria, *Future*, 99.

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## The Library of Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ. Books and their Audience in 12<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> Century Syria

Boris Liebrecht

Literature does not exist without its social context, its readers, and its market. These factors influence and determine its reception, transmission, and creation. Therefore, the quest for 18<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century Arabic literature, while exploring the “supply side” (*i. e.* the authors) of its production, should also take due notice of the “consumer- and retail-side” (*i. e.* a text’s audience and distribution). One of the places where the dissemination of literature occurred and books found their readers, was the library. Libraries, private and public, should therefore be an essential part of our understanding of literary culture.

Unfortunately, we hardly get the chance to see a private library of the period *in situ* anymore. Rarely surviving the life of their collector or his immediate heirs, they are dispersed today in collections all over the world. A chance to at least partly revive them today is their virtual restitution through a painstaking gathering of ownership statements. And while the great cataloguing enterprises of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries can only be admired for the sheer mass of accurate information they made widely accessible for the first time, they are usually no help in reconstructing a provenance history of the manuscripts.<sup>1</sup>

The catalogues of Arabic manuscripts in Berlin, Leipzig, Tübingen, and Turin were no exception to this rule.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, their compilers – Ahlwardt,<sup>3</sup> Vollers,<sup>4</sup> Seybold,<sup>5</sup> Weisweiler,<sup>6</sup> and Nallino<sup>7</sup> respectively – with the thousands of

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<sup>1</sup> This is hardly surprising, since many thousands of manuscripts had to be described, the content of many of which was unknown, let alone printed. Cataloguers, therefore, rightfully paid more attention to the texts than to the actual books in their physical form and with their individual history. It was not until very recently that catalogues would more frequently include the names of former owners and readers of the manuscripts described.

<sup>2</sup> Only Seybold, *Verzeichnis*, and Weisweiler, *Verzeichnis*, mention a larger number of readers and possessors from the Tübingen collection or hint to the existence of entries in the manuscripts. They are, nonetheless, not exhaustive in this regard.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ahlwardt, *Verzeichnis*, vol. 7, nos. 7714, 8188-8195, 8460 (in the following, I will always cite the manuscripts from Berlin by their original signature [Wetzstein, Sprenger, or Landberg], not the number in the Ahlwardt catalogue).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Vollers, *Katalog*, nos. 2, 110, 174, 612, 625, 627, 664, 866, 867.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Seybold, *Verzeichnis*, nos. 32, 33, 42.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Weisweiler, *Verzeichnis*, no. 52.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Nallino, *Manoscritti*, nos. 54, 55.

names they had to omit, took time to mention a man who has not acquired any lasting fame and whose manuscripts seem to be the only surviving trace of his existence.<sup>8</sup> This man was called *al-qayyim al-ḥādīj* Abū Ḥasan Aḥmad al-Shaqīfātī al-Ḥalabī al-Naqshbandī al-Shāfi‘ī, known as al-Rabbāṭ.

Most of the texts so catalogued could be described as “popular narratives,”<sup>9</sup> including many *sīras* or parts of the *1001 Nights* cycle, for many inseparably connected to places of popular amusement like the coffeehouse.<sup>10</sup> The copies were usually modern, sometimes in al-Rabbāṭ’s own handwriting, mostly of simple, if not to say cheap appearance, tattered and worn from constant reading.<sup>11</sup> And for nearly a century that seemed to be all there was to know about this man and his library. Since then, few of his books, including epics and vernacular poetry, were catalogued in Damascus.<sup>12</sup> In 1995 Muḥsin Maḥdī came across al-Rabbāṭ’s name while working on the manuscripts for his edition of the *1001 Nights*, thereby perpetuating a notion that he was important only as a lover of popular narrative literature.<sup>13</sup>

But new manuscript finds show a library that seems to be more than just the small collection of a man who loved his entertaining stories and liked to scribble down some vernacular poems of his own. Al-Rabbāṭ and his books, rather, might be an example of how a more secular choice of literature, enjoyed by the

<sup>8</sup> In the four catalogues of Berlin, Leipzig, Tübingen, Turin as well as the later catalogues of the Zāhiriyya library in Damascus altogether 47 manuscripts of Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ were registered and he thereby found his way as a poet even into Brockelmann’s *GAL* (vol. 2, 304). Karl Vollers catalogued the largest share of Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ’s books, a fact that was explicitly mentioned by the two reviewers of his work – Kern and Nallino – who draw the reader’s attention to the respective counterparts in Berlin, Tübingen and Turin (Kern’s review in: *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen* 11 [1908], 258-67, Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ is mentioned p. 258; Nallino’s review in: *Rivista degli studi orientali* 1 [1907], 131-5, mention of Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ is made on p. 132).

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the problematic term “popular” cf. Marzolph, *Popular Literature*, 610-11; Bauer, *Ibrāhīm al-Mi‘mār*, 88-92; Petráček, *Volkstümliche Literatur*, 228-41; Bauer, *Post-Classical Literature*, 151-6. That “high” and “popular” culture were mutually influencing each other is emphasized by Shoshan, *High Culture*, 87-8.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Vollers, *Katalog*, 11, where he describes Vollers 31 – a *Sīrat al-nabī* not from the possession of Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ, but in its appearance completely similar to Aḥmad’s *sīra*-books (like his own *Nasab al-nabī* directly following in the catalogue, Vollers 32-36) – and for no apparent reason calls it a “Volksbuch, im Kaffeehause abgenutzt,” although nowhere in the manuscript a coffeehouse is mentioned.

<sup>11</sup> For a study of al-Rabbāṭ’s library based on the previously catalogued manuscripts (and therefore outdated), cf. Liebreuz, *Handschriften*, 105-11.

<sup>12</sup> Sawwās / Murād, *Qism al-adab*, vol. 1, 112, 317-18, 407, 425-6, vol. 2, 301; Rayyāl, *al-Tārikh*, 409-10.

<sup>13</sup> Other researchers working on this kind of literature and with al-Rabbāṭ’s manuscripts, such as Claudia Ott or Thomas Herzog, also mention his name in passing.

most heterogeneous elements of society alike, was received outside the traditional circles of education and how a demand for this literature formed unlikely networks that reached from the very top of society to the bottom of a hardly still literate readership – with al-Rabbāṭ like a conduit in the middle.

### 1 Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ's life

On the life of Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ fairly little is known for certain. None of the biographical dictionaries or chronicles of the time mention him and no traveller seems to have taken notice of his existence. The few dates furnished in his manuscripts give no more than a very thin biographical framework. He was apparently a native of Aleppo, hence the *nisba* al-Ḥalabī, and lived in that city until the year 1202 or 1203/1787-9. The reason for this assumption is a list of that city's governors continued up to 1202 which Aḥmad laid down in one of his *safīnas* (Berlin Wetzstein II 1238),<sup>14</sup> confessing that he was ignorant as to later office holders, because: "then we moved away."<sup>15</sup> Most probably he moved to Damascus, since virtually all the readers and later possessors of his manuscripts, as far as they can be identified, hail from that city and the texts al-Rabbāṭ composed himself make numerous references to it. Furthermore, the vast majority of the extant manuscripts are part of collections definitely bought in Damascus, like the three *Wetzstein collections* in Berlin and Tübingen, the *Rifā'iyya* in Leipzig, or the greater part of the Arabic material in the *Sprenger collection* in Berlin. The first dated ownership statement he left comes from the year 1202/1787-8, when he finished supplementing the end of an incomplete *Sīrat Djūdār b. 'Umar al-Ṣayyād* (Tübingen Ms. Ma VI 42) in his possession. We may assume, therefore, that al-Rabbāṭ was no longer a mere child at that time. Furthermore, while this one note may not in itself be proof of a functional library, the fact that Shākir b. 'Abdallāh aghā al-Sūqiyya read five volumes from al-Rabbāṭ's library – now dispersed among the collections of Berlin, Leipzig and London – between the years 1203/1788-9 and 1219/1804-5, seems to indicate that he consulted the same collection over this period of time which might, therefore, have been publicly accessible already in 1203/1788-9.<sup>16</sup> The last date al-Rabbāṭ wrote down himself is found in a manuscript of the *Rifā'iyya* library in Leipzig: Vollers 612, which he also copied, has his dated ownership statement from the year 1252/1836-7. Supposing that he was a grown up man when he left Aleppo in 1202/1787-8, he must have been well into his sixties or even over 70 years old at that point. Some of his

<sup>14</sup> Cf. already Ahlwardt, *Verzeichnis*, vol. 7, 233.

<sup>15</sup> Ms. Berlin Wetzstein II 1238, fol. 28r: ثم خرجنا من حلب وما ندري عدنا بمن حكم والله اعلم بالصواب.

<sup>16</sup> Wetzstein II 543 (1203), 544 (1203), 545 (1203), 1246 (1203); Leipzig Vollers 32/D. C. 156 (1209); British Museum Library Ms. Add. 7404 Rich. (1219).

books are then found in the possession of two of his sons, Muḥammad and ‘Abd, who lent them out for money, at least from 1252/1836-7 onwards. Other books found new owners in the 1240s, so that one can with a fair degree of certainty set al-Rabbāṭ’s death not too long after 1252/1836-7, at which point he was no longer solely responsible for his library.

We may assume that Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ earned his living in two ways. The first was by means of fees for his booklending or even by selling manuscripts. But he also apparently carried out poetic and musical performances. In a manuscript of the Damascus *Zāhiriyya* (now part of the *Asad-*) Library, Aḥmad describes the setting of musical performances in a coffeehouse and advises – in the manner of an experienced artist – on how best to set the stage (Ms. Damascus *Zāhiriyya* 7400).<sup>17</sup>

One title Aḥmad ascribed to himself on some occasions, namely *al-qayyim*, has caused some confusion as to its meaning and the occupation it described. It was interpreted by Seybold as “Meistersänger,”<sup>18</sup> a translation that Karl Vollers and Martin Hartmann – and this author followed them on one occasion<sup>19</sup> – rejected instead translating the term as “Moscheeninspektor,” *i. e.* “mosque supervisor.”<sup>20</sup> But not only does Seybold’s translation have the authority of Johann Gottfried Wetzstein (the Prussian consul who lived in Damascus shortly after al-Rabbāṭ’s presumed death and purchased the vast majority of his known manuscripts)<sup>21</sup> to back it, it was also common usage in the region to call a leading poet of his generation its *qayyim* or *primus*.<sup>22</sup> Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ was indeed a poet and – at least in his own eyes and words – a *qayyim* among his peers. In fact, eight of the ten

<sup>17</sup> My knowledge of this manuscript’s content, which I could not consult, is based on the catalogue entry in Sawwās / Murād, *Qism al-adab*, vol. 1, 317-18.

<sup>18</sup> Seybold, *Verzeichnis*, 75: “berühmten modernen Meistersänger (مفسر) von Ḥalab.” The term “Meistersänger” in German evokes the sphere of highly venerated poetry performed in the Middle Ages with musical company by craft masters and guilds, being the bourgeois equivalent of the courtly troubadour (in German “Minnesänger”).

<sup>19</sup> Liebreuz, *Handschriften*, 98.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Vollers, *Katalog*, 191; Hartmann, *Handschriften*, 265-6, who discusses the merits of a translation as “Moscheeninspektor” in more detail.

<sup>21</sup> Wetzstein, *Catalog*, 6: “bekanntem Meistersängers (مفسر).” It is, nonetheless, unlikely that Wetzstein’s explanation is based on a personal knowledge of al-Rabbāṭ’s position and could therefore be regarded as a qualification of his fame. He rather translated the term *qayyim* in the meaning he was acquainted with, *i. e.* not only a poet, but specifically a famous one.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. the story of the *qayyim* of Egypt coming to Damascus and engaging in a poetic battle with the then still aspiring poet Māmāyḥ (Ibn Ayyūb, *Rawḍ*, p. 83-93 of the Arabic text), on whom the same title (*qayyim zamānīhī*) is later also bestowed (*e. g.* in the title of his *Dīwān* Ms. Berlin Wetzstein I 124, fol. 1r); cf. also Ibn Ayyūb, *Rawḍ*, p. 77 of the Arabic text, concerning a “*qayyim al-Shām fī fann al-zadjal*”; Muḥibbi, *Khulāṣat*, vol. 3, 215 (*qayyim al-adab*); Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt*, 58 (*qayyim al-adab*).

manuscripts registered by Ahlwardt as being in his possession are *safīnas* or personal collections of prose and poetry that were also partly the fruits of his own pen.

## 2 The manuscripts<sup>23</sup>

Recently, the ongoing Refaiya project in Leipzig<sup>24</sup> has given me the opportunity to look thoroughly through more than two and a half thousand manuscripts of Syrian origin in Leipzig and Berlin. The name Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ recurs more frequently than any other. The collection in Leipzig does not only contain 29 volumes, as the catalogue said, but at least 46. And the ten books catalogued in Berlin turned out to be an astonishing 115 so far. Some more manuscripts in London, Harvard,<sup>25</sup> and Damascus<sup>26</sup> surfaced and today a total of 174 items from this library have been found.<sup>27</sup> Many more can be expected in those parts of the Berlin collection I have not scanned yet, as well as in other libraries apparently all across the world, certainly in those of the historical Syrian realm. Therefore the following observations must be preliminary and al-Rabbāṭ's library

<sup>23</sup> For a shortlist of the manuscripts and their contents mentioned in the following chapters, *cf.* the appendix at the end of this article. In the following I depend for descriptions of the manuscripts and their contents to a large degree – and exclusively in the cases of Damascus, London, and Turin – on the excellent catalogues of these collections without mentioning them in every single case.

<sup>24</sup> See: <http://refaiya.uni-leipzig.de>. Sponsored by the German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft). This site will have an up to date list of all the manuscripts of Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ I might still be able to find after the completion of this article. A great deal of gratitude has to be expressed for the Staatsbibliothek Berlin and the head of the Oriental Department, Christoph Rauch, who graciously granted me the very privileged access to the manuscript depot that was indeed a prerequisite for this work.

<sup>25</sup> The Harvard manuscript has been digitized as part of the “Islamic Heritage Project” (<http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/ihp/>) and can be inspected here: <http://pds.lib.harvard.edu/pds/view/16005016>.

<sup>26</sup> *Cf.* Sawwās / Murād, *Qism al-adab*, vol. 1, 112, 407, 426, vol. 2, 301; Rayyāl, *al-Tārīkh*, 409-10.

<sup>27</sup> This number is misleading in two ways. On the one hand, it is too high, since some of the shelf-marks refer to sets of multi-volume works that could be subsumed under one such shelf-mark. Still, on the other hand, it is too low, since Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ's name does not necessarily appear in all the volumes of these multi-volume works or not all of them have been found yet. For example, his owner's entry in the last volumes of a set of the *Sīrat 'Antar* actually refers to the 60 volumes the entire set once consisted of (Sprenger 1313-1313bis) and counting all of them *in absentia* would automatically push the size of his library to more than 200 volumes. After completing the first draft of this article, I learned that Ibrahim Akel (Paris) is preparing a thesis on Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ and his books, so more findings are to be expected.

must have been larger – and presumably considerably larger – than is as yet apparent.

The new findings changed my perception of al-Rabbāt to a great extent. Far from having a small collection of mostly cheap, worn-out books, his library contained some real *cimelia*, at least in the context of Ottoman-era Syrian private libraries. Among them we find a fine old copy – written in 761/1359-60 – of the *Dīwān* of Ibn Nubāta (Wetzstein I 40) with superb leather binding instead of the usual quarter-leather or cardboard his books are very often covered with. Not quite as old – copied in 1034/1624-5 – but also outfitted with the calligraphy and binding worthy of the library of a bibliophile is a manuscript of al-Damīrī’s *Hayāt al-Hayawān* (Wetzstein I 169). One might also count the so-called Tübingen ‘Umar (Ms. VI 32), a fragment of the *Arabian Nights* probably from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, among those treasures, since it is one of the very few copies of this text illuminated with drawings. Still this book is not usually seen in the sphere of learned elite culture and is executed with great effort and devotion but – charming as they are – quite clumsy drawings. The most surprising find in al-Rabbāt’s library is Sprenger 5, an undated but very old copy of al-Muqaddasī’s geography *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm*. This superbly executed manuscript surely deserved a high price, and indeed Alois Sprenger (1813-93) bought the book in 1854 for 500 piasters.<sup>28</sup> This is the single highest price I am able to put on an extant manuscript from Syria until that date – though even more expensive ones surely existed.

This book therefore seems like an unlikely find in the library of a man who was thought to have supplied the readers of “coffee-house literature.” It looks less surprising once one sheds the first notion of popular narrative literature as being cheap and realizes that it was, despite its often shabby appearance, not at all the bottom of the Middle Eastern literary culture, but on the contrary one of its most precious commodities – at least in pecuniary terms. Admittedly, with their simple bindings, unattractive script, small size, signs of wear and tear, and entries of, apparently, often only half-literate readers, most of al-Rabbāt’s manuscripts do not give the best of impressions. But this first impression is, in many instances, misleading.

Another of al-Rabbāt’s books, the illuminated Tübingen fragment of the *1001 Nights*, was lent out to the *sayyid* Ḥasan b. Sa‘d al-Dīn al-Ḥarīrī for the duration

<sup>28</sup> Letter sent by the Prussian consul Johann Gottfried Wetzstein (1815-1905) from Damascus to his former teacher Heinrich Leberecht Fleischer (1801-88) in Leipzig. Wetzstein, who had a great deal of experience on the Damascene book market, interestingly calls this a “bargain price”: “Die vergangene Woche hat er von Anton Bulad für den billigen Preis von 500 Piaster eine sehr alte Geographie (von المقدسي) gekauft.” NL Fleischer Copenhagen, letter from Wetzstein to Fleischer, dated December 5, 1854, fol. 2v.

of this man's trip to the Ḥawrān in 1252/1836 for the price of 5 *fidḍa*<sup>29</sup> a day according to a contract found in the manuscript.<sup>30</sup> The book was lent out by Muḥammad al-Rabbāṭ al-Ḥalabī, a son of al-Rabbāṭ, who, interestingly, possessed and lent out the book in a year his father was still alive. The same contract stipulates that, should the manuscript get “lost, stolen, burnt, or otherwise not returned to us,” Muḥammad al-Rabbāṭ would take from Ḥasan al-Ḥarīrī its price (*thamanahū*), set at 300 *ghursh*. If the *fidḍa* is to be taken as the *pāra/miṣriyya*, forty of which would change for a *ghursh*, then this price is the equivalent of 2,400 days or 6 ½ years worth of its rental fee. Books like these must therefore have been a long-term investment and would not have been for those seeking fast cash. But they most certainly had more than just pecuniary value for their possessors. Also, the 300 *ghursh* would be the second highest price I have found so far in a manuscript from Syria – trailing only the aforementioned copy of Muqaddasī's geography, another book from al-Rabbāṭ's library, which was, however, sold some twenty years later.

Al-Rabbāṭ himself mentioned the prices of many of his books in several ownership statements. Unfortunately, most of these numbers are erased now.<sup>31</sup> But already the very few surviving ones in 24 manuscripts add up to an amazing 793 ½ *qursh*! This number is not easy to interpret, though. Al-Rabbāṭ never actually wrote down the currency *qursh* in his entries. But since the prices listed sometimes contain fractions (like 3 ½), which could not occur were the number to mean the smaller currency *miṣriyya/pāra*, this ascription seems inevitable.<sup>32</sup> Once it is established that the numbers refer to the *qursh*, the next crucial question would be what the price “25 *qursh*” found in two volumes of the *Sīrat 'Antar* meant? Does it refer to the whole set of 60 volumes of this work or rather to every single one of them, making the total price to an astounding 1,900 *qursh*?

A look at real estate prices from the time can serve to put this hypothetical number into context. According to information assembled by Brigitte Marino, houses

<sup>29</sup> Usually used in Ottoman Syria of this time to denote the *pāra/miṣriyya*, 40 of which constitute one *qursh/ghursh* or piaster. Mahdī, *Nights*, 301, tries to put this figure into context by stating that it would be half the daily wage of an ordinary worker in the Aleppo soap industry of the time. While this might be the case – though the numbers provided by Bowring for Damascus in the same period are considerably higher – he fails to give a source for this claim. He might have simply thought *fidḍa* to mean the *ghursh*, when it really meant the smaller *pāra/miṣriyya*.

<sup>30</sup> This had already been noted by Seybold, who transcribes the full contract; cf. Seybold, *Verzeichnis*, 76.

<sup>31</sup> Among those with a price erased is Sprenger 5, the geography bought for 500 piasters by Alois Sprenger in 1854. It would have been extremely interesting to compare the two numbers.

<sup>32</sup> For a detailed discussion of the prices of manuscripts in Ottoman Syria, cf. my forthcoming article “Mit Gold nicht aufzuwiegen. Der Wert von Büchern im osmanischen Syrien (11.-13. Jahrhundert AH),” based on a lecture held at the conference “Codicology and History of the Manuscript Written in Arabic Script,” Madrid, May 27-29, 2010.



in the suburban quarter al-Mīdān ranged between 50 and 13,000 *qursh* in the years 1820-30. But only 14 % of them cost more than 2,500 *qursh*, classified by Marino as “grandes maisons,” while half (49 %) were valued under 1,000 *qursh* (“maisons modesties”) and still 20 % cost less than 500 *qursh*.<sup>33</sup> The range of prices was, therefore, considerable, but it appears nonetheless that a price of 1,900 *qursh* as proposed for one copy of the *Sīrat ‘Antar*, the likes of which al-Rabbāṭ possessed in abundance, constituted an immense fortune and seems, therefore, unlikely.

One could argue that the high price of the Tübingen fragment of the *Nights* was due only to its unusual illuminations and that for the other, rather shabby *sīras* in the library a price of 25 *qursh* must have been sufficient. But informed travelers often noted the great scarcity and resulting high prices of epic literature, especially when one was looking for complete copies like the ones found of several works in al-Rabbāṭ’s library.<sup>34</sup> And his voluminous 60 volume set of the *Sīrat ‘Antar*, therefore, seems quite undervalued at 25 *qursh*, especially since it seems to have gained some prominence at the time among the extant copies of the text: in a note found in another manuscript of this epic, al-Rabbāṭ’s *‘Antar* is counted among the “famous ones.”<sup>35</sup>

A *Sīrat Baibars* in 26 volumes seems to further confirm this assumption. According to his own entries, al-Rabbāṭ bought it in the year 1214/1799. Only five volumes still bear the ownership statements, which in turn are fitted with a price. But the price differs from one copy to another, with three of them being valued at 33 *qursh* (Wetzstein II 561, 567, 573), while two of them cost only 21 (Wetzstein II 577, 580). The only reasonable explanation for this, especially with the above-proposed arguments in mind, seems to be a pricing of each volume individually and resulting prices of several hundred, if not a thousand *qursh* for each of the many multi-volume sets of popular epics. These extraordinarily high prices, fetched by no other book in this period in Syria among those I inspected,

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Marino, *Faubourg*, 241. The average price of houses in the cheap suburb of Ṣāliḥiyya at roughly the same time (1827-30) valued 1,409 *qursh*, cf. *ibidem*, 266.

<sup>34</sup> “Seeing so much around that reminded me of the delightful stories in the Arabian Nights, I went into the book bazaar close to the mosque, and inquired for an original copy of them; at the first two or three book-stalls I was unsuccessful, and was told they were very scarce and very dear; [...]” Addison, *Damascus*, vol. 2, 71. Another report is penned in Egypt: “The great scarcity of copies of these two works [*Sayf Dhū l-Yazan* and *1001 Nights*; B. L.] is, I believe, the reason why recitations of them are no longer heard: even fragments of them are with difficulty procured; and when a complete copy of ‘The Thousand and One Nights’ is found, the price demanded for it is too great for a reciter to have it in his power to pay.” Lane, *Account*, vol. 1, 415.

<sup>35</sup> Berlin Wetzstein II 1021, fol. ar: „*al-nusakh al-mashhūra / min sīrat ‘Antar hiya / nuskhāt Ibn Shams / nuskhāt al-shaykh ‘Umar Ibn al-‘Aqqād ‘Abd Shu‘ayb / wa-fihā mubālaghāt kiṭhār / nuskhāt al-Rabbāṭ.*“

might be the result of the efforts and labor invested in collecting these novels. Since most are either completely or to a great extent recent copies, the cost of labor, *i. e.* that of a professional scribe, must be taken into account. Judging by the prices for those scribes as given by some informed travellers<sup>36</sup> and in comparison with the actual prices found in the manuscripts I had the chance to inspect – and even quite marvelous copies among them – it would seem that second-hand books would regularly be much cheaper to acquire than commissioning a new copy, even if the latter was not in any way adorned.

A library of this size was therefore, as can easily be imagined, not a common asset and only accessible to those with the necessary financial means.<sup>37</sup> In fact, to even possess a collection of books worthy of the name library was quite uncommon. Rifāʿat al- aḥṭāwī (1216/1801-1290/1873) relates with amazement how in France everybody, rich or poor, seems to have a bookshelf at home.<sup>38</sup> In his home country Egypt, as well as in Syria, even the most renowned scholars would hardly have a stock of some hundred books at their private disposal. About sixty years before al-Rabbāṭ is first attested, the paramount Damascene scholar of his generation, ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (1050/1641-1143/1731), sold his private library to some of his offspring. In the surviving document, the list of his books adds up to about 360 volumes.<sup>39</sup> Wherever we hear of larger numbers, going into the thousands, these numbers are either to be found in a literary context and are probably inflated, or they pertain to the libraries of eminent and wealthy statesmen at the center of the Ottoman realm.<sup>40</sup> Libraries like the one of ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī, or a century later that of the Rifāʿī-family in Damascus (about 470 volumes) must be considered the rule. While al-Rabbāṭ’s library might in terms of its size be comparable to these two examples and possibly even surpassed them in sheer material value, it was quite different in terms of its contents and appearance.

<sup>36</sup> Prices of scribes are mentioned for Syria by von Kremer, *Mittelsyrien*, 143; *cf.* for Egypt Lane, *Account*, vol. 1, 210. Upon excluding as worthless some manuscripts from the Refaiya-collection he was about to purchase in 1853, Wetzstein argues in the case of an incomplete copy of *Sīrat Ḥamza Qarrān* (also called *Aqrān* in other manuscripts): “Das vorliegende ist umso werthloser als der Rest dieses langen Romans kostspielig zu beschaffen seyn würde, d. h. man müßte sich ihn besonders abschreiben lassen.” *Cf.* Wetzstein, *Catalog der Refaiya*, 44 (see in the bibliography “Archival and manuscript sources”).

<sup>37</sup> Some thoughts on the distribution of books and the size of libraries based on inventories can be found in Establet / Pascual, *Livres*, 147-50.

<sup>38</sup> Al- aḥṭāwī, *Muslim*, 107.

<sup>39</sup> Shaʿbān, *Amlāk*, 172-7. My count is only tentative, since in the document the collective volumes (*madjāmī*) are not in every case clearly separated.

<sup>40</sup> For examples *cf.* Sievert, *Provinz*, 404-31; *idem*, *Schätze*.

### 3 The texts

#### 3.1 *Sīra* literature

The core of al-Rabbāṭ's library in terms of volume is made up of works from the *sīra*-genre, historical or pseudo-historical narratives that are entertaining in their nature and would usually be described as "popular." This problematic term should not be mistaken as a social qualifier, since this kind of literature was enjoyed by virtually all ranks of society up to the Sultan himself.<sup>41</sup> But with its linguistic level not as sophisticated and exclusive as were texts like the *Maqāmāt* of al-Ḥarīrī they were decidedly open to everybody who could read or – in the environment of a coffeehouse or a similar public display – listen and therefore could in theory have the widest possible audience.

The list of *sīras*<sup>42</sup> or epics to be found among al-Rabbāṭ's books and available to his readers is impressive and virtually exhaustive: the all too famous examples like *Sīrat al-Zābir Baybars* (Wetzstein II 561, 567, 573, 577, 580, 603, Sprenger 1355), *Sīrat al-Barāmika* (Wetzstein II 381), *Ra's al-Ghūl* (Vollers 633), or *Sīrat 'Antar* (Wetzstein II 1043, 1051, 1083<sup>43</sup>, Sprenger 1313, 1313bis) are paired with those few have heard of today, e. g. *Ḥikāyat al-Malik Azād Bakht* (Wetzstein II 711) or *Qiṣṣat Faḍlūn* (Wetzstein II 742).

With few exceptions this type of literature is characterized by books of a rather uniform outer appearance: They are of small size; they have the simplest card-board or quarter-leather binding; although the script is often professional, clear, and readable, there can be no claim to calligraphic beauty; the texts are bound into many volumes of usually between 30 to 60 leaves, which leads to extremely inflated numbers of volumes for one single text that could – more economically arranged – fit into one or a few volumes. This might have served both the professional needs of the public narrators in the coffeehouses as well as those of the book-lenders who could thereby lend out many parts of a text at the same time. Virtually none of these booklets are the product of a single process of copying; they are usually pieced together from fragments of varying size, age, and style, and it appears that al-Rabbāṭ – and others like him – took great pains to collect dozens of those fragments, put them in the right order, fill the gaps between

<sup>41</sup> This is apparent from three volumes of *Sīrat 'Antar* from the library of the Ottoman sultan Mehmet II (1451-81), the conqueror of Constantinople, now preserved in Vienna; cf. Flügel, *Handschriften*, vol. 2, 6, no. 783.

<sup>42</sup> Some of these *sīras* – like the *Sīrat 'Amr/'Umar al-Nu'mān* – also form parts of the *1001 Nights* cycle, but are in these exemplars treated as independent stories without – according to the catalogues – mentioning the *Nights*.

<sup>43</sup> This volume does not bear al-Rabbāṭ's name, but verses addressing him are to be found in the middle of the text, fol. 52r.

them, sometimes with his own handwriting, and thereby produce something like a complete recension of these epic texts.<sup>44</sup> Also, the copies are mostly of very recent date, that is from the late 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries AH, only sometimes with seemingly older fragments mixed among them.

### 3.2 The *Arabian Nights*

Closely attached to this genre and sometimes overlapping with it are the stories from the *1001 Nights* cycle.<sup>45</sup> Many of the books containing parts of this cycle are of larger size and not split into so great a number of volumes as those mentioned above. Furthermore, they are mostly bound more opulently in leather. Such is the case with Wetzstein II 701 and the two large and old volumes Tübingen Ma VI 32 and 33. They were not, as is often alledged, looked down upon by more educated people. The beginning of the *Nights* and one story from its cycle (Wetzstein II 701) were copied in 1207/1793 in his youth by Muṣṭafā b. ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Ṣalāḥī (d. 1265/1849), who would later have some higher literary ambitions on his own, compiling a commentary-anthology of *badī‘* now preserved in Berlin.<sup>46</sup> Only the two volumes preserved in Turin (nos. 54 and 55 in Nallino’s catalogue) belonged to a multi-volume set identical in format and size to those of the other epics mentioned above. Therefore the stories of this famous collection may by their outer appearance be generally classified in a category different from the *sīras*, at least as far as the library of Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ is concerned.

### 3.3 Advice literature

Also to be found in al-Rabbāṭ’s library is the classic *Kalīla wa-Dimna* (Wetzstein II 672), the famous piece of advice literature in the disguise of fables translated

<sup>44</sup> Maybe a testimony to the process of piecing these books together is an enigmatic note by al-Rabbāṭ in Wetzstein II 636, fol. 1r, in which he lists those who copied or carried (*naqala*) certain numbers of the altogether ten quires (*karārīs*) of this book. Two, e. g., are with al-Rabbāṭ himself (*fī yadibī*), while another one is found “*fī yad al-faqīr Muḥammad*.” This might also refer to the lending out of several layers of a book before it received its binding, but in this case the appearance of al-Rabbāṭ’s name would be puzzling.

<sup>45</sup> In fact, so little difference was made by the copyists and compilers between many works of this genre that they, when confronted with a fragmentary recension of the *Nights*, took no pains to add missing parts from some of the mentioned *sīras* or *Kalīla wa-Dimna*. Cf. Chraībi, Notes, 172.

<sup>46</sup> Al-Bayṭār, *Hilyat al-bashar*, vol. 3, 1539. Many of the manuscripts of his apparently very rich library are now preserved in Berlin and Leipzig. His autograph anthology is Ms. Berlin Landberg 948; cf. Bauer, Anthologien, 78.

by Ibn al-Muqaffa'.<sup>47</sup> It is of course impossible to ascertain whether the readers enjoyed the book for the underlying philosophy and stylistic brilliance or for its entertaining narrative qualities – as the rational for reading a certain book or the impression it made on the readers are hardly ever mentioned. In any case, the book was added to Aḥmad's collection only when he copied it for himself in 1246/1830, and therefore probably just shortly before his own death. Another specimen of advice literature is al-Ghazālī's "mirror for princes" *al-Tibr al-masbūk* in the small fragment Wetzstein II 714.

### 3.4 Poetry

Besides his own poetry collections and anthologies in nine *safīnas* (Berlin Sprenger 1240, 1235, 2007, 2008; Landberg 1031; Wetzstein II 1236-1238; Damascus Zāhiriyya 7400) and one *madjmū'a* with *zadjal* and *mawālī* verses treating some historical incidents in Damascus during the author's lifetime (Damascus Zāhiriyya Ms. ʿām 8749),<sup>48</sup> more refined verses from the classical repertoire and prosimetric *adab* collections also take up some space in al-Rabbāt's library. The previously mentioned *Dīwān* of the renowned Mamluk writer Ibn Nubāta (Wetzstein I 40), one of the more splendid volumes of the collection, is found in this category as well as the *Dīwān* of the celebrated Egyptian poet and mystic ʿUmar Ibn al-Fāriḍ, cherished and often commented on by Syrian scholars in the Ottoman period and represented here by a small volume (Wetzstein II 187). Lbg. 360 encloses Ibn al-Habbārīya's *al-Ṣādiḥ wa-l-bāghim*. Wetzstein II 256 contains the commentary of ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Badrūn on a *qaṣīda* called *al-Bassāma fī aṭwāq al-ḥamāma* by ʿAbd al-Madḡid Ibn ʿAbdūn on the fall of the Aḥṣāids, one of the ʿawāʿif-dynasties of 5<sup>th</sup> century Muslim Spain. ʿAlawān al-Ḥamawī's *Nūr al-ʿayn fī sharḥ Silik al-ʿayn* presents another poetic commentary, this time on a late Mamluk-era poem. An anonymous collection of mostly Ottoman-era poetry by such venerated authors as ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī (1050/1641-1143/1731) and Aḥmad al-Khafādī (d. 1069/1659) but also Mamlūk-era classics such as Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafadī ended up in al-Rabbāt's hands (Damascus Zāhiriyya 3884, *madjmū'a* 151).<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> I am very certain that another book of fables closely imitating *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, namely the *Marzubān-nāma* Sprenger 1248, did in fact belong to al-Rabbāt. The typical design of the title page together with a note by one of al-Rabbāt's attested readers, ʿAbdallāh al-Djabbān, leaves little doubt that a completely erased note next to the title once bore the name Aḥmad al-Rabbāt.

<sup>48</sup> The themes are mostly the especially hard winter of 1248/1832-3, and social unrest resulting in the fighting between the governor Muḥammad Salīm Bāshā and the people of Damascus. Cf. Rayyāl, *al-Tārikh*, 409-11.

<sup>49</sup> Sawwās / Murād, *Qism al-adab*, vol. 1, 112-13.

### 3.5 *Adab*

The *adab* anthologies in the library are: a *Dīwān Law‘at al-shākī* (Vollers 612), an anthology full of homoerotic verses on the theme of lovesickness; the *Nasīmat al-Ṣabā* (Vollers 617) by Ibn Ḥabīb; the anonymous *Qaṭr al-nabāt* (Spr. 1181); Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-‘Adjamī’s commentary on al-Zamakhsharī’s *Rabī‘ al-abrār* (Lbg. 568); and *al-Yawāqūt fī ba‘d al-mawāqūt* by Aḥmad al-Ta‘alībī, literary conceits juxtaposing praise and condemnation of various items (Wetzstein II 1872).

### 3.6 History

Far from being satisfied with poems, *adab*, and the adventurous *sīra*-stories, al-Rabbāṭ took some interest in the contemporary history of his region. Testimonies to this are a history of the Lebanese Mountains (Wetzstein II 377) and a history of the French occupation of Egypt under Napoleon (Wetzstein II 378). These texts were written during his lifetime and al-Rabbāṭ was therefore a conduit for their immediate distribution. His readers might have turned to his library when they wanted to inform themselves on matters of contemporary political interest. And it is important for us to know that readers actually could find these topics represented in what was something of a “public library.”

Treating Mamluk Aleppo several centuries earlier is a copy of *al-Durr al-muntakhab fī tārikh Halab* (Vollers 656). And al-Rabbāṭ’s historical interests reach further back to the beginnings of the Islamic expansion. In this area, the manuscript Sprenger 34 shows al-Rabbāṭ as a compiler of *futūḥ* works. A note of his reads:

“These conquests in a single volume (*mufrad*) cannot be found on the market (*‘adīm*) and the examples of men who compiled something like it are few, because every conquest of one region is treated in a single work. I collected all these conquests and made them one *futūḥ* work.”

These remarks are signed by al-Rabbāṭ “*‘alā yad nāsikhīhī li-nafsihī*.”<sup>50</sup> This does not mean that al-Rabbāṭ copied the whole book that he compiled in the prescribed manner and could therefore claim some kind of authorship by rewriting a classic in his own words. Instead, the small manuscript is made up of several, sometimes apparently quite old copies of *futūḥ* works ascribed to al-Wāqīdī treating the different regions of early Islamic conquests. Al-Rabbāṭ rather had them bound together and also filled the tiny narrative gaps between them with his own text.

<sup>50</sup> Ms. Berlin Sprenger 34, 148.

Al-Rabbāṭ's library boasted two volumes of the universal history *Akbbār al-duwal wa-āthār al-uwal* by al-Qaramānī. The first (Spr. 1973), a voluminous copy with additions by its scribe up to the year 1151/1738, entered the library only after 1230/1815, since it was purchased in that year by Ibrāhīm walad Yūsuf Salāma – quite possibly a Christian – in Constantinople. The second (Spr. 1974), much smaller and comprising in fact only the preface, was copied by al-Rabbāṭ himself, supposedly after he acquired the aforementioned complete version in 1230 and obviously before the first dated reader's note in 1252/1836. Whether al-Rabbāṭ ever came around to finish his own complete copy remains an open question.

A compilation entitled *Djawābir al-buḥūr wa-waqā'ic al-umūr wa-ʿadjā'ib al-duḥūr* (Vollers 664)<sup>51</sup> covers the history of Egypt from its pre-Islamic beginnings. While the narration begins with an Egypt full of the unbelievable miracles of a fairy tale, it sobers up the more it advances into the Islamic period until the time of the Mamluk Sultan Qalāwūn.

The field of biographical dictionaries, closely tied to the annalistic histories and also called “*tārīkh*” in the contemporary parlance, is represented by the fragment of a collection of biographies called *al-Nūr as-sāfir* by ʿAbd al-Qādir al-ʿAydarūs (Vollers 867 II).<sup>52</sup>

### 3.7 Encyclopedia

The encyclopedia *Irshād al-qāsid* by the Egyptian polymath Ibn al-Akfānī (Vollers 2) eludes categorization by its very nature. It comprises many of the aforementioned topics with its parts on rhetoric, style, and language, while its focus on the exact sciences and medicine opens up a completely new chapter otherwise apparently not so well represented in al-Rabbāṭ's library.

### 3.8 Law and science

Fields which stand out among the overall focus of al-Rabbāṭ's library destined mostly for entertainment and *belles lettres* are those of law as well the natural sciences and medicine. The one juridical work in his collection does, nonetheless, fit well with the practical needs of ordinary readers in need of some purely formulaic advice. The text entitled *Biḍāʿat al-qāḍī* (Vollers 866 II) is arranged as a manual giving proper wording to all kinds of possible legal cases. At least one reader apparently felt encouraged to use some free space in the manuscript to put

<sup>51</sup> The usual ascription to Ibn Waṣīf Shāh is clearly wrong, although some work of his was a major source for the *Djawābir*; cf. Ferré, Auteur, 145-7.

<sup>52</sup> This work is usually called *al-Nūr al-sāfir ʿan akbbār al-qarn al-ʿāshir*.

what he learned into practice and copy some formula. The book may have been used to enable public scribes to formulate waterproof documents which the legal parties could bring into court for affirmation. Found in a lending library it may shed an interesting light on the actual practice of drawing up documents in the judicial system of the day.

Turning to medicine, we find in Harvard Ms. Arab. 396 a treatise by the Mamluk veterinarian Abū Bakr b. Mundhir al-Bayṭār, called *Nukhbat al-afkār*; ophthalmology was covered with a *Tadbkirat al-kaḥḥālīn* (Tübingen Ma VI 138); Vollers 859 IV contains an anonymous *Kitāb al-Mufriḥāt fī ‘ilm al-ṭibb*, and in Vollers 867 I we find al-Qalyūbī’s *al-Fawā’id al-ṭibbīya* – here not identified and simply called *Kitāb ḥikma*. The parts of Ibn al-Akfānī’s encyclopedia *Irshād al-qāṣid* (Vollers 2) concerning the subject may also be subsumed under this category.

A special treatise on hunting birds (Vollers 859 III) was available as part of a *madjmū’a* in the library. This same volume also contained a treatise on astronomy (Vollers 859 I). Users of al-Rabbāṭ’s library could also find one of the outstanding books on geography in the Arabic language, the already mentioned *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm* by al-Muqaddasī (Sprenger 5), as well as the widespread zology *Ḥayāt al-ḥayawān* by al-Damīrī (Wetzstein I 169-169bis).

### 3.9 Religion

A remarkable feature of al-Rabbāṭ’s collection is that the literature of the theological curriculum (*ḥadīth*, exegesis, *kalām*, *fiqh*), so dominant in the public libraries of his time, has not been found in his library so far. What we do have are works that tend not so much to the theoretical but to the spiritual needs of their readers, people who might not necessarily need reason, but comfort and inspiration. Therefore two kinds of works dominate this section, the one paraenetic, often with a Sufic touch, the other consisting of the lives or legends of saints and prophets. Among the first category is *Qūt al-qulūb* by Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Dāmaghānī (Vollers 161), as well as the *Mukāshafat al-qulūb*, erroneously ascribed to al-Ghazālī, together with a text on interpreting dreams (Wetzstein II 1577). The *madjmū’a* Wetzstein II 1806 contains several mystical and dogmatic treatises by al-Qūnawī and al-Ghazālī.

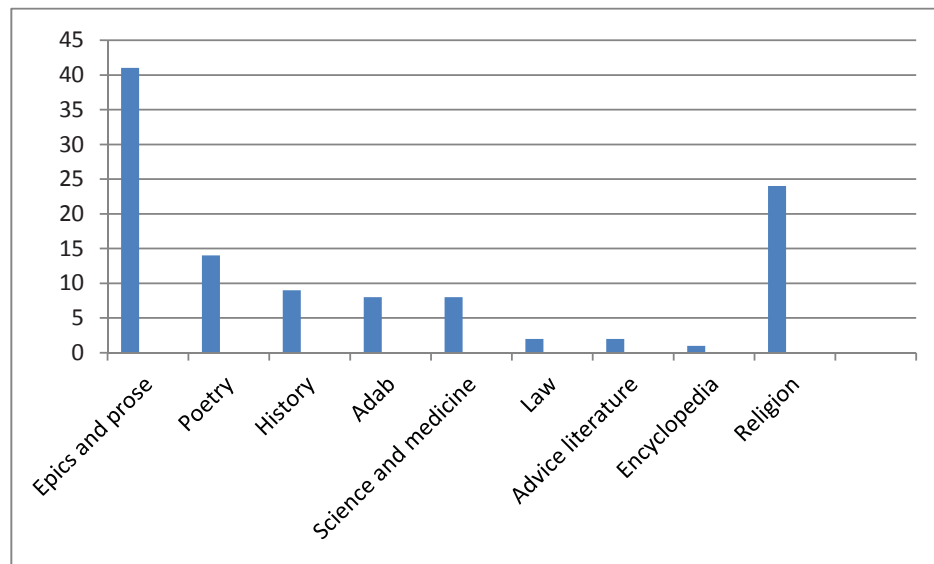
In the second category, *Rawḍ al-rayāḥīn* by al-Yāfi‘ī (Vollers 174), contains the lives of 500 saints. Vollers 865 is a collective volume with traditions and a fragment on pious men and women called *Salwat al-aḥsān*. Vollers 32-36, *Sīrat nasab al-nabī*, and Vollers 40, *Ghazwat Hunayn*, narrating a chapter of the life of the prophet, are close to the *sīra*-epics, only these having the prophet Muḥammad as their main hero. Two books treat Islamicized versions of pre-Islamic prophets: *Qiṣṣat Ayyūb al-Ṣābir* (Vollers 110), and the *Manzūma wa-qiṣṣat nabī Allāh Yūsuf al-Ṣiddīq* (Wetzstein II 719), a fine copy that stands out through its leather binding.



### 3.10 Overview

Classifying a literary work to put it in a graph is a complicated task. It suggests the heuristic value of one single label where there often are no clear-cut divisions between the genres. The mystical thoughts of a Sufi or the grammatical rules of a philologist may have taken the formal appearance of a poem. These reservations notwithstanding, a graph can literally paint a picture otherwise blurred in the written account.

The contents of al-Rabbāt's library may be summed up in the following way:



In this graph, works and not volumes are counted. A collective volume of mainly religious epistles like Ms. Berlin We II 1806 would therefore have a disproportionate impact in this display. The bulk of al-Rabbāt's library, as far as we know it, was made up of epic prose literature. Their true proportion could not be adequately displayed here since most *sīras* came down to us in no more than a few of their once numerous volumes. Still, a general picture emerges that shows the great emphasis the collector put on entertaining prose, poetry, history and *belles-lettres*. Together they outweigh the graphically overrepresented religious texts by a ratio of three to one. The relatively small number of works on natural sciences and medicine, on the other hand, does not do justice to the significance of their mere existence, since these topics are vastly underrepresented and often absent in any Levantine library of the period, especially those publicly accessible.

#### 4 The readers

Contrary to the usual practice in Arabic manuscripts of Ottoman-Syrian origin, al-Rabbāṭ's books are drowned in reader's notes, many clearly dating to his lifetime,<sup>53</sup> but bear very few ownership statements. It is, therefore, quite certain that his collection was publicly accessible beyond a confined circle of personal friends. Unfortunately we have only sparse information about the reality, economy, and practical dealings of this or any other library of its kind. The last date we can ascribe to al-Rabbāṭ is 1252/1836, when he finished transcribing the anthology *Law'at al-shākī* for his own use (Vollers 612). Many of the very frequent reading notes and all the commercial book-lending notes commence after this date. The lending out for money in two notes is explicitly connected with the names of his sons Muḥammad and 'Abd.<sup>54</sup> And al-Rabbāṭ even included verses against the lending of books<sup>55</sup> or at least urging for a deposit (*rahn*)<sup>56</sup> in several of his manuscripts. While there are, in fact, no explicit traces for a lending of books against money from al-Rabbāṭ himself, at least two letters preserved in two of his manuscripts indicate that readers approached him for books and had them sent to their homes.<sup>57</sup> Al-Rabbāṭ himself narrates the story of how a veterinarian friend (*aḥad al-aḥbāb min al-bayāṭira*) approached him in search of a certain book on his art which al-Rabbāṭ was able to produce only after a search of eight years!<sup>58</sup> The readers, in this case at least, shaped their library! Looking at them will shed at least some light on how this library was received.

Those of al-Rabbāṭ's books I have been able to inspect furnish us with the names of far more than two hundred of their readers or possessors. They made for a diversified audience. Among them we find scholars, high-ranking military and administrative personnel, traders, or artisans. Just to enumerate them here in full would exceed the boundaries of this article, not to mention the arduous and often enough impossible task of identifying every one of them. But some general

<sup>53</sup> Counting only the notes dated between the years 1200 and 1250 yields the names of more than 40 readers, many perusing several volumes over a number of years.

<sup>54</sup> Tübingen Ms. Ma 32; Wetzstein II 378.

<sup>55</sup> Wetzstein II 1236, fol. 1v. The verses are not his own, though. They are found in a number of manuscripts of different origins even as far as India.

<sup>56</sup> Wetzstein II 596, fol. 1r.

<sup>57</sup> Wetzstein II 1043/67v; Wetzstein II 1577/229r. Both are written in a truly horrible language with quite impossible orthography and can hardly be transcribed or even translated here. Wetzstein II 1043 reports the return of volumes 25 and 26 of *Sīrat 'Antar*, of which it formed a part, and asks for volumes seven to ten of the epic. It also says that *Sayf* (= *Dhū l-Yazan*) must have reached al-Rabbāṭ with the same shipment of books. Wetzstein II 1577 equally reports the arrival of the book in which the lines are inscribed together with one of al-Rabbāṭ's *safīnas*.

<sup>58</sup> Harvard Ms. Arab. 396, fol. 1v.

observations as well as some exemplary specimens should paint a broad picture of the reading public al-Rabbāṭ served with his books.

When talking about the readers of al-Rabbāṭ's library, one group stands out from among the vast majority of readers of the manuscripts of Syrian origin in general as far as I collected them. It is a group of people that cannot be identified by means of the usual biographic literature – which traditionally only covers members of scholarly elite – but whose names and titles sometimes point to their profession or social standing. It consists of men who could obviously read and write, but many of them hardly rose above the level of basic command of the latter. Their handwriting would often tend to the unreadable and the abundant grammatical and orthographical mistakes would betray a difficulty in handling both, as well as distinguishing between the spoken and the written language. While a common pious formula finishing an entry after the reader's name would read *غفر الله له ولوالديه*, al-Rabbāṭ's average reader would nearly unanimously corrupt such a sentence into something the likes of *غفر الله له ولي ولده*. The change of letters according to their vernacular spelling (*naḍara* instead of *nazara*); plain writing of defectively written, but elongated sounds (like in *la-bū*); missing or wrongly added articles; wrong case endings; and the like are common features of the language they employed, which nonetheless still strives to be above the vernacular.<sup>59</sup> Names like *abbākh* (“cook”), *Sammān* (“butter vendor”), *Qahwadjī* (“coffee merchant”), *Djabbān* (“vendor of dairy products”), or *Aqqād* (“rope-maker”) occur with suspiciously high frequency among the readers. These might point in their cases to actual professions rather than inherited family names. But there are also many readers with titles pointing to a military or administrative background. Most of them are readers only, *i. e.* they only left readers statements and cannot be found as possessors of books outside the realm of al-Rabbāṭ's library.

The group so defined is found in their largest numbers in the popular narrative literature of *sīras*, exotic fables and pious saintly stories. This mass of poorly educated readers is unprecedented in earlier times. There were those who could not transcribe their readership statements without mistakes in earlier centuries, but in the library of al-Rabbāṭ this becomes the rule. Is this indicative of the spread of a reading culture to other segments of society and a concomitant – either as a result of or reason for the former – change in the literary market in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries? Is it a parallel to the rise of a new middle class with a new taste for books as suggested by Nelly Hanna for 18<sup>th</sup> century Egypt?<sup>60</sup> Or is this picture misleading because “popular” literature was put into writing and was

<sup>59</sup> For examples of some of the most recurring mistakes *cf.* Liebreuz, *Handschriften*, 108-9.

<sup>60</sup> Hanna, *Praise*, especially 79-103.

being read by the same audience in earlier times, the traces of which simply did not survive up to this day?<sup>61</sup>

But there is another group of readers materializing. They, too, can be predominantly found in a certain discernible set of manuscripts (already defined in the second chapter), distinguishing itself by an unusually rich appearance combined with elaborate content (e. g. Wetzstein II 40, 169; Sprenger 5). Indeed, the names found in these manuscripts are of a very different nature, and Sprenger 5 portrays this very well, since its former possessors extended to the very top of the Ottoman religious bureaucracy, namely in the person of Fayḍ Allāh (or Feyzullah) Efendī, mufti at the Sublime Porte. His ownership statement is dated 1115/1703, which is also the year this powerful and notorious figure was deposed together with his sultanic overlord in a *comp d'état*.<sup>62</sup> These men were usually also the possessors of the books they read and are among the very few to be found in this capacity in al-Rabbāṭ's books. Since they mostly consulted or possessed the works before al-Rabbāṭ's lifetime they are not actually to be counted among the audience of his library. And Wetzstein I 40 does not even have a single trace of a reader from al-Rabbāṭ's times. Were these books not in fashion with his clientele or was their content too elaborate to understand? Were their rental fees probably higher? Or did those who could not produce a legible reader's statement shy away from tarnishing the title page of a beautifully exacted copy?

How this group of manuscripts and their readers stand out amongst the greater lot of al-Rabbāṭ's library becomes apparent when they are juxtaposed with exemplary samples of its more popular parts. One could be the *Sīrat al-Malik Badrnār* (Vollers 627, twelve small volumes). This epic attracted a score of readers, many of which left no more than unhelpful first names (like in one case Muḥammad b. Muḥammad). A former Daftardār of Damascus, whose name is unfortunately erased, read it in 1233/1818. In 1268/1852 it was 'Umar al-Laḥḥām, explicitly marked resident of a village *i. e.* not a city-dweller, who looked at the manuscript. Some undated notes include Muḥammad 'Arab al-abbā', Shākir al-arābulusī, son of Muḥammad al-Ḥalabī the *qazzāz-bāshī* (head of the silk-merchants guild), Muṣṭafā al-'Aṭṭār, Aḥmad al-Fattāl, and Ibrāhīm b. Ḥusayn al-Qawwāf (whose entries are otherwise dated 1237/1822, *cf.* Wetzstein II 638, fol. 36r). Therefore all the names bear either the title of a mili-

<sup>61</sup> Wetzstein at least believes this to be the case when he asserts that his manuscript of the *1001 Nights*, Tübingen 33, might be the oldest one surviving, "da die 1001-Nacht nur für den Gebrauch der Kaffeehäuser copiert und daher bald abgenutzt wird." Wetzstein, *Catalog*, 6.

<sup>62</sup> The negative and even hateful reception of his controversial policies in Damascus – as the puppet master of the Sultan he was perceived as helping the Christian enemies of the Empire or even as a secret Christian himself – and the joy over his deposition is reported by Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt*, 72-3. The extent of his nepotism is outlined throughout the study of Abou-El-Haj, *Rebellion*; *cf.* also Tayṣī, Feyzullah.

tary or administrative position, or are derived from handicrafts that were most likely also the professions of these men. In terms of social stratification, the readership reaches up to the important post of a *Daftardār*, *i. e.* financial administrator, of Damascus. The absence of names with a clear connection to traditional scholarly training is, however, apparent in this as in the other books of its kind. But then again, the manuscript was bought later on by ‘Umar al-Rifā‘ī al-Ḥamawī – a man Wetzstein calls a former *qāḍī*<sup>63</sup> – for his library, the famous Rifā‘iyya now preserved in Leipzig. He did, however, not leave a readership statement in the book. But since that was the case with all of his manuscripts, one may not deduce from this fact that it was inappropriate for a man of traditional religious learning to put his signature in a book of this content.

#### 4.1 Crossing borders: between the “popular” and the “elite”

There is little overlap between these two groups of readers, but there are a few men who did cross the borders between them and the two distinct levels of literature they are associated with. Among them is Sa‘īd Saqāminī, a man I was not able to identify until now. He was in possession of six manuscripts, now in Leipzig, Berlin, and Damascus respectively. Many more of his notes give nothing more than his name, making it impossible to decide whether he was the possessor or merely reader of the book.

He is surely identified as reader only in a volume of al-Rabbāt’s *Sīrat Djūdar* (Wetzstein II 675). Among al-Rabbāt’s books, his name is also found in Vollers 110, the Islamic legend of Job *Qiṣṣat Ayyūb al-Ṣābir*, as well as the splendid copy of al-Muqaddasī’s geography *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm* (Sprenger 5), here again as a reader. The last work is by its content and physical appearance more in line with the rest of those he read or possessed, which were mostly treating religious studies and *belles-lettres*.

The books definitely from his own collection are: two small and unattractive volumes (Vollers 845) of a *madjmū‘a* containing several collections of poetry and paraenetic poems; the prayer book *Qurrat al-‘ayn* by Maḥmūd al-Qādirī (fl. 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 11<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> century; Wetzstein II 1557); the *Thabat* of ‘Umar al-Shammā‘ (d. 936/1529; Wetzstein II 412); among his books were three *adab* collections, namely *al-La‘ālī wa-l-durar* by al-Tha‘ālibī (d. 429/1038) in a nice red leather binding (Wetzstein II 1225), a *Kitāb al-adbkiyā‘* by Ibn al-Djawzī (d. 597/1201) in an early copy dated 828/1425 (Damascus Zāhiriyya 5827), and an untitled collection of stories (Damascus Zāhiriyya 4186).

It is not certain whether Sa‘īd al-Saqāminī read or possessed the remaining six copies: Ibn al-Djawzī’s (d. 597/1201) *Kitāb al-Irshād wa-l-tatrīz fī faḍl dhikr Allāh*

<sup>63</sup> Wetzstein, *Catalog*, 1 of the unpaginated “Vorwort” (preface).

*wa-tilāwat kitābihī al-‘azīz* (Wetzstein II 338); the very old (dated 535/1141) copy of Shāfi‘ite legal responsas (*fatāwā*) of ‘Abdallāh al-Djuwaynī (d. 438/1046; Wetzstein II 1477); Wetzstein II 1495 *Uṣūl al-fiqh* by al-Bazdawī (d. 480/1089), also from the sphere of Islamic law; *Tārīkh al-Djazīra* (Sprenger 199), the anonymous history of Mesopotamia written by a clerk from the circle of Saladin; lastly Wetzstein II 1812, a collection of treatises on rhetoric and poetry. The readership and ownership statements in all these volumes he did not definitely use as a reader have a general audience quite different from that of al-Rabbāṭ’s books. But the background of these copies shall be symbolized here by Wetzstein II 349, a fragment of Ibn Sa‘d’s (d. 230/844) *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā*: it was in the former possession of the two eminent Ottoman bibliophiles Abū Bakr b. Rustum al-Shirwānī<sup>64</sup> and ‘Effatī,<sup>65</sup> known for their splendid libraries. For Sa‘īd al-Saqāminī – like al-Rabbāṭ – reading bibliophile treasures from famous libraries was apparently very well reconcilable with the popular epic of the fisherman *Djūdar*.

Another man bridged the gap between two works that stand emblematic for the very popular and the most refined in Arabic prose literature, even reading both of them in the same year. Šāliḥ b. Ismā‘īl Djurbadjī al-Mahāyinī may be identified with a strongman from the Damascene suburb al-Mīdān who died in 1285/1868. He was imprisoned in connection with the massacres of 1860, but was soon released and Mikhāyil Mishāqa explicitly lauds his protection of the Christians during the events. For his bravery he was even awarded medals and honors by European powers such as France and Russia.<sup>66</sup> Long before that, in 1235/1820 he read a collection of stories (*qiṣaṣ*) in the style of the *1001 Nights*, also partly taken from this source and narrated by Shahrazād (Wetzstein II 662) from al-Rabbāṭ’s library, but also a very old<sup>67</sup> copy of al-Ḥarīrī’s (d. 516/1122) *Maqāmāt* now preserved in Michigan (Isl. Ms. 650), the latter one not from al-Rabbāṭ’s collection. Both are certainly very entertaining and have received global recognition as such, but still only one is considered among the gems of Arabic language and stylistics. Šāliḥ must have read both books at a very young age, probably in his twenties or even earlier, since he did not die until 50 years later in 1285/1868.<sup>68</sup> Already his father Ismā‘īl b. ‘Īsā Djurbadjī al-Mahāyinī read in 1205/1791 the manuscript Berlin Wetzstein II 640, a volume of the *Sīrat Sayf Dhū l-Yazan* which was most probably in al-Rabbāṭ’s possession at that time, since many volumes of this set – among them those directly preceding and following – bear al-Rabbāṭ’s ownership statements. Therefore, a more regular acquaintance between the two families can be imagined.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Sayyid, Marques, 19, 22.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Richard, Lecteurs, 82.

<sup>66</sup> Schatkowski Schilcher, *Families*, 101.

<sup>67</sup> The oldest dated entry from a reader is that by Taghrī Birdī b. ‘Abdallāh al-Zaynī al-Zāhirī in 854, but the copy itself is probably from the 8<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. al-Uṣṭuwānī, *Mashāhid*, 150, 190; Mishāqa, *Murder*, 30, 251.

#### 4.2 Christian and Jewish readers

Statistically overrepresented among the readers and possessors of al-Rabbāṭ's books are members of religious minorities, *i. e.* Christians and Jews. Wetzstein II 697, a *Hikāyat al-malik Shabramān*, was read by *kbwādja* Mūsā Salmān and Rūfā'īl b. Yūsuf Zakāk in 1259/1843. Rūfā'īl Ishāq Linyāda al-Ḥalabī, a Jewish reader, enjoyed eight volumes of *Sīrat Muḥammad al-Kurdī b. Karkhān* between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Rādjab of 1243/February 4-7, 1828 (Wetzstein II 542-549) as well as the *Hikāyat Qamar al-Zamān wa-Shams al-Zamān* (Tübingen Ms. Ma 41) two days later, the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> Rādjab 1243/February 7-8, 1828; another Jewish reader – Ishāq Ezrā walad Mūsā Ezrā – is found in al-Tha'ālibī's (d. 429/1038) *adab*-anthology *Yawāqīt al-mawāqīt* (Wetzstein II 1872, dated 25<sup>th</sup> Dhū l-Ḥidjdja 1245/June 17, 1230). The Christian physician Anṭūn Djabbāra, who bought the geography Sprenger 5 in 1241/1826 has already been mentioned. Some Hebrew scribbling and verses in praise of Christian saints can be found on the flyleaves of Sprenger 2007, one of al-Rabbāṭ's *Safīnas*. They may not be connected to the textual body of the book, but they nonetheless show that al-Rabbāṭ had access to the discarded papers of Christians and Jews and was not shy about using them without erasing their texts even though they were of a religious nature. The *adab*-anthology *Nasīm al-Ṣabā* (Vollers 617) bears on its title page the reader statement of Me'īr b. Yūsuf of the important Jewish Damascene Lizbūnā family. After a conventional beginning, though, this entry turns into a full-fledged contract between the *kbwādjas* Ibrāhīm b. Ḥayyim and Yūsuf b. Dāniyāl about the purchase of large quantities of soap. This contract is dated 1250/1834, and since a document of this kind would hardly be expected from someone who just borrowed the book for a short time, this date is most likely also the *terminus ante quem* for al-Rabbāṭ's selling of the book. Lastly, two Jewish scholars or rabbis (*ḥākhām*) looked into al-Rabbāṭ's *Qiṣṣat Djūdār* (Tübingen Ma VI 42).<sup>69</sup> The topics represented in al-Rabbāṭ's library are indeed those which, judging from the preserved notes I could gather, attracted religious minorities the most, *i. e.* entertainment – both popular<sup>70</sup> and more refined in the form of classical *adab* –, history, and the natural sciences.

<sup>69</sup> Seybold, *Verzeichnis*, 76.

<sup>70</sup> Other examples of Christian and Jewish readers of epics are found in Tübingen Ms. Ma VI 42 (*cf.* Seybold, *Verzeichnis*, 88-9); a volume of the *Sīrat 'Antar*, read already in 1061/1651 by the priest (*kbūrī*) Makāriyūs Ṣahyūn (Wetzstein II 924); and another volume of the same text (Wetzstein II 1055) where the readership statement from 1265/1849 of Salmūn b. Rūfā'īl (last name not legible) is found.

### 4.3 The reading process

One would like to know whether anything can be said about the process of reading, specifically reading frequency and pace. Those readers represented by more than one or two entries are deplorably few. Deplorably, because it is hardly plausible that so many would have read, for example, only one volume from the middle of one *sīra* and many years later another one from the end of a second novel.<sup>71</sup> The many instances where this is the case most probably show how many notes have been either lost or were never even been written down in the books.

Where many entries allow us to follow a reader over the course of many books or even the duration of many years, the reading frequency is often astonishingly irregular. Two men with a constant appetite for reading, not the least in al-Rabbāt's manuscripts and sometimes in the very same volumes, may furnish as examples. The first is 'Abd al-Qādir Sbānū, surnamed al-'Aqqād, which, besides being his name in the sense of a personal identifier, must also be taken as this man's actual profession (rope maker) because it sometimes comes in an expanded version followed by the location of his trade at the *Sūq* (Wetzstein II 682) or *Ḥammām al-Khayyātīn* (Wetzstein II 547), *i. e.* in Damascus. 'Abd al-Qādir left 36 readership statements in the manuscripts I studied. Twelve of those were in volumes definitely belonging to al-Rabbāt, three more were quite probably also from the same source. The earliest date he left is found in Wetzstein II 542, which he read in 1250/1834. He consulted the rest of al-Rabbāt's books between 1253/1837 and 1262/1846, and therefore probably after their original owner's death. First he was interested in his contemporary history as a reader, in 1253/1837, of the History of the French occupation of Egypt (*al-Ghāwī al-munṭawī*, Wetzstein II 378). That same year he also studied at least one volume of *Sīrat al-Barāmika* (Wetzstein II 381) and the *Sīrat al-Malik 'Umar b. al-Nu'mān* (Wetzstein II 682). Six years elapsed before 'Abd al-Qādir Sbānū dated another of his readership statements. It was at the end of 1259/1844 that he perused a volume of *Sayf Dhū l-Yazan* (Wetzstein II 641), followed one month later at the beginning of 1260/1844 by Wetzstein II 506, a volume of *Ghazwat al-Arqaṭ*, which he took up again nearly three years onward at the end of 1262/1846. In between those dates fell his reading of the following volume of the same *Ghazwat al-Arqaṭ* (Wetzstein II 507), which he completed one month after the first. The last of al-Rabbāt's books he used was the paraenetic collection of exemplary biographies *Rawḍ al-rayāḥīn* (Vollers 174) in 1262/1846.

<sup>71</sup> *E. g.* 'Abd al-Qādir al-ūkhī read in 1232/1817 one volume of the *Sīrat al-Hākīm bi-Amrillāh* (Wetzstein II 492) and ten years later in 1242/1827 two volumes of the *Sīrat Muḥammad al-Kurdī b. Karkhān* (Wetzstein II 542-543).



The entertaining stories collected in Wetzstein II 704 seem to have aroused the special interest of ‘Abd al-Qādir Sbānū, since he returned to it no less than four times over the course of seven years! They are not marked as a possession of al-Rabbāṭ, but bear a note of a certain Amīn al-Rabbāṭ, probably a son of the elder al-Rabbāṭ, and may therefore – especially given the many readers of this volume also found in books definitely belonging to the father – quite possibly be ascribed to Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ himself. ‘Abd al-Qādir turned to this volume first in 1253/1837, then read it again in each of the next two years, and finally five years later in 1260/1844. In 1254/1838 he was accompanied by Ṣāliḥ al-‘Azīziyya al-Mīdānī, a man otherwise known as a reader of many of al-Rabbāṭ’s books.<sup>72</sup> Those two must have been some kind of reading companions, since they read the same work together again on at least two occasions.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, reading sessions in groups, also in a private setting, were probably not uncommon, even if the reader’s entries are mostly silent about that aspect. Not everybody liked to read alone in his chamber. Public reading – besides the well-known sessions of scholars for the purpose of studying – occurred on many levels and was by no means confined to the sphere of the popular epic. The Damascene chronicler Ibn Kannān (1074/1663-1153/1740) reports in many instances how he and his learned companions sought on their frequent trips to the gardens and countryside of Damascus to amuse themselves with all kinds of texts, among them his own chronicle.<sup>74</sup>

All the 24 other books ‘Abd al-Qādir Sbānū al-‘Aqqād read<sup>75</sup> belonged to three different complete sets of the *Sīrat ‘Antar*, which were nonetheless all in the possession of ‘Abdallāh al-Baghdādī, another important figure on the market of popular epics in Damascus and a man who apparently took over many of his books from al-Rabbāṭ. And at least two volumes among al-Baghdādī’s last set read by al-‘Aqqād indeed belonged to al-Rabbāṭ. As far as they are dated, the volumes were all read in the last two months of 1260/1844 and the first two months of the following year in a straightforward fashion, which thereby marks

<sup>72</sup> Wetzstein II 378 (*Kitāb al-Ghāwī al-muntawī*, 1253), 381 (*Sīrat al-Barāmika*, in 1253), 636 + 638 (*Sayf Dhū l-Yazan*, in 1255), 679 + 682 (*Sīrat ‘Umar al-Nu‘mān*, in 1253), 691 (*Ghazwat al-sab‘ ḥusūn*, in 1251), 697 (*Ḥikāyat al-Malik Shabramān*, twice in 1254). He is equally called Ṣāliḥ ‘Azīz or ‘Azīzī.

<sup>73</sup> While both men left separate readership statements in Wetzstein II 697, the *Ḥikāyat al-Malik Shabramān*, they are both dated on the same day, 2 Sha‘bān 1254/21 October 1838 (and therefore the same year they also read Wetzstein II 704 together). The same is true for Wetzstein II 682, the *Sīrat al-Malik ‘Umar b. Nu‘mān*, which both men read 24 Radjab 1253/24 (December 1837). The two are also found as readers of Wetzstein II 924, but at a difference of seven years between their entries. Only one day separates their respective readership notes in Wetzstein II 378.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Ibn Kannān, *Yawmiyyāt*, 340.

<sup>75</sup> Wetzstein II 924, 926, 927, 928, 929, 930, 931, 932, 933, 937, 938, 940, 943, 945, 946, 947, 949, 950, 955, 956, 957, 958, 1053, 1054.

his busiest reading period. It also shows how al-Baghdādī – and certainly al-Rabbāṭ like him – kept three different complete sets of this enormous collection in his library and handed out those parts needed by a reader to continue a story straightforwardly by taking the necessary volumes from all three collections as they were available.

The second exemplary reader, ‘Abdallāh al-Djabbān, was probably a vendor of dairy products as his name suggests. A reader’s entry he left in Vollers 161 may be indicative of his level of erudition: Obviously unable to or uncomfortable with penning his own entry, he rather chose to copy an ownership statement from the year 1055/1645 which he found on the same page. Unfortunately for ‘Abdallāh his source was equally unable to express himself correctly and concluded his note with the phrase “*ghafara a-l-h [scil. Allāh la-hū] wa-lī waladihi [scil. wālidayhi] wa-lī muslimīn mīn.*” None of the mistakes are particularly unique to this writer, but the totally absurd repetition of the last syllable of the word *muslimīn* is striking and is something I have never encountered anywhere else, which makes it all the more telling to see ‘Abdallāh faithfully repeat the same “*muslimīn mīn*” two hundred years later in his own entry. ‘Abdallāh al-Djabbān was, nonetheless, a busy reader who left readership statements in 50 volumes over the course of 14 years. Three of these books definitely belonged to al-Rabbāṭ and three more probably did. The three works from al-Rabbāṭ’s library are: the *Qiṣṣat Ayyūb al-Ṣābir* (Vollers 110) read in 1255/1839, al-Rabbāṭ’s own copy of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* (Wetzstein II 672) in 1264/1848, and the parae-netic *Qūt al-qulūb* (Vollers 161) with a now erased date probably in the 1250s. Outside the library of al-Rabbāṭ there is one astonishingly dense period of reading in which he consumed – in this order – no less than the story of *Maryam al-Zanānīriyya* (Wetzstein II 698, the story is found in the *Arabian Nights*), parts of *al-Ṭayr al-nāṭiq* (Wetzstein II 654, 655, 658), *al-Malik Sayf Dhū l-Yazan* (Wetzstein II 643), and the *Iskandar*-novel (Wetzstein II 522, 523, 524), all in nine days between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> Djumādā I 1269/February 11-20, 1853. Unfortunately, he does not inform us whether this was his usual reading pace and he had a natural craving for stories, or if this was an extraordinary break from his daily routine, perhaps caused by an illness or the like. Other works consulted by ‘Abdallāh al-Djabbān are a volume of the novel *Ḥamza Aqrān* (Wetzstein II 685) in 1266/1849, the fable-collection *Marzubān-nāma* (Sprenger 1248) in the same year, the collection of stories Wetzstein II 704 in 1261/1845, the pseudo-historical *Futūḥ al-Shām* by al-Wāqidī (Wetzstein II 725) in 1261/1845, and another novel *Dīwān al-Harās* (Wetzstein II 900) without a date, but after 1261/1845 when the volume was copied.

Al-Djabbān was also reader of the same sets of *Sīrat ‘Antar* from the library of ‘Abdallāh al-Baghdādī as ‘Abd al-Qādir Sbānū and his name is found in 34 of the

many volumes in their libraries.<sup>76</sup> But he was less straightforward in his reading attitude. It sometimes seems as if he read the story backwards, *e. g.* when he consulted Wetzstein II 977 in 1261/1845, Wetzstein II 976 in 1263/1847, and Wetzstein II 975 in 1264/1848. His reading experience is also marked by large intervals. Therefore it took him more than three years to follow up on Wetzstein II 980 (6<sup>th</sup> Rabīʿ I 1261/March 15, 1845) with the following volume Wetzstein II 981 (5<sup>th</sup> Dhū l-Ḥidjja 1264/November, 2 1848), while in the meantime he did read, among many others, Wetzstein II 984, 989, and 992 from the same collection. This is most certainly indicative of, on the one hand, how one took those volumes available at a particular time without paying too much attention to how the storyline unfolded. On the other hand it may show how those epics were read not with the aim of pursuing a coherent epic story from beginning to end, but enjoying its pieces independently. Some of them may have stuck and made the reader want to return to it. That is why ‘Abdallāh al-Djabbān, like ‘Abd al-Qādir Sbānū, reread many of the books, sometimes with many years between the first and second consultation. Wetzstein II 997 was first read in 1264/1848 and picked up again only in 1269/1853, Wetzstein II 999 in 1264/1848 and 1270/1854. Or did ‘Abdallāh al-Djabbān simply forget which of the innumerable volumes of popular *sīras* he had already read and it was the booklender’s hand which determined that he should come across a certain volume again?

#### 4.4 Possessing and lending: Why turn to Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ’s library?

There are a few readers of al-Rabbāṭ’s books who had libraries of their own. A comparison between the books they read with al-Rabbāṭ and those they possessed themselves might reveal for what reasons they frequently turned to an outside source when in some cases they clearly had the means to buy their own manuscripts. Two members of the Damascene Zaytūna family are a perfect example for this. Muḥammad Amīn b. ‘Umar al-Zuhdī b. Ibrāhīm aghā, known as Zaytūna (born in 1237/1821, d. after 1293/1876)<sup>77</sup> did not catch the attention of a contemporary biographer or chronicler, but in 1869 he was friends with Albert Socin (1844-99) and Eugen Prym (1843-1913), two German scholars residing in Damascus, and provided them with precious books, which may have been his

<sup>76</sup> Wetzstein II 904 (19.10.64), 905 (13.09.69), 907 (12.10.64), 909 (25.10.64), 917 (15.11.64), 934 (25.10.1259), 954 (12.03.1263), 966 (22.04.1263), 970 (11.09.1262 + 6.05.1263), 975 (64), 976 (22.05.63), 977 (26.02.1261), 980 (6.03.61), 981 (5.12.64), 984 (61 + 17.05.63), 989 (5.07.1263), 992 (10.07.64), 996 (17.02.70), 997 (64 + 26.03.69), 999 (27.07.64 + 17.02.70), 1001 (4.02.1263), 1003 (64), 1004 (15.01.65), 1009 (22.02.63 + 11.03.1270), 1010 (5.03.68), 1012 (17.03.1270), 1013 (10.09.64), 1015 (13.09.64), 1018 (21.09.1263), 1019 (28.09.1264), 1020, 1021 (2.10.64), 1028 (5.09.1263 + 28.10.1263), 1050 (24.03.63).

<sup>77</sup> The date of birth is taken from biographical notes on the Zaytūna family found in Ms. Berlin Wetzstein II 1148, fol. 50v.

main profession.<sup>78</sup> Born into a world of manuscripts, he was later to become one of the first Damascenes to use the printing press to spread his literary predilections as an editor of five classic *Dīwāns* in 1293/1876.<sup>79</sup> He was a reader of six manuscripts from the former possession of al-Rabbāṭ in the years from 1257/1841 until 1259/1843, being between 20 and 22 years old.<sup>80</sup> His father ‘Umar Zaytūna (born 1218/1803)<sup>81</sup> had, at the young age of fifteen, already used four books from al-Rabbāṭ’s library in the year 1233/1818.<sup>82</sup> And a fifth one (Wetzstein II 566), in which his entry’s date is unfortunately erased, most probably also belonged to al-Rabbāṭ, since it is part of a large and uniform set of the *Sīrat al-Zābir Baybars* of which some volumes bear al-Rabbāṭ’s ownership statements.

Apart from al-Rabbāṭ’s books, the father ‘Umar Zaytūna read three more volumes he apparently did not own himself. One of them was the second part of the encyclopedic *adab* collection *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabā’ wa-muḥāwarāt al-shu‘arā’* (Wetzstein II 424) by Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d. 502/1109). The date is erased, but this is one of only two books he shared with his son Amīn, who read it on 18<sup>th</sup> Muḥarram 1267 (November, 23 1850). Another *madjmū‘a* ‘Umar read in 1258/1842 (Wetzstein II 1233) is somewhat complementary to the first volume, only the texts here assembled deal with the art of music.<sup>83</sup> That ‘Umar Zaytūna was

<sup>78</sup> Socin, *Dīwāne*, 667-8: “Dieser Mann ist meinem Freunde Prym und mir von unserem Aufenthalte in Damascus her wohl bekannt. Er war damals (1869) unser Buchhändler; öfters brachte er halbe Tage bei uns zu, und es war interessant, ihm, dem weitgereisten zuzuhören. Er brachte zur Seltenheit schöne Handschriften.” Interestingly, Socin could have been acquainted with Amīn Zaytūna’s name as well as with that of his father from manuscripts he might have used in the Rifā’iyya library that found their way to Leipzig – where Socin studied and would later ascend to the chair of Arabic – even before he embarked on his journey to Damascus.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. *ibidem*. The work was printed in Cairo.

<sup>80</sup> Berlin Wetzstein II 378 (1259), 486 (1257), 487 (1257); Tübingen Ms. Ma VI 32 (17.10.1258), Tübingen Ms. Ma VI 42 (27.11.1257); Leipzig Vollers 612. Although Wetzstein II 486 does not carry an ownership statement by al-Rabbāṭ, it may – since it belongs to the same set of *Sīrat al-Ḥākim bi-Amrillāh* and was read by Amīn at the same date in 1257 as Wetzstein II 487 – safely be assumed that it belonged to al-Rabbāṭ as well, though Amīn read it sometime after his assumed date of death.

<sup>81</sup> The date of birth is taken from biographical notes on the Zaytūna family found in Ms. Berlin Wetzstein II 1148, fol. 50v. He was first given the name Muḥammad, but when the *shaykh* ‘Umar al-Kallāb visited the family he was renamed. Banī Hānī, *Tārīkh*, 362, lists him among the “*kibār al-ashraf*.” In the document cited by him, ‘Umar is called: “*al-amāthil al-izām al-sayyid ‘Umar djalabī b. iftikhār al-amāthil al-fikhām Ibrāhīm aghā Zaytūna*.” Even with the pompous style of the court scribes taken into account, the family must have had some standing in the city.

<sup>82</sup> Berlin Wetzstein II 513 (1.3.1233), 514 (3.1233), 515 (1.3.1233), 516 (1.3.1233).

<sup>83</sup> There is also some regional touch to it, since the last work of the collection, Muḥammad Efendī al-Kandjī’s (d. around 1150/1737) *Bulūgh al-munan fī tarādjim ahl al-ghunā* treats the biographies of the author’s contemporary singers and musicians in Damascus.

part of a network of readers that may have had al-Rabbāt at its center is suggested when looking at another reader of Wetzstein II 1233, Muṣṭafā b. Aḥmad Barakāt.<sup>84</sup> This man read Wetzstein II 578 in the year 1227/1812, a volume belonging to the same set of *Sīrat al-Zāhir Baybars* as Wetzstein II 566 which ‘Umar Zaytūna read while many of the volumes of this set bear ownership marks of al-Rabbāt. The same people frequently came to the same library to read the same books and possibly also to exchange their views about them. It may, therefore, be assumed that al-Rabbāt could also be the owner of Wetzstein II 1233. But it may well be that it was the ties between several of the readers that established a network reaching to other libraries and not the library of al-Rabbāt that connected them. Lastly, there is Michigan Isl. Ms. 503, the Sufic *Kitāb al-Djawāhir wa-l-durar* by ‘Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha‘rānī (898/1493-973/1565), which ‘Umar read in 1250/1834, followed two years later by his son. The son Muḥammad Amīn Zaytūna is registered as a reader outside the library of al-Rabbāt only in the two volumes (Michigan Isl. Ms. 503 in 1252/1836 and Wetzstein II 424 in 1267/1851) already mentioned among those used by his father.

‘Umar Zaytūna possessed at least ten books and this is also true for his son. But at least in the case of the latter this was certainly only the smaller part of a very fluctuating library, since all of the manuscripts entered the market and were purchased both for the Rifā‘iyya library and for the Wetzstein collections when Amīn was still a young man and long before his death. In the books of their own possession both father and son shared the predilection of al-Rabbāt for poetry and refined as well as entertaining prose or prosometric literature (*adab*). Works of these genres make up for the most part of their collections. Among them is the first part of *Zawābir al-djawābir* (Vollers 607), a voluminous *adab*-anthology compiled by Ismā‘īl b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Anṣārī al-Kātib in the 7<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> century with the ownership statement of Amīn. ‘Umar Zaytūna possessed the *Dīwān* of Bahā’ al-Dīn Zuhayr (581/1186-656/1258; Wetzstein I 43), that of Ibrāhīm al-Qīrāṭī (726/1326-781/1379; Wetzstein I 45), and also a selection from the *Dīwān* of al-Mutanabbī (303/915-354/965; Wetzstein I 47). He bought a voluminous collection of poems bound in red leather, called *Rawḍat al-mushtāq wa-bahdjat al-‘ushshāq* by the local Damascene poet Māmayh al-Rūmī in 1251/1835 (Wetzstein II 243). His son Amīn, too, participated in the local veneration for this man and bought another copy, though not as beautifully adorned, in 1267/1851 (Wetzstein II 163). Especially interesting in this segment is the appearance of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s *Dīwān* twice among the books of Amīn Zaytūna. First, he completed an essentially older fragment in 1265/1849 (Wetzstein I 146) and then shortly afterwards bought a small copy, dated 867/1463 (Wetzstein I 35), in the year 1267/1851 – and apparently resold both of them in that same year since they are

<sup>84</sup> This man was reading the same text preserved in a manuscript of the Rifā‘iyya in Leipzig, Volumes 546.

part of the first Wetzstein-collection which was acquired around the year 1850. Amīn could have read this book in al-Rabbāṭ's library as well. 'Umar Zaytūna was also interested in the fine penmanship necessary for learned secretaries and men of letters from the heyday of Islamic chancellery. He possessed a part of al-Nuwayrī's (d. 732/1332) manual for scribes, *Nihāyat al-arab fī funūn al-adab* (Wetzstein II 1) – which had an illustrious pre-possessor in Abū Bakr b. Rustum al-Shirwānī, an Ottoman bibliophile<sup>85</sup> – and Usāma b. Munqidh's (497/1104-584/1188) *al-Badī' fī l-badī'* (Wetzstein II 134).

Historical interest in Muslim Spain can be found on Amīn Zaytūna's part in Volumes 669, containing an abridgement of *Nafḥ al-ṭīb min ghuṣn al-Andalus al-khaṭīb* by al-Maqqarī (d. 1041/1631-32) and Bashtakīn's (d. 830/1427) abridgement of *al-Iḥāṭa bi-tārīkh Gharnāṭa* by Lisān al-Dīn Ibn al-Khaṭīb (d. 776/1374) on the history of Granada. Like al-Rabbāṭ, Amīm Zaytūna possessed manuscripts with ties to the Ottoman elite, as is witnessed by a small history of the Ottoman dynasty, or more accurately that of the Sultan Salīm b. Bāyazīd. This *al-Djawābir al-muḍī'a fī ayyām al-dawla al-'uthmāniyya* (Sprenger 198), the work of the high profile Damascene scholar Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad Ibn Sulṭān al-Dimaṣqī (870/1466-950/1543), consists of only a few small pages and its modern cardboard binding does not attract the eye, but it was superbly executed and ordained with a lavishly ornamented title page which states that the work was transcribed for the library of the Ottoman Sultan Selim – the very man praised between its covers.<sup>86</sup> Amīn bought the booklet in 1266/1850. Some history is also found in the *madjmū'a* Wetzstein II 422, which contains texts on Egypt, biographies, but also some mystical treatise by Ibn 'Arabī, copies of documents, verses, and legal reasoning on inheritance and *ḥashīsh*. Two more *madjmū'as* assemble – as usual – widely diverse texts: Wetzstein II 1725 offers the manual for physicians *Da'wat al-aṭibbā'* by Ibn Buṭlān (d. 458/1066) along side poetry, prayers, biographies, one Sufic and one philosophical treatise, while Wetzstein II 1755 serves uplifting stories of ascetic saints next to a collection of law court documents.

There is a greater share of religious works – especially spirituality, prayer, and mysticism – to be found among Zaytūna's books when compared to al-Rabbāṭ's. Amīn had a small volume with simple Coranic exegesis and a treatise on the eternal light of the prophet Muḥammad (Wetzstein I 102). Sufism was represented as well in the books of his father, in this case by 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Djīlī's *Sharḥ al-khalwa al-muṭlaqa* (Wetzstein I 115), which he bought in 1263/1847 from the estate of 'Abdallāh al-Uṣṭuwānī. 'Umar Zaytūna's earliest

<sup>85</sup> Cf. note 64.

<sup>86</sup> Fol. 1r: “*bi-rasm mawlānā al-sulṭān / malik al-barrayn wa-l-baḥrayn wa-l-'Irāqayn / al-malik al-muzaffar Abū l-Faṭḥ Salīm / Sāb khallada Allāh ta'ālā mulkabū / amīn*”.

possession in 1241/1826 was a small collection of dogmatic treatises (Wetzstein II 1533).

So the question remains, why did the Zaytūnas frequent al-Rabbāt's library? When comparing the dates of Zaytūna's ownership statements with those of the reading entries in al-Rabbāt's books, the first seem to be clearly of a later stage in their lives. 'Umar Zaytūna read al-Rabbāt's novels at the young age of 15 in the year 1233/1818. As far as we know, he started buying his own books in 1241, but most of them in the late 1250s and 60s. Amīn read al-Rabbāt's books in 1257/1841 and 1259/1843, being 20 to 22 years old at the time, but all the ownership statements date from 1265/1849 through 1271/1854. Also, the books they bought for themselves, as well as those they read in other libraries at a more advanced age, were all of a serious nature or of widely accepted linguistic brilliance, fit for scholars and men of letters. They apparently turned to al-Rabbāt when they wanted more epical entertainment. And both men's young age at the time they did so might have played a role in the choice of this reading.<sup>87</sup>

## 5 The afterlife of the library

Parts of al-Rabbāt's library clearly stayed in the hands of at least two of his sons, 'Abd and Muḥammad. The two left little evidence of their possession in the books, but the entries of some readers who used many books now scattered in different collections over a long period of time after 1252/1836 give the distinct impression that much of the library continued to be accessible as a whole, e. g. in the cited examples of 'Abdallāh al-Djabbān and 'Abd al-Qādir Sbānū. The fact that many readers from the Berlin manuscripts are also found in the Rifā'iyya in Leipzig at very late dates leaves open the possibility that the Rifā'iyya itself was either a lending library for popular literature – a rather unlikely scenario – or the bulk of the remains of al-Rabbāt's library were sold off only at a very late stage. This is supported by the fact that Johann Gottfried Wetzstein and Alois Sprenger alone bought no less than 130 volumes from al-Rabbāt's possession around the year 1270/1853, the date the Rifā'iyya was sold.

Some manuscripts, on the other hand, must have been sold while al-Rabbāt's was still alive. Sa'īd al-Khālidī, servant at the shrine of Bilāl al-Ḥabashī, is known as the reader of four manuscripts between 1240/1825 (Sprenger 5) and 1250/1835

<sup>87</sup> In the autobiographical report of the Medieval Jewish convert to Islam Samaw'al al-Maghribī, appended to his polemic *Iḥām al-yabūd*, he explicitly links his own early fascination with popular epics such as *Antar* to young age, while maturity made him seek out more reliable books of history. The passage is discussed in Reynolds, *Popular Prose*, 254; cf. also Rosenthal, *History*, 46-7. Cf. another example from the 19<sup>th</sup> century cited in Strauss, *Who read what*, 50-1.

(Vollers 32). With one exception, all were at some point in the possession of al-Rabbāṭ. This makes it quite certain that he used the books when they were together in one library, *i. e.* al-Rabbāṭ's. Since al-Khālidī read Sprenger 5 in 1240/1825 the book would at this point be found in al-Rabbāṭ's collection and Anṭūn Djabbāra, who purchased Sprenger 5 1241/1826, would have bought it from al-Rabbāṭ. The latter date must then be regarded as the *terminus ante quem* for al-Rabbāṭ's possession, meaning – if correct – that he parted from this very precious item during his lifetime. But 1252/1836 indeed seems to be some kind of a watershed moment. Those readers who consulted books before 1252/1836 and also at a later date are very few,<sup>88</sup> supporting the notion that parts of the library changed hands around this time, but probably essentially stayed together in the hands of his two sons, albeit with a slightly altered network of readers.<sup>89</sup>

Many of al-Rabbāṭ's books, especially the *sīra*-collections, later passed into the hands of ʿAbdallāh al-Baghdādī al-Qādirī, who probably acted in just the same manner with regard to the segment of entertaining prose and *adab* literature as al-Rabbāṭ's did before or next to him. Many of these multi-volume sets bear the names of both men, and in many instances they even shared the same readers, like the aforementioned ʿAbdallāh al-Djabbān or ʿAbd al-Qādir Sbānū al-ʿAqqād. ʿAbdallāh al-Baghdādī's exact lifetime is unknown, but that it was him who followed al-Rabbāṭ in the possession of the latter's books – and not the other way around – is secured by two of al-Rabbāṭ's ownership statements that were erased and his name replaced by that of al-Baghdādī.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, the only one dated among al-Baghdādī's notes bears the year 1266/1850,<sup>91</sup> a time when al-Rabbāṭ was quite certainly no longer alive. The library of this man, as far as their remains were accessible to me, is different from that of al-Rabbāṭ only in the absence of the very precious books which lend such a distinctive contrast – both in terms of outer appearance and content – to al-Rabbāṭ's otherwise quite poor-looking collection.<sup>92</sup> But the example of al-Baghdādī's son shows once again how the borders between the literary worlds of popular entertainment, pious learning, and higher education were constantly blurred. This man,

<sup>88</sup> Only Muḥammad Nadjīb al-Ḥusaynī was a reader in the 1240s as well as the 1250s: Wetzstein II 556 (Shawwāl 1256), 636 (1245), 637 (1241), 641 (1241), 677 (middle Djumādā I 1242), 680 (Shaʿbān 1251), 682 (6 Ramaḍān 1250).

<sup>89</sup> Also, the few new ownership dates point to the same timeframe. Generally, the marks of possession dated during or after al-Rabbāṭ's lifetime are very sparse: 1231 (Vollers 2); 1236 (Wetzstein II 579); 1248 (Wetzstein II 521, the buyer in this instance being also in 1243 a reader of al-Rabbāṭ's book Wetzstein II 679); 1248 (Harvard Ms. Arab. 396); before 1250 (V 617, contract between Jewish merchants from that date combined with a reader's statement); 1241 (Sprenger 5); 1253 (Wetzstein I 169 and 169bis; Damascus Zāhiriyya 3884 *madjmuʿa* 151).

<sup>90</sup> Wetzstein II 702, fol. 74r and Wetzstein II 794, fol. 1r.

<sup>91</sup> Wetzstein II 1723, fol. 125r.

<sup>92</sup> This might very well be a problem of transmission.



‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Abdallāh al-Baghdādī, took over at least some of the *sīra*-library of his father.<sup>93</sup> But he, unlike his father and much like al-Rabbāṭ, also possessed very elegant copies of texts from a more scholarly environment.<sup>94</sup> This is not surprising, since ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Baghdādī describes himself in some of his notes as “*al-qāḍī bi-Dimashq al-Shām*” and “*ḥafīd al-qāḍī al-‘āmm bi-Dimashq al-Shām*”<sup>95</sup> and therefore hails from the same class of career jurists as ‘Umar al-Rifā‘ī al-Ḥamawī, the former judge who bought no fewer than 46 of al-Rabbāṭ’s manuscripts for his own library, the Rifā‘iyya.

## 6 Conclusion

The interested readers of the Ottoman Empire’s Arabic-speaking provinces had little in the way of public resources to turn to in their quest for information and literary entertainment. The pious endowments of mosques or madrasas, in the hands and under the watchful eyes of supervisors often scolded for their mismanagement, were usually not trying to establish collections beyond the realm of the religious curriculum. The private libraries of scholars and dignitaries, on the other hand, were mostly open only to a small network of peers.

A private, but apparently publicly accessible manuscript collection like that of al-Rabbāṭ must, therefore, have been one of or the only key for many segments of society to gain access to non-religious literature and learning. Al-Rabbāṭ’s surely catered to the needs of those with an appetite for *sīras*, but his library attracted an audience not only from every social strata but also interested in a wide array of literary genres apart from those taught in the traditional religious curriculum. The collection’s content was as inclusive as were its readers, ranging from vernacular poetry to epics and entertaining *adab*-collections to geography, medicine, or law. And at least some readers showed an openness and the ability to cross the lines between the venerated classical texts and those of their own time and within the most diverse literary genres. It is this variety and social openness, intangible in any contemporary chronicle or biographical dictionary and shown by people otherwise often completely unknown, which should be kept in mind when searching for the social-historical background of literary developments in the Middle East. After all, it was this audience that was to be confronted and had to adopt any foray into new literary territory. For the contemporary chroniclers and biographers that usually define our understanding of the cultural sphere of

<sup>93</sup> Wetzstein II 962-980 (*Sīrat ‘Antar*).

<sup>94</sup> Wetzstein II 256, a commentary of Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s *Dīwān* by al-Ḥasan al-Būrīnī, a fine copy for which al-Baghdādī paid 190 *qursh* in the year 1269/1852.

<sup>95</sup> Wetzstein II 999, fol. 84v and back cover.

the Damascene society, this literary territory was on the margin of what they believed to be truly important and noteworthy. But for many users of al-Rabbāṭ's library it was clearly in the center of their literary interests.

Like the totality of manuscripts and collections of the same regional origin and time period that I had the chance to study, this Damascene library, although not antiquarian and containing also works of contemporary history, does not show an interest in or a reception of literary trends of European origin which were beginning to be felt in Syria towards the end of al-Rabbāṭ's lifetime. On the other hand, we should not jump to hasty conclusions. After all, the whole extent of this library is not yet and may never be completely known. Did al-Rabbāṭ possess translations of European texts? Did he even include in his library the first printed Arabic books, which had reached Damascus – though to an unknown extent – with the Egyptian occupation and which by definition would not show up in any manuscript collection? Al-Rabbāṭ was a contemporary to the first movement of translating modern European textbooks into Arabic, a movement that in the Egyptian port of Dimyāṭ at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was largely upheld by Christian scholars from the Syrian lands with a knowledge of Greek like the priest ʿĪsā Petro (Bītrū).<sup>96</sup> Whether the circle of al-Rabbāṭ knew of this man's works – which included translations of modern treatises on philosophy or astronomy, but also a history of China<sup>97</sup> – is not known. But the connections between Dimyāṭ and Damascus existed, as a translation by Petro of a Greek history of the first century of Christianity made for Djirdjis Shaḥḥāda Ṣabbāgh al-Dimashqī in 1817 suggests.<sup>98</sup> Since it was open to Christians and Jews, there is no reason to assume that other contemporary, less exclusively Christian texts translated from the Greek may not have entered al-Rabbāṭ's library through these contacts. Surely, this collection will have more surprises to offer.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. on him recently Reichmuth, *Wissenstransfer*, 35-48.

<sup>97</sup> Ms. Princeton, Yahuda collection 2326.

<sup>98</sup> The manuscript is now preserved in Leipzig – where, ironically, the original Greek work had also been printed – under the shelf mark Vollers 1069.

## The reconstructed library of Aḥmad al-Rabbāt as identified until now

Call-number	Title and author
<b>Berlin</b>	
We I 40	<i>Dīwān</i> by Ibn Nubāta (686/1287-768/1366)
We I 169 + 169bis	<i>Ḥayāt al-Ḥayawān</i> by al-Damīrī (742/1341-808/1405)
We II 187	<i>Dīwān</i> by ‘Umar Ibn al-Fāriḍ (576/1181-632/1235)
We II 256	<i>Ṣudfat al-durar wa-kimāmat al-zahr bi-sharḥ al-Bassāma fī aṭwāq al-ḥamāma</i> , commentary by ‘Abd al-Malik Ibn Badrūn (d. 560/1164) on the poem by ‘Abd al-Madḡid Ibn ‘Abdūn (d. 520/1126)
We II 377	<i>Tārīkh Djabal al-Durūz</i> [according to Abdul-Karim Rafeq, this might be a version of the chronicle <i>al-Durr al-marṣūf</i> by the Lebanese monk Ḥanāniyya al-Munayyir (1756-1832); cf. Rafeq, <i>Province</i> , 328]
We II 378	<i>Kitāb al-Gḥawī al-munṭawī ‘alā tārīkh Qiṣṣat al-Fransāwī wa-mā tawaqqa‘a min ḥādhihi al-tā’ifa min al-fasād wa-l-kharāb li-djamī‘ al-bilād Rūm wa-Islām bi-itmām</i>
We II 381	<i>Sīrat al-Barāmika</i>
We II 487-505, 517	<i>Sīrat al-Ḥākīm bi-Amrillāh</i>
We II 506-519, 521	<i>Sīrat Ghazwat al-Arqaṭ</i>
We II 541-548, 550	<i>Sīrat Muḥammad al-Kurdī Ibn Karkhān</i>
We II 551-555	<i>Sīrat al-‘Anqā’ bint Bahrām Djūr bi-kalām tuḥfat al-Ṣudūr</i>
We II 561, 567, 573, 577, 580, 603	<i>Sīrat al-Zābir Baybars</i>
We II 636, 637, 641	<i>al-Malik Sayf Dhū l-Yazan</i>
We II 664	<i>Tārīkh Ḥasan al-Danaf</i>
We II 672	<i>Kalīla wa-Dimna</i> transl. by Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ (d. 140/757)
We II 674, 675, 677,	<i>Sīrat Djūdar b. ‘Umar al-Ṣayyād</i>
We II 679, 680-682	<i>Sīrat al-Malik ‘Amr al-Nu‘mān wa-awlādihī</i>
We II 691	<i>Ghazwat al-sab‘ ḥuṣūn yughzihā al-Imām ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib</i>
We II 697	<i>Hikāyat al-Malik Shabramān ma‘a wazīrihī Izdihār</i>

We II 701	<i>1001 Nights</i>
We II 702	Compilation of stories
We II 703	<i>Dīwān samr wa-ḥakāyā ‘ibar madjmū‘ min al-Mustaṭraf</i>
We II 707	<i>Ḥikāyat al-Ṣayyād wa-l-Qumqum wa-l-samak al-mughannī wa-malik wa-ibn al-tādjir wa-l-talsam</i>
We II 711	<i>Ḥikāyat al-Malik Azād Bakht wa-bnuhū wa-l-wuzarā’ al-‘ashara</i>
We II 714	<i>al-Tibr al-masbūk fī naṣīḥat al-mulūk</i> by al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111)
We II 719	<i>Manzūma wa-Qiṣṣat nabī Allāh Yūsuf al-Ṣiddīq</i>
We II 723	<i>Qiṣṣat Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiyya wa-mā fa’ala min al-khabath ma’a ahl al-bayt</i>
We II 742	I. <i>Qiṣṣat Fadlūn</i> II. <i>Ḥadīth nuzūl al-waḥy ‘alā l-nabī</i>
We II 794	<i>Awwal aṣl al-Rawḥa qabla Mughāmis</i> , from the <i>Banū Hilāl</i> , epic
We II 1043, 1051, 1083	<i>Sīrat ‘Antar</i>
We II 1082	<i>Ḥasan al-Djawharī</i> (from the <i>1001 Nights</i> )
We II 1236	<i>Safīna</i> by Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ
We II 1237	<i>Safīna</i> by Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ
We II 1238	<i>Safīna</i> by Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ
We II 1577	<i>Mukāshafat al-qulūb</i> erroneously ascribed to al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111)
We II 1806	I. <i>al-Risāla al-murshidiyya fī aḥkām al-ṣifāt al-ilāhīya</i> by Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274) II. <i>al-Muṣṣiḥa ‘an muntahā al-afkār wa-sabab ikhtilāf al-umam</i> by al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274) III. <i>al-Adjwiba al-naṣīriyya (‘alā al-Qūnawī)</i> by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī IV. <i>al-Risāla al-hādīya</i> by al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274) V. <i>al-Maḍnūn bihī ‘alā ghayr ablihī</i> by al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111) VI. <i>al-Tafrīqa bayna al-īmān wa-l-zandaqa</i> by al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111)

We II 1872	<i>al-Yawāqīt fī ba‘d al-mawāqīt</i> by Abū l-Naṣr Aḥmad al-Ta‘ālibī (d. 429/1038)
Spr. 5	<i>Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma‘rifat al-aqālīm</i> by al-Muqaddasī (336/947-around 380/990)
Spr. 34	<i>Futūḥ al-buldān</i> ascribed to Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Wāqidī (130/747-207/823)
Spr. 837	I. <i>Nūr al-‘ayn fī sharḥ Silk al-‘ayn</i> [i. e. the <i>Tā‘īya</i> by Ibn Ḥabīb al-Safadī (d. 915/1509-10)] by ‘Alawān al-Ḥamawī (d. 936/1529) II. <i>Sharḥ Ṣalāt Ibn Mashīsh</i> by ‘Abd al-Salām Ibn Mashīsh (d. 622/1225-26) III. <i>Faḍl al-tablīl</i>
Spr. 1181	<i>Qaṭr al-nabāt fī l-ḥakāyā al-mutaḥassanāt</i> (collection of anecdotes)
Spr. 1235	<i>Safīna</i> by Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ
Spr. 1240	<i>Safīna</i> by Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ
Spr. 1248	<i>Marzubān-nāma</i> (fables)
Spr. 1278, 1284, 1285, 1286, 1313, 1313bis	<i>Sīrat ‘Antar</i>
Spr. 1355	<i>Sīrat al-Zābir Baybars</i>
Spr. 1973	<i>Akḥbār al-duwal wa-āthār al-uwal</i> by Aḥmad Djalabī Ibn Sinān Yūsuf al-Qaramānī (939/1532-1019/1611)
Spr. 1974	<i>Akḥbār al-duwal wa-āthār al-uwal</i> by Aḥmad Djalabī Ibn Sinān Yūsuf al-Qaramānī (939/1532-1019/1611)
Spr. 2007	<i>Safīna</i> by Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ
Spr. 2008	<i>Safīna</i> by Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ
Lbg. 360	<i>al-Ṣādīḥ wa-l-bāghim</i> , a poem by Muḥammad b. Ṣāliḥ Ibn al-Habbāriyya (d. 504/1110)
Lbg. 568	<i>al-Mukhtār bi-anwār Rabī‘ al-abrār</i> (by Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Zamakhsharī [d. 538/1143-44]), the commentary by Aḥmad b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-‘Adjamī (fl. 8 <sup>th</sup> /13 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> ct.)
Lbg. 1031	<i>Safīna</i> by Aḥmad al-Rabbāṭ
Ms. or. quart. 1212	<i>al-Mukhtār min al-Mudḥish</i> by Abū al-Faraj ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Djawzī (d. 597/1200)

<b>Cambridge</b>	
Harvard Ms. Arab 396	<i>Nukhbat al-afkār</i> by Abū Bakr b. Mundhir al-Bayṭār (fl. 8 <sup>th</sup> /14 <sup>th</sup> ct.)
<b>Damascus</b>	
Zāhiriyya 3638	<i>Qiṣṣat al-a‘rābī ma‘a al-Ḥasan b. amīr al-mu‘minīn</i>
Zāhiriyya 3854 madjmū‘ 151	<i>Madjmū‘a</i> of mostly Mamluk and Ottoman poetry
Zāhiriyya 7400	<i>Safīna</i> by Aḥmad al-Rabbāt
Zāhiriyya 8419	I. <i>Futūwat Salmān al-Fārisī</i> II. <i>Manāqib Aḥmad al-Badawī</i>
Zāhiriyya 8749 ‘ām	<i>Madjmū‘a</i> by Aḥmad al-Rabbāt I. <i>Qiṣṣat huṭūl al-thaldj fī madīnat Dimashq sanata 1248</i> II. <i>Qiṣṣat mā djarā fī l-Shām min ḥurūb wa-fitan bayna Muḥammad Salīm Bāshā al-wazīr al-a‘zam wa-ahl al-Shām</i> III. <i>Mi‘rādj al-nabī</i>
<b>Leipzig</b>	
Vollers 2	<i>Irshād al-qāṣid ilā asnā al-maqāṣid</i> by Ibn al-Akfānī (d. 749/1348-9)
Vollers 30	<i>Madjmū‘a ḥawat ba‘d sīrat al-nabī</i>
Vollers 32-36	<i>Sīrat nasab al-nabī</i>
Vollers 40	<i>Ghazwat Ḥunayn</i>
Vollers 110	<i>Qiṣṣat Ayyūb al-Ṣābir</i>
Vollers 161	<i>Qūt al-qulūb</i> by Abū ‘Abdallāh al-Dāmaghānī (d. 487/1085-6)
Vollers 174	<i>Rawḍ al-rayāḥīn fī hikāyāt al-ṣāliḥīn</i> by ‘Abdallāh al-Yāfi‘ī (d. 768/1367)
Vollers 612	<i>Dīwān Law‘at al-shākī wa-dam‘at al-bākī</i> , ascribed here to Khalīl b. Aybak al-Ṣafādī (d. 764/1363)
Vollers 617	<i>Nasīmat al-Ṣabā</i> by al-Ḥasan Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 779/1377)
Vollers 625	<i>Sīrat Lubb al-albāb</i>
Vollers 627	<i>Sīrat al-malik al-Badrnār</i>

Vollers 630	<i>Sīrat al-malik Sayf Dhī l-Yazan</i>
Vollers 633	I. <i>Ra's al-Ghūl</i> or <i>Futūḥ al-Yaman</i> II. <i>Futūḥ Bahnasā</i>
Vollers 656	<i>al-Durr al-muntakhab fī tārikh Ḥalab</i> , ascribed to Ibn al-Shiḥna (d. 890/1485-86)
Vollers 664	<i>Djawābir al-buḥūr wa-waqā'i' al-umūr wa-'adjā'ib al-duḥūr</i>
Vollers 859	I. <i>Tasbriḥ al-aflāk</i> by Bahā' al-Dīn al-Āmilī (d. 1031/1622) II. <i>Kashf al-ḥidjāb wa-l-rān 'an wadjh as'ilat al-djānn</i> by 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Sha'rānī (d. 973/1565-6) III. <i>Kitāb fī 'ilm al-ṭuyūr</i> IV. <i>Kitāb al-Mufriḥāt fī 'ilm al-ṭibb</i>
Vollers 865	I. <i>Ḥadīrat al-Quds</i> II. <i>Salwat al-aḥsān</i> by Abū al-Faradj 'Abd al-Raḥmān Ibn al-Djawzī (d. 597/1200)
Vollers 866	I. <i>'Ayn al-amthāl fī Zarīf al-aqwāl</i> II. <i>Biḍā'at al-qādī li-ḥtiyājihī fī l-mustaqbal wa-l-māḍī</i> by Muḥammad al-Brusawī Kūl Kadīsī (d. 982/1574-75)
Vollers 867	I. <i>al-Fawā'id al-tibbiyya al-muwāfiqa li-ṭibb al-barīya</i> by Aḥmad al-Qalyūbī (d. 1069/1659) II. <i>al-Nūr al-sāfir 'anmā ḥaditha fī l-qarn al-'āshir</i> by 'Abd al-Qādir al-'Aydārūs (978/1570-1038/1628) III. <i>Muḥarrarat al-tamāma fī aḥwāl al-qiyāma</i> IV. <i>al-Waṣīya</i> by Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu'mān (d. 150/767-68)
<b>London</b>	
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<b>Tübingen</b>	
Ma VI 32	<i>1001 Nights</i>
Ma VI 33	<i>1001 Nights</i>
Ma VI 42	<i>Sīrat Djūdar b. 'Umar al-Ṣayyād</i>

<sup>99</sup> Cf. the description by Maḥdī, *Nights*, 275-80.

Ma VI 52	<i>Sīrat Banī Hilāl</i>
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# „Inzwischen lerne ich arabisch, das mir die haar wehe thun.“ Der Lern- und Arbeitsalltag eines Europäers in Kairo in den 1750er Jahren

Arthur Manukyan

Viele europäische Missionare und Gesandte des 18. Jahrhunderts waren sprachliche und kulturelle Grenzgänger: sie wollten etwas vermitteln oder überbringen. Wie gingen sie dabei vor und welche Strategien entwickelten sie, um ihre Ziele vor Ort zu erreichen? Was waren ihre Erkenntnisquellen? Im Folgenden werde ich am Beispiel eines Herrnhuter Gesandten in Ägypten die alltäglichen Sorgen und Bemühungen eines solchen Grenzgängers darstellen. Es handelt sich um Friedrich Wilhelm Hocker, Arzt, Theologe und Missionar, der einen großen Teil seines Lebens im Orient verbrachte. Er ist 1782 in Kairo im Alter von 72 Jahren verstorben und wurde auf dem Friedhof des griechisch-orthodoxen Klosters des heiligen Georgius in Alt-Kairo begraben. Seinen Lebenslauf klammere ich an dieser Stelle aus,<sup>1</sup> vielmehr möchte ich seinen Alltag in Ägypten skizzieren, vor allem seine Bemühungen, die arabische Sprache zu erlernen.<sup>2</sup>

## 1 Friedrich Wilhelm Hocker in Kairo und die „Tücken der neuen Welt“

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Im Frühjahr 1752 wurde Hocker vom Grafen Zinzendorf nach Ägypten ausgesandt. Bereits 1748/49 hatte er sich in Ägypten aufgehalten, Kairo betrat er aber nun zum ersten Mal. Sein Auftrag bestand darin, einen Kontakt zum Patriarchen der Kopten Markos VII.<sup>3</sup> (1745-69) herzustellen und zu unterhalten. Die Ziele Hockers und seiner Herrnhuter Auftraggeber waren vielfältig. Erstens: In Kairo sollte eine Herrnhuter Station aufgebaut werden, deren finanzielle Grundlagen der ausgesandte Arzt bis zur Ankunft weiterer Mitarbeiter aus Deutschland schaffen sollte. Zweitens: Von Ägypten aus sollten die Herrnhuter, nachdem sie das Wohlwollen des Patriarchen der Kopten erlangt hätten, eine Reise nach Äthiopien unternehmen. Langfristig gesehen plante man in Äthiopien die Etablierung einer Herrnhuter Siedlung bzw. Kolonie. Die jurisdiktionelle Einheit der

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<sup>1</sup> Zum Lebenslauf Hockers siehe: Manukyan, Herrnhuter Präsenz, 57-8; ferner *idem*, *Konstantinopel und Kairo*, 223-34.

<sup>2</sup> Die folgenden Ausführungen basieren wesentlich auf den Ergebnissen meiner Dissertationsschrift: Manukyan, *Konstantinopel und Kairo*.

<sup>3</sup> Zu Markos siehe bei Ibn al-Muḳaffaʿ, *History of the Patriarchs*, 292-5.

koptischen und äthiopischen Kirche, die bis in das 20. Jahrhundert hinein bestand, hatte die Herrnhuter zu der Annahme geführt, dass ein freundschaftlicher Kontakt zum Patriarchen der Kopten in Kairo ihnen die Aufnahme in das weitgehend von Fremden abgeschottete Äthiopien erleichtern könnte. Denn das Oberhaupt der äthiopischen Geistlichkeit war in der Regel ein vom Patriarchen ausgesuchter und nach Äthiopien entsandter koptischer Erzbischof.

Um sich dem Patriarchen der Kopten nähern zu können, machte sich Hocker daran, das Arabische zu erlernen und praktizierte zugleich als Arzt.

### 1.1 Die Wohnungssuche

Als Angehöriger einer protestantischen Konfession – die Herrnhuter Pietisten gaben sich als Protestanten aus –, und weil er von England aus (zwischen 1750 und 1755 Zentrale der Brüder-Unität) angereist war, wurde Hocker offiziell unter englischen Schutz gestellt.<sup>4</sup> Diesen hatte ihm der Konsul Richard Harris schon bald nach der Ankunft in Alexandria brieflich zugesichert. In Alexandria hatte der Herrnhuter darüber hinaus noch einen griechischstämmigen Kaufmann namens Giovanni Bezzo kennengelernt, der ihm für die Zwischenzeit sein Haus in Kairo zur Verfügung stellte. Schutz und Unterkunft waren somit zunächst gewährleistet. Hocker ließ sein Gepäck im Haus des Kaufmanns provisorisch unterbringen – „so in eben der Straße, nemlich in der Contrada Veneta“<sup>5</sup> –, in dem er auch tagsüber verweilt; im Hause des Konsuls bekam er dagegen Unterkunft und Verpflegung.

Das osmanische Kairo selbst bestand aus drei größeren Einheiten: al-Qāhira (gegründet im Jahre 969) innerhalb der fatimidischen Mauern, Miṣr al-Qadīma bzw. Alt-Kairo, die ca. 2 km in südwestlicher Richtung entfernte ursprüngliche Stadt, und Būlāq, die etwa einen Kilometer westlich befindliche Hafen-Vorstadt.<sup>6</sup> In den verschiedenen Stadtvierteln (*ḥārāt*) bestand grundsätzlich die Tendenz zu religiöser, ethnischer und beruflicher Homogenität, aber auch in den ausgesprochenen „Ausländervierteln“ lebten verschiedene Minderheiten nebeneinander. Die Beschreibungen, die Hocker in seinen Briefen liefert, bestätigen dieses Bild. Die Europäer in Kairo, größtenteils Franzosen und Italiener und somit konfessionell dem Katholizismus zugeordnet, lebten und trieben Handel hauptsächlich entlang des so genannten Großen Kanals (*al-Ḥalīġ al-Miṣrī*) sowie in der Nähe der Märkte, die sich dort befanden, was ökonomische und wohl auch sicherheits-

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<sup>4</sup> R.17.B.6.a.11.g (Hocker an Zinzendorf; Kairo, den 6. Oktober 1752), 1 und 5. (Hier und im Weiteren sind bei den Quellen die Signaturen angegeben, unter denen sie im Unitätsarchiv in Herrnhut [= UAH] zu finden sind.)

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Vgl. Winter, *Egyptian Society*, 225.

spezifische Gründe hatte.<sup>7</sup> Die Straßen, in denen die Europäer lebten, wurden von eigens dafür bestelltem Wachpersonal geschützt. In den Tagebüchern bezeichnen die Herrnhuter diese Wachen als „Janitschare der Gasse“. Bei Tumulten in der Stadt, die es in Kairo dieser Zeit des Öfteren gab, wurde das Wachpersonal für die Europäer verstärkt, wie einige Herrnhuter berichten.<sup>8</sup> Die Präsenz der europäischen, insbesondere französischen, venezianischen und englischen Händler in Kairo hatte sich durch den gewachsenen Handel mit Europa verstärkt. Im Zusammenhang mit diesen ökonomischen Beziehungen war auch ein verstärkter Einfluss der europäischen Politik und ihrer Botschafter im Lande spürbar.<sup>9</sup>

Mit der Zeit lernte Hocker auch die anderen europäischen Gesandten sowie katholische Missionare und Priester kennen. Er suchte eine eigene passende Unterkunft für längere Zeit. Nach Hause schrieb er: „Ich denke aber bald mein eigener Herr zu werden; denn eigener heerd, wens auch nur ein Stück käse und brod wäre, ist doch allezeit Geldes werth.“<sup>10</sup> Am 17. September 1752 bekam Hocker von dem nunmehr abgelösten englischen Konsul Barton, der sich noch in Kairo aufhielt, ein Haus angeboten. Das Haus lag „in der Gegend der Europäer“ (*Hārat al-Ifranġ*),<sup>11</sup> unmittelbar neben dem Haus Bartons. Dieses hatte er selbst gemietet, damit kein Fremder in seine Nachbarschaft einziehen könne.<sup>12</sup> Doch nahm Hocker dieses Angebot nicht gleich an, und als er aus seinem anderweitig gemieteten Haus am 6. November ausziehen musste,<sup>13</sup> war es nicht mehr möglich, auf das Angebot des Ex-Botschafters zurückzukommen. Denn den türkischen Nachbarn Bartons gefiel nicht, dass „ein lediger Europäischer Medicus“ in ihrer Nähe wohnen sollte.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Vgl. Winter, *Egyptian Society*, 225-52, hier: 228. Die entsprechenden Stadtpläne „Cairo in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century“ und „Cairo Citadel 1798“ siehe bei Crecelius / Bakr, *Al-Damurdasbi's Chronicle*. Eine ausführliche Beschreibung zu Kairo findet sich in: Carsten Niebuhrs *Reisebeschreibungen*, 105-48.

<sup>8</sup> R.17.B.11 (Diarium Kairo; Hocker, 25.4.1773-29.8.1773), 26. April: „In den paar Gaßen der Franken vermehrte der Aga die gewöhnliche Janitscharen Wache noch mit einigen Saratschen.“

<sup>9</sup> Vgl. Crecelius, *Egypt in the Eighteenth Century*, 67-8. Zur politischen und gesellschaftlichen Struktur Ägyptens im 18. Jahrhundert siehe den ausführlichen Bericht des späteren osmanischen Gouverneurs von Syrien (1780) Cezzar Ahmed Pascha (gest. 1804): Shaw, *Ottoman Egypt*, 9-53.

<sup>10</sup> R.21.A.70.12, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Vgl. Winter, *Egyptian Society*, 217. Den Stadtplan hierzu siehe bei Raymond, *Arab Cities*, 249, 257.

<sup>12</sup> R.17.B.6.a.11.g, 8-9.

<sup>13</sup> R.17.B.6.a.12.a, 13 (Brief Hockers an Zinzendorf, mit dem Diarium; Kairo, den 16. Januar 1753).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, 14.



Dass Hocker nicht verheiratet war, sahen die Nachbarn offenbar als eine Gefahr. Das vorherige Haus Hockers, das einem Armenier gehörte, war ihm am 29. Oktober unter der Angabe gekündigt worden, eine Frau sei in das Haus hineingegangen.<sup>15</sup> Bei der Frau hatte es sich um eine Patientin gehandelt, die zusammen mit ihrem Mann den Arzt Hocker aufgesucht hatte.<sup>16</sup> Der Armenier befürchtete „eine Avanie, wenn Weiber sein hauß frequentirten“.<sup>17</sup> Der Herrnhuter empfand dies als eine Ausrede. Frauenbesuch sei „just das Netz, womit die türken die Francken fangen und ihnen den beutel fegen“.<sup>18</sup> Das ganze würde gar oft im Vorfeld mit Absicht inszeniert.<sup>19</sup> Die ledigen Europäer waren offenbar verdächtig, Liebschaften in Kairo zu pflegen. Vor diesem Hintergrund wird nunmehr die Anweisung des verängstigten Herrnhuters an seinen verheirateten arabischen Diener verständlich, keine Frauen in sein Haus hineinzulassen, nicht einmal dessen eigene.<sup>20</sup> Zu diesem Zeitpunkt war Hocker bereits – durch Vermittlung des englischen Ex-Konsuls – in ein neues Haus „an der Ecke der französischen Straße“ eingezogen.<sup>21</sup> Hier blieb er die nächsten Monate wohnen.

Natürlich konnte ein Neankömmling wie Hocker nicht mit allen Gepflogenheiten des Gastgeberlandes – insbesondere hinsichtlich des Umgangs mit Frauen – vertraut sein. Diese Schwierigkeiten, mit denen sich Hocker anfangs konfrontiert sah, wirkten sich in der Folgezeit nachhaltig auf die Wahrnehmung Ägyptens durch die Herrnhuter aus. Verheiratete „Brüder“ dorthin zu schicken, wie es in anderen so genannten Missionsgebieten der Welt üblich war, kam für sie nicht in Frage. Die nach Kairo ausgesandten ledigen Herrnhuter lebten in ihrer eigenen Welt, in der eigenen, stark am Mönchtum orientierten „Hausökonomie“, und mieden den Kontakt zu Frauen.

Im Mai 1753 wechselte Hocker erneut seine Unterkunft. Wieder waren Schwierigkeiten aufgetreten, „weil man ungewöhnlicher dinge von mir praetendirte“.<sup>22</sup> Einzelheiten erfahren wir zwar nicht, aber Hocker fühlte sich offenbar von seinem Hausbesitzer bedrängt. Eine neue Unterkunft vermittelte ihm dieses Mal ein Kopte. Da sie Hocker heller und bequemer als die vorherige schien und

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, 13.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*: „so gar, daß sie [= die Türken] manchmahl Gaßen-Weiber suborniren, die sich heimlich in die häuser der Francken schleichen müssen, und von daher hernach einen Praetext zu einer Avanie nehmen“. Vgl. zur Thematik: *Carsten Niebuhrs Reisebeschreibungen*, 109.

<sup>20</sup> R.17.B.6.a.12.a, 14.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>22</sup> R.17.B.6.a.12.c (Brief Hockers an Zinzendorf, mit dem Diarium; Kairo, den 26. September 1753), 1.

zugleich auch größer war, zog er am 12. Mai dort ein.<sup>23</sup> Die Wohnung befand sich sehr wahrscheinlich ebenfalls im europäischen Wohnviertel, da in demselben Haus später zeitweise der holländische Konsul untergebracht wurde.<sup>24</sup> Hier blieb Hocker bis zu seiner Abreise wohnen.

## 1.2 Das Sprachstudium: Herausforderungen und Hindernisse

Von Anfang an bemühte sich Hocker, das Arabische zu erlernen. Bereits als er unterwegs nach Ägypten war, forderte er arabische Lehrbücher an, die der damalige Agent der Herrnhuter in London, Heinrich Cossart, besorgte. Darunter befanden sich Lexika und Grammatikbücher wie die des Franziskanermönchs Thomas Obicini oder des Antonius ab Aquila, die in der ersten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts gedruckt worden waren.<sup>25</sup> Das in jahrhundertelangen Beziehungen mit der arabischen Welt gesammelte Wissen der römisch-katholischen Kirche war für die protestantischen Missionare unentbehrlich. Im September 1752 erhielt Hocker die arabischen Bücher.<sup>26</sup>

Zudem ging er bei arabischen Sprachlehrern in die Schule. Hocker hoffte anfangs, einen auch in europäischen Sprachen kundigen Kopten als Lehrer zu finden. Der Plan, der hinter dieser Überlegung stand, war klar: Hocker suchte einen arabischen Sprachlehrer aus der ethnischen und konfessionellen Gruppe, mit der er auch längerfristig den Kontakt aufbauen wollte. Gewiss hoffte er so auf Knüpfung weiterer Kontakte. Seinem Wunsch war aber kein Glück beschieden.<sup>27</sup> Überhaupt scheint es nicht so leicht gewesen zu sein, einen Sprachlehrer in Kairo zu finden. So wechselhaft wie mit der Wohnungssuche erging es dem Herrnhuter auch bei seiner Suche nach einem Arabischlehrer.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> R.17.B.6.a.13.a, 7.

<sup>25</sup> R.21.A.70.12 (Heinrich Cossart an Hocker, 6. Oktober 1752), 1-2: „Die Arabischen Bücher, um die du nach Rom geschrieben hast, habe ich vor 14 tagen empfangen, jedoch uneingebunden, welches ein fehler war, weils hier sehr schlechte buchbinder giebt. Es war 1) Germani Arab Lexicon in fol. 2) Thomae a Novara Thesaurus Arabico-Syro-Latinus in 8vo 3) Aquilae Grammaticae Linguae Arabicae Vulgaris et litteralis in 8vo [= *in octavo*], /:die ist in hoc genere die beste:/ [gemeint ist das Werk von Antonius ab Aquila, gedruckt in Rom 1650] und 4tens ist noch eine Grammatica Arabica Agrumia appellata Thomae Obicini in 8. [gedruckt in Rom 1631], die habe ich nicht einbinden laßen, und will sie dir mit Gelegenheit senden.“ Die an zweiter Stelle genannte Grammatik wurde 1636 in Rom gedruckt. Verfasser war der Franziskaner Thomas Obicini (it. Tomasso Obicini da Novara, 1585-1632), der sich um die Entwicklung der orientalistischen Studien große Verdienste erwarb.

<sup>26</sup> R.21.A.70.12, 1-2. Diese Werke sind in den Quellensammlungen der Herrnhuter nicht mehr zu finden.

<sup>27</sup> R.17.B.6.a.12.b, 3 (Brief Hockers an Zinzendorf, mit dem Diarium; Kairo, den 29. April 1753).

Am 4. September 1752 – eine Woche nach der Ankunft in Kairo – engagierte er einen koptischen Priester „namens Christopher“, der in Rom studiert hatte und zum Katholizismus übergetreten war.<sup>28</sup>

Auch ein arabischer Bediensteter Hockers sollte offenbar als Sprachlehrer fungieren. Dieser war etwa zehn Jahre lang Diener eines deutschen Chirurgen in Kairo gewesen,<sup>29</sup> und man kann annehmen, dass er mit seinen Deutschkenntnissen nicht geizte, möglicherweise stolz darauf war, sie dem europäischen Arzt zu präsentieren. Der Intention Hockers lief das zuwider, weil er vor allem Arabisch zu sprechen wünschte.

Nach Hause schrieb der Herrnhuter, er beabsichtige, „einen Copten, Griechen oder türken, der keine Europaeische Sprache kan“ (!) anzunehmen, um „im reden fertiger [zu] werden“.<sup>30</sup> Am 13. Februar 1753 engagierte Hocker einen „Shieg und Mulla bey der großen Moschee“ für einen Monat als Lehrer.<sup>31</sup> Aber „er war nicht vor mich“, schreibt er lapidar, was allerdings nicht allein an der sprachlichen Kompetenz des Scheichs gelegen haben kann.<sup>32</sup> Denn Hocker klagt: „Es ist ein Elend, daß nicht ein einiger [= einziger] Christ hier in Cairo ist, der seine Mutter-Sprache fondamentell [*sic!*] versteht und so einen andern lehren kan“.<sup>33</sup> Die Schwierigkeiten waren im Fall des islamischen Geistlichen also wohl religiöser Natur, womöglich gab es Streit, doch auch darüber erfahren wir nicht viel mehr.

Im Dezember 1754 konnte Hocker für kurze Zeit einen in Aleppo gebürtigen katholischen Missionar namens Pater Antonio als Sprachlehrer engagieren.<sup>34</sup> Dieser scheint Hockers Arabisch am meisten geformt zu haben. Überhaupt ist auffällig, wenn auch nicht verwunderlich, dass der Herrnhuter in Kairo stets auf Katholiken und katholische Konvertiten als Sprachlehrer zurückgreifen musste. Im Land, das die deutschen Pietisten für sich als Neuland erkundschafeten, waren die Katholiken und ihre Missionare keine Neulinge. Die Anzahl der zum Katholizismus übergetretenen Kopten wird zwar um das Jahr 1750 mit nicht mehr als 1.300 Personen in ganz Ägypten geschätzt, doch die Tendenz war stei-

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<sup>28</sup> R.17.B.6.a.11.g, 7. Mehr erfahren wir nicht über diesen Priester.

<sup>29</sup> R.17.B.6.a.12.a, 14.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*, 4.

<sup>31</sup> R.17.B.6.a.12.b, 5.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>33</sup> R.17.B.6.a.12.b, 5-6.

<sup>34</sup> R.17.B.6.a.13.a, 8-9, 10.

gend.<sup>35</sup> Unter den Konvertiten befanden sich bedeutende Personen, und ihnen standen gute Ausbildungsmöglichkeiten in Rom zur Verfügung.<sup>36</sup>

Das Erlernen der arabischen Sprache ging für den Herrnhuter Arzt beschwerlich voran. „Inzwischen lerne ich arabisch, das mir die haar wehe thun, und es kommt mir als einem verseßenen<sup>37</sup> alten Menschen wirklich etwas sauer an“,<sup>38</sup> schreibt er, und: „Absonderlich wollte es mit der arabischen Sprache nicht vom fleck, und es war als wenn mir das Gehirn vernagelt wäre“. <sup>39</sup> Schon im November 1752 ließ Hocker bis Ende des Jahres seine Studien ruhen,<sup>40</sup> zumal es auch gesundheitlich nicht gut mit ihm stand. Aber er gab nicht auf. Die Beschäftigung mit der arabischen Sprache diente den zukünftigen Plänen der Brüdergemeine, die weitere Brüder nach Kairo aussenden wollte. Diese sollte Hocker selbst unterrichten.<sup>41</sup>

„[Ich] samle das nöthigste zu einer kurtzen verständlichen deutschen Arabischen Grammatica und Vocabolario und componire auch einige Dialogos, und die Zeit wird mir wirklich nicht zu lang, sondern zu kurz.“<sup>42</sup>

Bei den späteren Aufenthalten in Kairo fungierte Hocker wie geplant selbst als Lehrer für die neu ankommenden Herrnhuter, seine „Lehrbücher“ sind allerdings nicht mehr erhalten.<sup>43</sup>

### 1.3 Die medizinische Praxis

Nach der Klärung der Wohnungssituation und den Bemühungen, das Arabische zu erlernen, sollte die finanzielle Basis für das weitere Leben in Kairo gelegt wer-

<sup>35</sup> Siehe dazu ausführlich: Hamilton, *The Copts*, 58-103 (Jesuiten, Franziskaner und Kapuziner, die koptisch-katholische Kirche) und vgl. Spuler, *Koptische Kirche*, 305-6.

<sup>36</sup> Vgl. Hamilton, *The Copts*, 88-95.

<sup>37</sup> Von „versitzen“: Zugrunde liegt hier die Vorstellung vom unbeweglich bleiben, von Trägheit und Nachlässigkeit, letztlich also die erklärte Absicht Hockers, zu zeigen, dass er eine zu erwartende Leistung nicht in Angriff nehmen kann und wird. Zur Wortsemantik vgl. *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, 25.

<sup>38</sup> R.21.A.70.12, 1.

<sup>39</sup> R.17.B.6.a.12.a, 2.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>41</sup> R.17.B.6.a.12.c, 4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibidem*. Fast wörtlich auch an Cossart am 17. Januar 1753, R.21.A.70.13, 1.

<sup>43</sup> Im Unitätsarchiv in Herrnhut ist das arabisch-italienische Wörterbuch von Georg Pilder, des späteren Reisebegleiters Hockers, erhalten. Siehe unter: NB.VII.R.3.301, *Wörterbuch Deutsch-Arabisch-Italienisch*, 1256 S., handschriftlich, und NB.VII.R.3.302, Register zum Wörterbuch, 873 S., handschriftlich. Eine ältere Version des Wörterbuchs findet sich unter: NB.VII.R.3.300, Pilder, Georg: *Arabisches Lexicon. Italienisch-arabisch-deutsch*, 1767, handschriftlich, 672 S.

den. Schon bevor Hocker das Arabische leidlich beherrschte, wurde er von Patienten aufgesucht, die allerdings nicht sonderlich gut zahlten.<sup>44</sup> Den Grund berichtete er in einem Brief nach Hause:

„Den 19. Juli [1753] erfuhr ich, warum die Patienten mich so schlecht bezahlten. Sie stehen nemlich in dem Gedanken, ich wäre ein Emissario eines großen Herrn, der was gewisses auskundschaften solte und daher dachten sie, ich brauchte kein Geld. Das erzählte mir der französische Chirurgus, mein guter freund.“<sup>45</sup>

Die Ursprünge dieser Gerüchte in Kairo sind nicht eindeutig auszumachen. Möglicherweise hingen sie mit der erwarteten Ankunft des französischen Grafen d’Esneval in Ägypten zusammen, mit dem die Herrnhuter 1750-52 Verhandlungen über die Möglichkeit ihrer Ansiedlung in Äthiopien geführt hatten. D’Esneval war Marineadmiral im dänischen Dienst und hatte sich freistellen lassen, um nach Äthiopien zu reisen. Den Herrnhutern gegenüber gab er vor, bereits vorher dort gewesen zu sein und vom äthiopischen Kaiser den Auftrag erhalten zu haben, europäische Handwerker ins Land zu holen. Diese Geschichte wurde von den Herrnhutern aber mit Vorsicht aufgenommen. Zinzendorf gab Hocker die strikte Anweisung, sich mit d’Esneval auf keine Geschäfte einzulassen.<sup>46</sup>

Wie auch immer: Die Gerüchte über seine Stellung als Emissär bereiteten Hocker in Kairo vor allem anfangs große Probleme. Die weniger vermögenden Patienten Hockers hatten offenbar häufig die Gelegenheit zu günstiger oder gar kostenloser medizinischer Versorgung nicht ungenutzt gelassen. Hocker konnte in dieser Anfangszeit, in der er seine Praxis zu etablieren suchte, seine Entlohnung nicht mit Nachdruck einfordern. Erst nach seiner Reise nach Konstantinopel, die er machen musste, um einen Firman des Sultans für die Reise nach Äthiopien zu erlangen, und einem Aufenthalt in Alexandrien konnte er seinen Lebensunterhalt selbst verdienen. In Alexandrien zahlten die Patienten übrigens besser und vor allem gewissenhafter. Die anfängliche Erfahrung im Blick auf die Zahlungsmoral der Patienten hat Hocker in mancher Hinsicht verhärtet, so dass später die Herrnhuter Brüder seinen des Öfteren schroffen Umgang mit den Ägyptern bei den Verantwortlichen in Deutschland beklagten. So ein Umgang mit den Einheimischen würde auch ihren christlichen Auftrag, ihre Mission in Ägypten in Frage stellen und diese womöglich ungläubwürdig machen.

Insgesamt befand sich Hocker in der Anfangszeit in einer melancholischen Grundstimmung. Das Gefühl der inneren Einsamkeit überfiel ihn trotz des intensiven Kontakts mit vielen Menschen in Kairo:

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<sup>44</sup> R.21.A.70.13, 2 (Brief an Cossart; Kairo, den 17. Januar 1753).

<sup>45</sup> R.17.B.6.a.12.c, 11.

<sup>46</sup> Zur gesamten Geschichte siehe: Manukyan, *Konstantinopel und Kairo, passim*.

„Ich bin hier ein ganz isoliertes Wesen, weiß bis dato keinen einigen [= einzigen] ehrlichen Menschen, geschweige einen honneten freund, am allerwenigsten ein nach Jesu ausgestrecktes herz; mein lieber Herr ist aber desto näher, freundlicher und gnädiger gegen mich.“<sup>47</sup>

Er entbehrte in der fremden Stadt die von Herrnhut gewohnte Atmosphäre der frommen Gemeinschaft, und sein zunächst unerfüllter Wunsch nach einem passenden Begleiter lastete auf ihm. Hocker wollte mit diesen Mitteilungen auch den Druck auf seinen Auftraggeber erhöhen, bald weitere Brüder zu seiner Unterstützung auszusenden. Wie sehr ihm seine innere Einsamkeit zu schaffen machte – er scheint zwischenzeitlich unter Depressionen gelitten zu haben –, zeigte sich darin, dass diese Grundstimmung beim Verlassen Ägyptens im Jahre 1755 – neben allen entscheidenden politischen Ereignissen und situationsbedingten Überlegungen – eine wichtige Rolle spielte.

## 2 Hockers Besuch im Koptischen Patriarchat: Sprache öffnet Türen

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Der Auftrag, der Hocker nach Ägypten führte, war bei ihm stets präsent. Der geplante Besuch beim koptischen Patriarchen Markos VII. ist in der Korrespondenz immer ein Thema, und sobald sich Hocker im Arabischen sicher fühlte, fiel die Entscheidung, das Patriarchat aufzusuchen. Als er sich am 28. November 1753<sup>48</sup> dort anmeldete, ließ man ihn wissen, „der Patriarch wäre bettlägerig“, worauf der Herrnhuter geistesgegenwärtig erklärte: „und Ich bin ein Medicus und komme Ihn besuchen“.<sup>49</sup> So standen ihm alle Türen offen. Die Kopten scheinen keine sonderlichen Bedenken gehabt zu haben, dem unbekanntem Europäer Zutritt zu dem Patriarchen zu gewähren. Hocker wurde – soweit sein Bericht – auch nicht nach seiner genauen Identität gefragt. Seine Berufsbezeichnung reichte wohl aus.

Die koptische Gemeinschaft in Kairo in jener Zeit war recht überschaubar. Im Laufe des 11. Jahrhunderts war der traditionelle Patriarchensitz der Kirche von Alexandrien in das fatimidische Kairo verlegt worden.<sup>50</sup> Die Verlegung in die Hauptstadt entsprach den politischen Gegebenheiten, die es erforderlich machten, dass der Patriarch als Oberhaupt der Kopten die Nähe der muslimischen Machthaber suchte. In Kairo besaßen die Kopten, die hauptsächlich in den Stadt-

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<sup>47</sup> R.17.B.6.a.12.b, 11; ähnlich in: R.17.B.6.a.11.g, 12.

<sup>48</sup> R.17.B.6.a.12.g, 5 (Hockers Brief an Zinzendorf, mit dem Diarium; Alexandria, den 11. Januar 1754).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*, 6.

<sup>50</sup> Zur Geschichte und Entwicklung der Stadt siehe Raymond, *Quartiers*, 104–16, ferner die weiteren Artikel zu Kairo: *ibidem*, 135–45, 147–63, 165–78, 179–99, 234, 235–46, 247–63, 265–76.

vierteln Birkat al-Azbakiyya, Qantarat aš-Šarq und Bāb Šay Rīhān – also den nördlicheren Stadtteilen – lebten, zwei Kirchen, weitere Kirchen gab es in Alt-Kairo.<sup>51</sup>

Nachdem Hocker die Krankheit des Patriarchen Markos als eine leichte Erkältung diagnostiziert hatte, offenbarte er seine Absichten und überreichte einen ins Arabische übersetzten Brief Zinzendorfs.<sup>52</sup> Nunmehr trat er in seiner eigentlichen Rolle als Abgesandter der Brüderkirche auf, als Diakonus „einer alten orientalischen apostolischen lebendigen Kirche, deren Episcopal-Sitz in England ist“.<sup>53</sup> Hocker bot offiziell im Namen dieser Kirche dem Patriarchen und der koptischen Kirche seine „Dienste“ an. Was darunter zu verstehen sei, sollte der Brief Zinzendorfs erläutern. Der Patriarch war durch die ärztliche Hilfe seines Gastes so positiv eingenommen, dass ihm dieser abrupte Übergang von der Rolle des Medicus zu der des Diakonus einer ihm unbekanntem Kirchengemeinschaft offenbar keine Probleme bereitete. Das Gespräch zwischen Hocker und dem Patriarchen, das hauptsächlich um die bevorstehende Äthiopienreise des Herrnhuters und die politischen und religiösen Umstände in Äthiopien kreiste,<sup>54</sup> endete mit der Bitte Hockers, den Patriarchen wieder besuchen zu dürfen, welche ihm auch gewährt wurde: „sein haus wäre mein Haus“, so die Antwort des Patriarchen.<sup>55</sup> Hocker traf den Patriarchen noch weitere Male, führte Gespräche auf Arabisch ohne Mittlerpersonen und gab Auskunft über die so genannte „Kirche der Brüder“. Seinen Ausführungen vermochte Markos gut zu folgen, und auch die arabische Übersetzung des Zinzendorf-Briefes durch Hocker hielt er für gelungen. Die Mühen des Arabischlernens, die der Herrnhuter so eindrücklich beschrieben hatte, zahlten sich nun für ihn aus. Weiter war seine Hilfe als Arzt willkommen, und der Herrnhuter war einer der letzten Menschen, die Markos im Frühjahr 1769 wenige Tage vor seinem Tod besuchten. Als Arzt konnte er aber nichts mehr für den alten Patriarchen tun.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Carsten Niebuhrs *Reisebeschreibungen*, 110 (mit Stadtplan) und 131 und Butler, *Ancient Coptic Churches*, 271-85 (Hārat az-Zuwaila, Hārat ar-Rūm). Vgl. dazu auch Gabra, *Kairo*, 13, 137-9; Meinardus, *Two Thousand Years*, 188-90.

<sup>52</sup> Zum Brief siehe ausführlich bei Manukyan, *Konstantinopel und Kairo*, 256-62; ferner *idem*, „Wir gehen unseren Brüdern nach.“, 71-6.

<sup>53</sup> R.17.B.6.a.12.g, 6.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, 6-7.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibidem*, 7.

<sup>56</sup> Siehe dazu: R.17.B.9.26 (Brief Hockers an Friedrich [Neusser bzw. Neisser]; Kairo, den 26. Mai 1769), 1. 1769 starb Markos VII. im Kloster der Mutter Gottes al-ʿAdawiya in Būlāq, siehe bei Ibn al-Muḳaffaʿ, *History of the Patriarchs*, 293. Zum Kloster: Evetts, *Churches and Monasteries*, 136-41.

### 3 Migranten als Vermittler

Friedrich Wilhelm Hocker gehörte im 18. Jahrhundert zu den – wenn man das moderne Vokabular benutzen möchte – hochqualifizierten europäischen „Migranten“ im Orient. Er war auf Zeit gekommen, blieb aber hier bis zu seinem Tode. Seine sprachlichen und kulturellen Kompetenzen nutzte er erfolgreich, um Verbindungen zur Gemeinschaft der Kopten in Ägypten zu knüpfen.<sup>57</sup> Er fungierte als „Grenzgänger“ und versuchte sich als „Vermittler zwischen den Welten“ durch Schaffung solidarischer Bündnisse.<sup>58</sup>

Hocker war aufgrund seiner Vermittlerrolle eine Persönlichkeit, die für die Brüder-Unität des 18. Jahrhunderts unentbehrlich war – „in dieser Sache immer noch der Original-Mann“ –, auch nach dem Tod des Grafen Zinzendorf (gest. 1760).<sup>59</sup> Bis zum Schluss übergang die Leitung der Unität Hockers wiederholt vorgebrachte Bitten und Gesuche um den Rückruf aus Ägypten. Seine Erfahrungen und sprachlichen Ressourcen wurden von der Brüdergemeine nunmehr dazu genutzt, das eigene religiöse und ideologische System dort zu verbreiten, wo es als fehlend vermutet oder hineininterpretiert wurde. Zwischen 1770 und 1783 etablierten die Herrnhuter in al-Bahnassa eine „Missionsstation“ für die Kopten in Mittel- und Oberägypten, die als des Evangeliums verlustig betrachtet wurden, und der Evangelisation bedurften.

Wie die Herrnhuter dabei vorgehen und ob sie damit Erfolg hatten, steht allerdings auf einem anderen Blatt.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Zur „Brüdergemeine als überkonfessioneller und transnationaler Bewegung mit ausgeprägter Netzwerkkultur“ siehe Mettele, *Weltbürgertum*; ferner Vogt, *Mission*, 204-36.

<sup>58</sup> Die Herrnhuter Aktionen nehmen so das vorweg, was in der modernen Interkulturalitätsforschung hinsichtlich des Orients im Anschluss an die bisherige Orientalismusdebatte diskutiert wird. Dabei würde es darum gehen, „wie eine Kollegialisierung der Wissensproduktion zu institutionalisieren wäre, die im Stande ist, über die historisch geschaffene Kluft zwischen Nord und Süd oder Orient und Okzident solidarische Bündnisse und politische Allianzen zu befördern“, so Schmitz, *Kulturkritik*, 383. Vgl. dazu auch Polaschegg, *Orientalismus*.

<sup>59</sup> Siehe unter R.17.B.10, Brief von Petrus Böhler und Friedrich Neisser im Namen der Unitäts Ältesten Konferenz an Friedrich Wilhelm Hocker nach Kairo, Großhennersdorf, den 24. Januar 1771, 2 (Kopie).

<sup>60</sup> Zur Vorgehensweise der Herrnhuter in dieser Periode, zu ihren Strategien und Plänen in Ägypten und letztlich zu den Gründen ihres „Scheiterns“ siehe: Manukyan, *Herrnhuter Präsenz*, 53-80.



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# The Arabic Correspondence of the Moravian Brethren in Cairo

Christian Mauder

## 1 Introduction

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One peculiarity of the Renewed Unity of the Brethren (German: *Erneuerte Brüdergemeine*), commonly also called the community of the “Moravian Brethren,” was its continual recourse to a cleromancy ritual in the form of lot-casting. It was employed in all vital affairs of this religious group, which owes its existence and theological focus to the work of Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-60).<sup>1</sup> Other Christian groups that like the Moravian Brethren had their historical roots in the Pietist movement within 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century German Protestantism used similar methods of decision making, yet none to such a great extent. Decisions about posts and promotions, marriages, travels and the frequent missionary activities of the community were made or affirmed by means of a highly complex and minutely regulated lot-casting procedure.<sup>2</sup> In January 1768, the following lot was drawn which turned out to be of utmost importance for the contacts between the Moravians and the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Middle East:

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<sup>1</sup> The name “Moravian Brethren” points to the fact that the members of the Renewed Unity of the Brethren situate themselves in a century-old reformist tradition, rooted among the Moravians and Bohemians in today’s Czech Republic. Moravian emigres to the village of Herrnhut in Upper Lusatia, Germany, where their community settled in 1722, fostered the Brethren’s self-interpretation of their renewing an earlier religious community of theologically non-Catholic Bohemians and Moravians, which shared with the group headed by Zinzendorf *inter alia* the common designation “Unity of the Brethren” (*Unitas Fratrum*). On the relationship between the Renewed Unity of Brethren and older Moravian and Bohemian religious groups from an inner-Moravian perspective see Mueller, *Zinzendorf als Erneuerer*, and from an outside point of view Ward, *Renewed Unity*, 112-24.

<sup>2</sup> In the eyes of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Moravians, this form of lot-casting was one of the best and most direct ways to determine the will of God. For further details on the lot-casting procedure see the discussions in Bechler, *Herrnhuter in Ägypten*, 54-5; Beyreuther, *Lostheorie und Lospraxis*, 262-86; Langton, *History*, 77-8, 123, 148; Mettele, *Weltbürgertum*, 56-8, 139-43; Hamilton / Hamilton, *History*, *passim*; Podmore, *Moravian Church*, 106, 122, 125; Schneider, von Zinzendorf, 357, 365. See also the critical comments in Mueller, *Zinzendorf als Erneuerer*, 42-3; Ritschl, *Geschichte*, vol. 2, 434, vol. 3, 257; Seibert, *Glaube*, 44, n. 58.

“The Savior wants the Unity [of the Brethren] to now set up a post at Cairo, from which the affairs of the Savior shall be observed and tended to in the local areas [...].”<sup>3</sup>

This “order of the Savior” – as the German Protestants understood it – to establish a permanent missionary outpost in the city of Cairo marks the beginning of the period of Moravian activities in Egypt discussed below. The focus is thereby on the Arabic sources preserved from the time of the Moravian outpost in the Egyptian capital. After an overview of the history of the Moravian presence in Egypt during the 1770s and early 1780s, I deliver some remarks about the make-up and the language of the preserved texts. Thereafter I address the question what we can learn from the texts about the economic and missionary life of the Moravians. Subsequently, I point to the significance of the texts in the history of Christian Arabic Literature. The last section summarizes and concludes.<sup>4</sup>

## 2 Activities of the Moravians in Egypt

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Egypt was not a blank spot on the map for the Moravian Brethren when they were planning to establish an outpost in Cairo in 1768.<sup>5</sup> For about ten years, individual Moravians had visited the country and stayed there for longer or shorter periods due to plans of the Unity to establish a permanent Moravian settlers’ colony in Ethiopia. Only later did Egypt itself become the focus of Moravian attention. Especially the German physician and deacon Friedrich Wilhelm Hocker (1713-82), who had spent many years of his life as a Moravian emissary

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<sup>3</sup> In German: “der Heiland will. Daß die Unitaet nun ein Posto in Cairo mache, von da aus des Heilands-Sache in dortigen Gegenden [...] observiret und besorget wird.” Moravian Archives, Herrnhut, signature R.21.A.70.6, quoted according to Manukyan, Herrnhuter Präsenz, 57, n. 13.

<sup>4</sup> This paper is based on the results of the research project “Herrnhuter Quellen zu Ägypten” (“Moravian Sources about Egypt”) headed by Prof. Dr. Dr. Martin Tamcke, Faculty of Theology, University of Göttingen, and funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (“German Research Foundation”), whose support is gratefully acknowledged. An earlier version was presented at the international conference “Middle Eastern Literatures of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. A Departure towards Modernity?” (Wittenberg, Germany, March 26-28 2010). The author is grateful to Dr. Ute Pietruschka and Prof. Dr. Ralf Elger, the convenors of the conference, for giving him the opportunity to present his research results at this event. Moreover, the author would like to thank the participants of the conference and especially Dr. Arthur Manukyan for their valuable comments and suggestions. Furthermore, the author is very grateful to Katrin Killinger for her substantial comments on earlier versions of this text and her help in obtaining parts of the secondary literature. In addition, he would like to thank Prof. Dr. Dr. Martin Tamcke and Prof. Dr. Sebastian Günther for their scholarly advice.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. the contribution by Arthur Manukyan in this volume.

in various regions of the Middle East including Cairo,<sup>6</sup> urged the church leaders again and again to concern themselves with the Egyptian question.<sup>7</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that he was among the first Moravian Brethren who actually embarked for Cairo after the decision of the community to establish a permanent outpost there. Together with the carpenter Johann Heinrich Dancke (1734-72), he reached the Egyptian capital in 1769. Later in the same year, a third Moravian missionary joined them and the small group established itself in Cairo. Here, Hocker practiced medicine and earned a large part of the small community's livelihood by treating both Muslims and Christians.

The focus of the preaching and teaching activities of the Brethren, however, lay outside the Egyptian capital. In 1770, Dancke went on an exploration trip up the Nile and met a group of Coptic priests from the town of al-Bahnassa, about 150 km south of Cairo. This town, called "Benesse" or "Behnesse" in the Moravians' writings, for centuries had enjoyed some importance as a regional ecclesiastical center.<sup>8</sup> Other travellers might have regarded the meeting with the Copts from al-Bahnassa as a mere coincidence; but for the Moravians the will of the Savior himself manifested in such an event. During the following years, al-Bahnassa and its surroundings became the main field of missionary activity for the Moravian Brethren. Supported by several new coreligionists from Germany, they paid frequent visits to the town, which were answered by Coptic visits to Cairo. Moreover, numerous letters were exchanged between local Egyptian Christians and the German missionaries.

Up to now, I have used the word "missionary" to refer to the Moravians working in Cairo and al-Bahnassa. Although this terminology is correct from a historical point of view, from the perspective of Moravian theology the Egyptian activities of the Brethren are more closely related to what is called "diaspora work." While "missionary work" in Moravian language designates mainly efforts to propagate the Gospel among non-Christians like the natives of North America, "diaspora work" is directed towards men and women already belonging to Christian churches and denominations. By means of diaspora work the Moravian Brethren were eager to spread their interpretation of the Christian faith among

<sup>6</sup> See Baudert, *Auf der Hut*, 43 on his biography, his earlier travels and the eventually abandoned Ethiopian settlement project; Bechler, *Herrnhuter in Ägypten*, 8-11, 13-26, 75-87; Beck, *Brüder*, 134-36; Hamilton, *The Copts*, 102; Manukyan, *Interesse an Persien*, 162-72; *idem*, *Konstantinopel und Kairo*, 209-360; *idem*, *Herrnhuter Präsenz*, 56-7; *idem*, *Fremd in der Heimat*, 49-50, 52-3; Müller, *200 Jahre Brüdermission*, 251-2; Schulze, *Abriß*, 37-8; Vogt, *Orientalische Initiativen*, 39-40; Watson, *American Mission*, 19-23.

<sup>7</sup> As Arthur Manukyan showed, Hocker regarded himself as charged by the Savior with spreading his word and his religion among the peoples of the Middle East, *cf.* Manukyan, *Herrnhuter Präsenz*, 57; *idem*, *Konstantinopel und Kairo*, 357.

<sup>8</sup> *Cf.* Evetts, *Churches and Monasteries*, 93, 94-5 (Arabic text), 210-11, 215-17 (English text).

their co-religionists, thus bringing together the “true” children of Christ all over the world.<sup>9</sup>

In Egypt, on the one hand the political and legal situation made it nearly impossible to work among the non-Christian, *i. e.* mainly Muslim population, as the conversion of a Muslim to the Moravian creed might have resulted in both the convert’s and the missionaries’ execution.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, the Copts “frozen in their holiness based on works” and especially their rites of fasting, as the Moravians said, were considered a worthy field of work. Thus, the Egyptian fellow Christians should be “awakened to become living<sup>11</sup> and true members of the church they were [...] a part of.”<sup>12</sup> It is of great importance to note that the Moravians did not intend to separate the Copts from their own church; nor did they try to make proselytes among them. Instead, they desired only to teach their understanding of the Bible and their faith to carefully chosen members of the Coptic Church and to exhort them to follow the true message of the Gospel, which had been forgotten among the Egyptian Christians, as the Moravians claimed. The selected Copts were expected to act later as “firstfruits”<sup>13</sup> among their fellow Christians and to further propagate the Moravian creed. The outward church membership of the Copts and the structure of their religious community, however, should not be changed.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. on the Moravian concept of diaspora work, Bauer, *Diasporawerk*, 125-87; Langton, *History*, 111, 116, 358; Mettele, *Weltbürgertum*, 93-100; Meyer, *Zinzendorf*, 71-3; Steinecke, *Diaspora*, 3-66; Stoeffler, *German Pietism*, 160-2; Weinlick, *Count Zinzendorf*, 88-9.

<sup>10</sup> Although the legal situation seems to have prevented any major missionary work among Muslim Egyptians, a few cases in which Moravians had considerable religious influence on Muslim individuals are known. Cf., for example Watson, *American Mission*, 29-30; and Bechler, *Herrnhuter in Ägypten*, 53-4, on the impact Moravian teachings had on a member of the neo-Mamluk military elite.

<sup>11</sup> This formulation points to the Moravian teaching that all human beings who have not been given true life by Jesus Christ and do not have steady recourse to him are to be considered “dead.” See on the centrality of this concept within Moravian theology already Spangenberg, *Leben*, vol. 5, 1409. Cf. also *e. g.* Beyreuther, *Geschichte*, 193, 205-6; Seibert, *Glaube*, 72; Uttendörfer, *Weltbetrachtung*, 15-17, 175, 177. For other cases in which Moravians considered Middle Eastern Christians “stone-dead” (German *mausetot*) and lifeless cf. Manukyan, *Konstantinopel und Kairo*, 230, 242, 311.

<sup>12</sup> Schulze, *Abriß*, 125. Similar formulations appear also in more recent accounts of the Moravian missionary activities, cf., *e. g.*, Beck, *Brüder*, 136. See on the intentions of the Moravians in Egypt further Bechler, *Herrnhuter in Ägypten*, 47, 50-2; Hamilton, *The Copts*, 102; Manukyan, *Herrnhuter Präsenz*, 62, 74; *idem*, *Konstantinopel und Kairo*, 242, 260-1, 296, 367, 376; Tamcke, *Christentum*, 11.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. for introductions on the concepts of the firstfruits based on Rev 14:4 in the context of Moravian missionary and diaspora work Langton, *History*, 360; Meyer, *Zinzendorf*, 41, 48; Vogt, *Orientalische Initiativen*, 45.

One may assume that *inter alia* this problematic task of convincing Copts of the Moravian teachings while at the same time not separating them from their native church finally led to the failure of the Germans' enterprise in Egypt. Those Copts who were strongly influenced by their teaching must have considered it problematic to stay within their native church. But since the Moravians abstained from setting up a new religious community in Egypt, they could not offer an alternative spiritual home.<sup>14</sup> The Moravians themselves, however, blamed mainly the unstable and dangerous political situation in late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Cairo for their ill success.<sup>15</sup> Other factors like their own bad mental, physical and financial situation may have also had a share in their failure. Dissatisfied with the results of a dozen years' work, the leadership of the Moravian community decided to abandon its presence on the shores of the Nile in 1782. One year later, the last Moravian left Egyptian soil for good.<sup>16</sup>

### 3 The texts

Although the Moravian presence in late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Egypt lasted only a few years, it is richly documented. In the archives of the Unity of the Brethren in Herrnhut, Germany, numerous letters, diaries and other written material have been preserved. Of particular interest are the manuscripts filed as "Hocker's correspondence from Benesse."<sup>17</sup> These consist of 40 Arabic letters written between 1770 and 1780 and a small number of other, mostly minor texts sent from or to the Moravian Brethren in Egypt. The length of the texts varies from a few lines up to several pages. They were written on loose sheets of paper of various size, often both *recto* and *verso*.<sup>18</sup> The language can generally be characterized as Middle Arabic, with the degree of dialectal influence greatly fluctuating from one

<sup>14</sup> See on this problem from a broader perspective also Hummel, *Presence*, 197-8.

<sup>15</sup> The Brethren in Cairo were often harassed by members of the ruling military elite and even physically harmed, cf. Bechler, *Herrnhuter in Ägypten*, 41-2, 65-9; Manukyan, *Herrnhuter Präsenz*, 60, 73; *idem*, *Konstantinopel und Kairo*, 363, 375; Watson, *American Mission*, 23-8.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. on the history of the Moravian outpost in Cairo Baudert, *Auf der Hut*, 43-4; Bechler, *Herrnhuter in Ägypten*, 26-74; Beck, *Brüder*, 136-7; Boutros, *Missionen*, 3-4, 22; Hamilton, *The Copts*, 102; Manukyan, *Konstantinopel und Kairo*, 360-80; *idem*, *Herrnhuter Mission*, 57-79; *idem*, *Fremd in der Heimat*, 57-9; Mettele, *Weltbürgertum*, 106; Schulze, *Abriß*, 124-5; Stead / Stead, *Exotic Plant*, 364-6; Watson, *American Mission*, 23-31.

<sup>17</sup> Moravian Archives, Herrnhut, signature NB.VII.R.3.305.b. As all Moravian Arabic texts quoted in this chapter are to be found under this signature, the addressor, addressee and (if known) place and date of writing are given in the footnotes to facilitate identification of a particular text.

<sup>18</sup> See for further details on the texts the introduction in the edition of the texts in Tamcke / Manukyan / Mauder, *Arabische Briefe*.



letter to the other. In view of the senders, the letters can be divided into three groups:

Eleven letters, about a quarter of the corpus, were authored by German Moravians. Most of these are signed by Friedrich Wilhelm Hocker. Three of them were written by his fellow Johann Heinrich Dancke. All are dated, according to the Gregorian calendar, between November 1770 and April 1777.<sup>19</sup> Many of them are merely corrected drafts, but they are mostly in a good condition and can be read easily. The language is influenced by Egyptian Arabic,<sup>20</sup> though the overall picture shows that the Moravians were both anxious and able to use a form of written Arabic closer to the classical rules than the language employed by their native correspondents. Thus, their earlier efforts to become proficient in both the written and the spoken variant of the Arabic of their time obviously proved successful.<sup>21</sup> As shown below, the Moravians managed to communicate about complex theological and devotional topics, which dominate in their letters, in a clear and understandable, sometimes even elegant way.

As for the second group: Twenty letters were penned by Copts from al-Bahnassa, many of them members of the local clerical and administrative elite. Those of the texts bearing information on the time of their writing are dated between January 1771 and December 1780.<sup>22</sup> The Copts used their native calendar in their affairs with the Moravians. Although most of these texts are well preserved, the handwriting often is hardly readable, partly due to inappropriate writing instruments. In contrast to the messages of the German Protestants, the texts of the Coptic authors are highly interspersed with non-classical elements. The letter *hamza* is nearly absent, there are various cases of *scriptio plena* and a frequent use of typically Egyptian vocabulary can be attested. Moreover, letters signifying dental fricatives are regularly replaced with similar ones indicating alveolar plosives. *Alif al-wiqāya* is often absent and the standard particle for the negation of all verbal forms is *mā*.<sup>23</sup> Like the Moravians, the Copts often treat theological and devotional subjects in their messages.

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<sup>19</sup> One can doubt whether the Coptic addressees of the letters were able to make much sense out of these dates, which were based on a calendar not familiar to them.

<sup>20</sup> Among the Egyptian dialectal elements common in the letters of the Moravians one may mention the usage of such typically Egyptian words as *awīy* “very” and *imbārīḥ* “yesterday.” Moreover, the Moravians regularly ignored the standard rules for *hamza*-writing and did not always employ the dual where necessary according to the classical grammarians. For details about these features – not uncommon in Middle Arabic texts from the 18<sup>th</sup> century – in the writings of the Moravians see Mauder, Briefwechsel, 66.

<sup>21</sup> On these efforts, see the contribution by Arthur Manukyan in this volume and *idem*, *Konstantinopel und Kairo*, 229, 240, 249-51.

<sup>22</sup> Of the 20 letters in this group, the composition date of five is unknown.

<sup>23</sup> On the language peculiarities in the letters of the Copts and their significance, see Mauder, Briefwechsel, 67-73.

The third group of texts consists of nine letters written by Egyptians who were not part of the Coptic community in al-Bahnassa. Some of them were obviously Muslims, others seem to have been of Christian, but not necessarily Coptic faith. They dated their letters in most cases according to the Islamic calendar, introducing a third system of time recording into the manuscript corpus. Those letters whose time of composition is known were written between December 1770 and August 1772. They thus belong to the first years of the Moravian outpost in Cairo. The texts are mostly related to the occupational activities of the Moravians as physicians and artisans. Messages written by a Muslim called Muḥammad Yūsuf include repeatedly the so called “*bi-imperfect*.”<sup>24</sup> This construction, very common in present-day Egyptian Arabic,<sup>25</sup> has rarely been documented in 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century Middle Arabic letters. Moreover, most of the recorded cases from these centuries go back to Christian or Jewish, but not to Muslim, authors.<sup>26</sup> Thus, one may count these letters among the few known pieces of evidence for the existence of this particular phenomenon in Muslim Middle Arabic of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>27</sup>

#### 4 The Moravians between earning a livelihood and preaching the Gospel

Wherever Moravian missionaries went, they were expected to take care for themselves and earn a livelihood by their own hands’ work. While this strategy caused considerable hardship in other missionary areas, at the Egyptian outpost it worked very well. The Moravians in Cairo became well-known artisans and physicians, respected for their skills among members of all major religious and social groups, as can be perceived from letters written by their customers. Especially Hocker soon gained a good name as a medical doctor among the native population of Cairo and European merchants and diplomats. He regularly received patients or visited them at home.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Cf. the two letters from Muḥammad Yūsuf to Hocker, both no place, one undated, one March 22, without year.

<sup>25</sup> Cf., for example, Diem, *Hochsprache und Dialekt*, 41; Versteegh, *Arabic Language*, 108; Woidich, *Kairenisch-Arabisch*, 280-2; Fischer / Jastrow, *Handbuch*, 75.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Versteegh, *Arabic Language*, 125.

<sup>27</sup> Since we lack a thorough and comprehensive linguistic analysis of Middle Arabic letters dating to pre- and early modern times, it cannot be decided whether the usage of the “*bi-imperfect*” documented in the letters under discussion has to be considered exceptional or is indeed an aspect of a more common phenomenon.

<sup>28</sup> On the Moravians’ medical work in Cairo, see also Bechler, *Herrnhuter in Ägypten*, 8, 30, 34-9; Manukyan, *Konstantinopel und Kairo*, 251-2, 370, 372; *idem*, *Herrnhuter Präsenz*, 67, 69.

Some of the many cases of illness in which Hocker was called for help are documented by the preserved letters in great detail. Particularly touching are the instances in which obviously desperate parents beg Hocker to take care of their children. Among these concerned parents was a father named Niqūlā Maḥfūz, who wrote several letters to Hocker in December 1770 and January 1771. His infant daughter had fallen ill with some kind of respiratory disease:

“We inform you [*sc.* Hocker] about our daughter Maryam. We gave her the medicine to drink which you sent for her in a bottle, but her cough (*su‘la*) remains unchanged. There is mucus (*balgham*) in her chest, and the mucus sticks to her chest whenever she is sitting or sleeping. [...] Moreover, she has lost weight and became very weak. She does not want to eat enough and refuses to drink anything at all. [...] She is very weary due to her condition and we are [also] very weary because of her. [...] We ask God that he may give us patience in this trial. Hopefully God, by means of your zeal and competence, may calm her and may [also] calm our fear for this girl.”<sup>29</sup>

Hocker was beseeched for help in a similar manner several times. His medical capabilities obviously were well-respected by both his Christian and Muslim environment.

Another Moravian in Cairo, Johan Antes (1740-1811), was an American-born clockmaker. His services were demanded both by the common people and by members of the military elite.<sup>30</sup> In 1771, an “Amīr ‘Uthmān, follower of the late Muḥammad Katkhudā,” at that time probably on an inspection trip to the fortified port city of Damietta, sent a broken clock for repair. The accompanying letter partly employs a professional tone due to an Amīr. He reminded the Moravians “not to be negligent in that [affair], as it is expected from you.” However, he also ensures the craftsmen of his affection toward them: “We are interested solely in you” (*lā nas’alu illā ‘ankum*). Moreover, he wrote about his “great desire” (*mazīd al-shawq*) to meet them, as they are his “friends” (*aḥbāb*).<sup>31</sup> The reason for his politeness may be found in the rare professional skills of the Western craftsmen he was eager to employ. Nevertheless, it is interesting that a military commander of that rank considered the use of these formulas appropriate in addressing low class foreign artisans.

Similar assertions of affection and esteem appear in the letters exchanged between the Moravians – in their capacity as missionaries – and the Copts of al-Bahnassa as a literary frame for theological discussions, pious exhortations and extensive quotations from the Bible. The letters written by the Germans are

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<sup>29</sup> Niqūlā Maḥfūz to Hocker, no place, December 27, 1770.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. on the work of the Moravian artisans in Egypt Bechler, *Herrnhuter in Ägypten*, 30, 39-42.

<sup>31</sup> Amīr ‘Uthmān to an unknown Moravian recipient (Dancke?), no place (Damietta?), July 2, 1771.

dominated by topics central to the Moravian theological discourse in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Most obvious is the heavy focus on Jesus Christ, whom the Moravians perceived not only as the savior of all mankind, but also as the creator of the world. This is a typical feature of the so-called “Christocentrism” dominating the religious outlook of Count Zinzendorf, the leading figure of 18<sup>th</sup>-century Moravianism. In Zinzendorfsian understanding, man is called upon to establish a steady connection with the Savior-Creator, having daily recourse to Christ as faithful companion, beloved friend and regular interlocutor. In Christ and his sacrificial death, and not in good works or ceremonies, lies humanity’s sole chance of salvation and redemption.<sup>32</sup>

The continuous and intimate contact with Christ so important to the Moravians is called *mu‘āshara* in their Arabic terminology. Almost every letter the Germans sent to the Copts of al-Bahnassa exhorts them to *mu‘āshara* according to their example. Thus, Johann Dancke writes to ‘Abd al-Malāk and Mikhāyil Bishāra, two of the most regular local correspondents:

“The poor sinner, whose eyes have been opened by the Holy Spirit [...] has intimate contact (*yu‘āshir*) with his Savior day and night, while he holds onto him and sticks to him like a child sticks to his mother. He offers him what ever happens in his heart, be it righteous or not righteous, for he is the only one who can help [...]. The one who does not accept Jesus is spiritually dead and absolutely has no benefit from his works.

Oh my dear brethren, I do not know anything but Jesus – thank God – the generous one, the precious one, who offered himself as a sacrifice for our sins. I hold solely onto him day and night and [then] I, the poor sinner, am in great joy. Oh my brethren, I beg for you and for the salvation of your souls. You may do it like me and live in great joy too.”<sup>33</sup>

The way the Copts were to see Christ in their inner eye when together with him is also clearly defined: as a suffering man, bloodstained and dying. The Moravians did their best to communicate their fascination for the image of the martyred Savior to their Egyptian coreligionists, *i. e.*, the “blood and wounds piety”

<sup>32</sup> Cf. on these aspects of Moravian and especially Zinzendorfsian theology among others Becker, *Verhältnis*, 3-20; Beyreuther, *Geschichte*, 218-20; *idem*, *Christozentrismus*, 9-33; Hamilton / Hamilton, *History*, 60-1, 73-5, 155-9; Meyer, *Christozentrismus*, 10-243, 277-88, 339-51; *idem*, *Zinzendorf*, 34, 41, 46, 61-2, 67, 81-2, 158; Schneider, *von Zinzendorf*, 361-2, 367, 370; Stoeffler, *German Pietism*, 146-8, 153-4; Uttendorfer, *Grundgedanken*, 56-60, 64, 102-42; Wallmann, *Pietismus*, 184, 186, 199-201; Weinlick, *Count Zinzendorf*, 22, 46, 153. See on Hocker’s understanding of these positions Manukyan, *Interesse an Persien*, 166; *idem*, *Konstantinopel und Kairo*, 225, 367.

<sup>33</sup> Dancke to ‘Abd al-Malāk and Mikhāyil Bishāra, Cairo, November 10, 1771.

for which they are well known in Western church history.<sup>34</sup> Hocker describes how he lived “day after day in the grace of [Christ’s] blood and begs him every day that he may pour out anew over [his] heart a drop of his blood.”<sup>35</sup> He values the blood of Christ highly as the ransom for the sins of mankind.<sup>36</sup> Thus, he advises one of his Coptic correspondents to “constantly bring in front of your eyes (*quddām a’yunika*) his [sc. Christ’s] bloodstained image.”<sup>37</sup> At the end of another letter, the German physician states that he wishes for the already mentioned Mīkhāyil Bishāra that

“my Lord and my Savior shall be present in front of your mind (*quddām rūhika*) in his image and the image of the cross, and that he shall quench the thirst of your heart, which craves for his appeasing blood, Amen.”<sup>38</sup>

Later, Hocker, after asking his Coptic correspondent whether Christ stays for him “in his bloodstained shape the all in all,”<sup>39</sup> expresses his hope that Christ “may return to you from day to day anew in the image of his death, and everything that you think or do shall be wetted with his blood.”<sup>40</sup>

As discussed above, the Moravians wanted to implant key elements of their theological outlook into the minds of carefully selected Copts in order to win “firstfruits,” who could then continue their work among their countrymen. These efforts turned out to be successful at least in a few cases, as is documented by the preserved letters of individual Copts. Indeed, some of the texts written by Copts could nearly be taken for Moravian letters. Mīkhāyil Bishāra from al-Bahnassa writes in a letter dating to the last years of Moravian presence in Egypt:

“We, oh brethren, thank Christ, our God, who has chosen us and bought us by means of his pure blood [...]. We dedicate to him our hearts and our souls completely and beg him every day that he shall give us a pure heart, that he

<sup>34</sup> On the blood and wounds piety of the Moravian Brethren, which is often associated with the so-called “Sifting Time” period in their history (1743-50), but nonetheless dominates the considerably later Arabic letters, see among others Atwood, *Deep in the Side*, 50-61; Bettermann, *Theologie und Sprache*, 53-73, 79-84, 98-103, 144-6; Faull, *Faith and Imagination*, 23-7, 33-49; Hamilton / Hamilton, *History*, 98-9, 104-5; Meyer, *Zinzendorf*, 53-6; Podmore, *Moravian Church*, 132-6; Schneider, *von Zinzendorf*, 353, 363, 368-9; Vogt, *Gloria Pleurae*, 175-212; Wallmann, *Pietismus*, 199-202; Weinlick, *Count Zinzendorf*, 116, 198-200. See on Hocker’s personal blood and wounds piety Manukyan, *Interesse an Persien*, 170; *idem*, *Konstantinopel und Kairo*, 230, 376.

<sup>35</sup> Hocker to Mīkhāyil Bishāra, Cairo, April 18, 1777.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. for instance Hocker to Yuḥannā, Cairo, November 2, 1770.

<sup>37</sup> Hocker to Yuḥannā, Cairo, May 28, 1775.

<sup>38</sup> Hocker to Mīkhāyil Bishāra, Cairo, October 25, 1772.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 15:28. On the significance of this passage for the Moravians, see also Beyreuther, *Christozentrismus*, 12-14, 20, 22; Uttendörfer, *Grundgedanken*, 68.

<sup>40</sup> Hocker to Mīkhāyil Bishāra, Cairo, June 26, 1774.

shall wet us with his blood, which is pure and shed for us, and that he shall cleanse us from our sins, for everything is futile without Christ. We always thank him for what he did with us first and likewise beg him now that he may protect us and cleanse us from all defilement. We give him our hearts to live in, as he said: Who gives me his heart, in him I shall live and abide. [...] There is no salvation for us except through Christ, our Savior. As he bought us by means of himself, we completely dedicate ourselves to him. Every time and every hour, the crucified one is in front of our eyes. [...] Please do not forget us in your prayers. The peace of the Lord may be with you, Amen.”<sup>41</sup>

All major topics of the Moravian preaching can be found in this passage: the blood piety, the trust in the salvation by Christ alone and the desire to have constant intimate recourse to him. Most remarkably, however, is Mīkhāyil’s final plea that the Germans may not forget him and his fellow believers in their prayers. A request like this is found in nearly every letter written by the Copts and can be interpreted as an expression of the Copts’ particular esteem for the Moravians, whose prayers are considered to be especially valuable. This tendency of the Copts to accept the Moravians as spiritual authorities becomes even clearer when they speak about them as their “teachers” and call themselves – in accordance with Moravian terminology – “a new seedling.”<sup>42</sup> Most explicitly the alleged superiority of the Moravians is expressed in the following statement, which shows that the Copts became convinced that the German Protestants and not themselves were in the possession of the divine truth: “We, oh my brother, thank God for sending [us] our brother Yuḥannā [*i. e.*, the Moravian Johann Dancke], for he taught us the way of the truth (*ṭarīq al-ḥaqq*).”<sup>43</sup> Obviously, the Moravian teachings had a considerable impact on the religious outlook of the Copts and their self-interpretation as Christians.

## 5 The place of the Moravian writings in the history of Christian Arabic literature

The Moravian Brethren were among the earliest Protestant groups engaged in a continuous and profound dialogue with Arabic-speaking Christians. In the Egyptian context, their enterprise is to be considered the first coordinated and permanent missionary project of a Protestant community in this country. Their long and intensive contact with the Coptic Church stands at the beginning of the now century-old history of Coptic-Protestants encounters. In the decades after

<sup>41</sup> Mīkhāyil Bishāra to Hocker, no place, February 13, 1779.

<sup>42</sup> Several Copts to Hocker, Augustin, Antes and Christian, no place, June 7, 1779.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Abd al-Malāk to Hocker, al-Bahnassa, undated.

their presence, many other Protestant groups followed their way to Egypt, working among the local population and establishing Protestant churches there.<sup>44</sup> Thus, Hocker and his fellow missionaries should be regarded as pioneers of a development that left its indelible traces in the religious landscape of modern Egypt and the entire Middle East.

Among these traces, Protestant religious literature in Arabic language figures prominently. In addition to the Arabic letters discussed in this paper, which constitute for themselves a major contribution to early Protestant writing in a Middle Eastern language, the Moravians engaged in extensive translation activity. The *Confessio Augustana*, one of the most basic texts of the Lutheran church tradition, was rendered for the first time into Arabic by the Moravians. Especially Friedrich Wilhelm Hocker was concerned with translating Moravian hymns and liturgical texts, many of them still preserved in the archives of the Unity of the Brethren and awaiting scholarly attention. Arabic versions of devotional speeches by Count Zinzendorf, so central to Moravian piety and religious outlook, were produced and found their way to the Christians of al-Bahnassa.<sup>45</sup> We cannot say for sure how much these texts, belonging as they do to a foreign theological tradition, were appreciated by the Copts; some remarks in the preserved letters suggest that the Egyptians did not pay attention to them in a way considered appropriate by the Moravians. For example, Hocker asked the Copts several times to confirm that they had received the Zinzendorfsian speeches (*maqālāt*) and to send them back when read:

“Some time ago, that is, on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, I wrote you a letter in my own hand and sent it to you together with four speeches translated into Arabic [...]. I have asked you, my brother, that you send them [back] to me after you have read them and [also after] everybody who is with you has finished reading them. [The same applies] also to the speeches that have been in your possession for a long time. My brother, please inform me by all means whether everything has reached you safely. Know, my brother, that I have a growing desire for messages from you, after I have not heard anything from you for such a long time, neither sight nor sound.”<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> On early Protestant missionary activities in Egypt from different perspectives, see Bechler, *Herrnhuter in Ägypten*, 74-5; Boutros, *Missionen*, 1-40; Hamilton, *The Copts*, 102, 278-9; Heyworth-Dunne, *Education*, 100-2; Kawerau, *Amerika*, 186-91, 284, 349-50; Murre-van den Berg, Macaroni, 104-6, 108; Richter, *Missionsgeschichte*, vol. 2, 58, 60-1, 243-58; *idem*, *Missionskunde*, 318-19, 326-7; Sharkey, *Empire*, 43-48; *eadem*, *American Evangelicals*, 18-47; Stock, *History*, vol. 1, 223, 225, 228, 231, 350-1, vol. 2, 140, vol. 3, 113-14, 116, 514-15, 522, 530, 746-8, Tamcke, *Christentum*, 10-11; Warzeski, *Woman's Work*, 80-90; Watson, *American Mission*, 31-4, 38-9, 61-460.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Bechler, *Herrnhuter in Ägypten*, 21, 32; Manukyan, *Herrnhuter Präsenz*, 71-2; *idem*, *Konstantinopel und Kairo*, 226-7, 325-7, 332, 351, 373-4, 377-8; Tamcke, *Christentum*, 11.

<sup>46</sup> Hocker to Mikhāyil Bishāra, Cairo, July 24, 1774.

One may conclude from this and similar passages that the Copts did not pay as much attention to the translated speeches and their contents as they did to the guidance provided in the form of personal letters from the Moravians. But even if the Copts had not been particularly eager to study the theological texts translated by the Germans, the importance of these documents for the history of Arabic literature is beyond doubt: The letters together with the translations form the first known comprehensive corpus of Protestant religious texts written in Egypt, thus being among the pioneer works of an important field of Christian Arabic literary history.<sup>47</sup>

## 6 Summary and conclusion

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The Moravian Unity of the Brethren is well known among church historians as one of the earliest Protestant groups actively pursuing missionary enterprises throughout the world. In 1768, the leadership of the Brethren decided to include Egypt in their projects. German Protestants then set up an outpost in the Egyptian capital of Cairo, which existed until its formal disbandment more than a dozen years later in 1782. The preserved Middle Arabic letters dating to the time of this Moravian outpost, together with many other preserved sources, offer us detailed insights into the activities of the Germans in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Egypt. These texts, which are sometimes noteworthy also from a linguistic point of view, show how the Moravians integrated themselves into the economic world of the Egyptian capital, earning their livelihood as physicians and artisans. In addition, the Germans appear in these letters as preachers and teachers, spreading their Protestant understanding of Christian faith among Middle Eastern Christians.

The texts surviving in the archives of the Unity of the Brethren also help us to understand how the Copts reacted to the Moravian religious instructions. At least in their letters to the Germans, they embraced key elements of the latter's creed like the so-called blood and wounds piety.

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<sup>47</sup> Still fundamental on early Protestant Arabic literature is Graf, *Geschichte*, vol. 4, 272-85. See also among others Anderson, *History*, vol. 1, 75, 228, 230, 233, 369, 374, 380, 383; Boutros, *Missionen*, 18-21; Coakley, *Printing Offices*, 13-15; Kawerau, *Amerika*, 201-3, 206-11, 260-6, 349-52, 381-8, 390-6; Murre-van den Berg, *Macaroni*, 75-9; Roper, *Beginnings*; Tamcke, *Christentum*, 11; Saliba, *Bible in Arabic*; Watson, *American Mission*, 187-8, 392-4, 427-34. According to Graf, at whose time the Moravian outpost of the 1770s and 1780s was hardly known, the English Church Missionary Society was the first noteworthy missionary presence in Egypt potentially connected with comprehensive literary activities, cf. Graf, *op. cit.*, 275. The beginnings of Church Missionary Society's work in Egypt date to 1815, thus more than 20 years later than the Moravian presence.



The Moravian presence in Egypt turned out to be ground-breaking with regard to both the religious and the literary history of the Middle East, introducing new elements into Egyptian literature and the local religious landscape. Being among the very first Protestant missionaries in Egypt, they opened up a new area of religious encounter between European and Middle Eastern Christianity, with numerous co-religionists following their path to Egypt in the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Moreover, as the Moravians were among the very first writers of Arabic Protestant religious texts on Middle Eastern soil, they also stand at the beginning of a noteworthy field within modern Arabic literary history.

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من اخي القدير اواناوس هوكي الى الاخ العزيز المعلم ميخايل بشارة  
 في خمسة المحرم سنة نعمة يسوع المسيح ربنا تكون مع روحك امين  
 وبعد لا يغيب عنك يا اخي افي قوي مشتاق الى <sup>احرق</sup> مكتبك منك  
 تعرفن بحالك وخصوصا بليغية <sup>بحالة</sup> قلبك هذا انت مع الاحسان  
 بما مسكنك اليومية تلتجى الى مخلصنا العزيز وتلتصق بالمصلوب  
 كما يلتصق الصبي بامه وهل هو في صورته الدموية يبقى لك الكل  
 في الكل لان طفا هو ما يحفظ <sup>حفظ قلبي</sup> قلبك بصوتا مع كل احسان مسكف  
 اني انا احس بها يوما فيوما اي النظر الدائم الى الصليب حيث توفي  
 عنى خالقى والذى ولد والمعاشرة <sup>بخطه</sup> به المتصلة المستطابة  
 المنعشة للضم القلب الحليل في <sup>كلها</sup> يصيبني من الاشياء صغيرة  
 كانت ام كبيرة . انا لست اقدر ان اقدم له شكرا واجبا على لانه عرفني  
 بنعمة من تجسده وموته عنى المسكين وعن كل المجلس البشرى ؛ ولكن  
 انا للساعة بعيد عن العرفان الطلى <sup>هذا</sup> السن العظيم ان الله ظهر بالبشرية  
 وصر انسلنا ثلثي واطفاسا <sup>اهل الامم</sup> من الضليلة الشديدة <sup>بالغاية</sup> من اجل ومات  
 عن اخيرا مصلوبا ؛ وانا اتنى يوما ان الروح القدس يعلمني <sup>بكل</sup> كل المنفعة  
 الكنوز المدخرة في لاه وموته وقيامته ؛ <sup>وهي</sup> وبها لنا من جوف عازق ان  
 دون الخلق ودمه وجر احائه <sup>وموته</sup> كلتنى بطل فاشتيافى هو ان انت يا  
 اخي تنسا كلتنى غيره ولا تلتمس الا عرفان يسوع وهو مصلوب ؛

Letter from Friedrich Wilhelm Hocker to Mikhāyil Bishāra, Cairo, June 26, 1774, recto.  
By courtesy of the Moravian Archives, Herrnhut.

وانما اطلب الى ربّي انه يزيدني وياتك ومن في ~~محلّم~~ <sup>محلّم</sup> تنبّه من الموت  
 في معرفة يسوع المصلوب <sup>عنه قريه</sup> واذا ارسلتني <sup>عنه قريه</sup> وتخبرني بها بحال نفسك  
 فتفرّج قلبي جدًّا. ولا انكر اني قد رجوت عند عبد المليك بعض احرف من يدك  
 ولكن واسفا بعد اذ هابك <sup>مما بين مصر</sup> ما سمعت ولا حس ولا خبر عنك  
 فانا اني لاف ما نسيتك <sup>فلم يظهر اليك</sup> من المقالات <sup>التي فسرت</sup> بالعربي  
<sup>عند</sup> لا جلكم والتي ارسلكم <sup>منها</sup> محلم <sup>بمجايل</sup> الذي بلرا يتوجه الى عندكم  
 وانا اطلب اليكم ان بعد ما قريتها توسلوني اياها مع لتي في ايديكم وان شاء  
 الرب ابعث اليكم بعض مقالات اخرى <sup>كانت عنده</sup> صحبة <sup>مع</sup> <sup>بمجايل</sup>  
 مرّة <sup>حنا</sup> وطلبت الريال <sup>من</sup> بوظافة <sup>ونصف</sup> و <sup>اخو</sup> <sup>اشرف</sup> <sup>سالم</sup>  
 في ايديها الفلوس المذكور بغير وصول في حضور <sup>مجايل</sup> <sup>اخيرا</sup>  
 يا اخي لا يغبي عنكم ان المكسب لانا في مصر قليل والمثلوس قوى  
 ضيق وان العشرين ريال بوظافة <sup>التي</sup> تسلفت مني قبل ثمانه شهر  
 وينبغي فيكون هذا الفلوس قوى مقبول لدي <sup>راخي</sup> انشر يستم كثير عليكم  
 وبقد موا سلامه وسلاهي على اخي <sup>احنا</sup> الصا العايغ و <sup>احنا</sup> القسيس <sup>المكرم</sup>  
 وم عبد الملان وعلى كل بيتكم <sup>المكرم</sup> والقسوس في بطنسة باسرتهم وعلى  
 كل من يحب او يريد يجب يسوع <sup>الرب</sup> فهو يعودك يوما  
 فيوما جديدا في صورلا موته <sup>وكما</sup> تصنع يكون منطوقا بدمه  
 امين مكتوب في مصر المحروسة يوم ٢٦ من شهر حزيران ١٧٧٤ بعد  
 تجسد الله <sup>والسلام</sup>

Letter from Friedrich Wilhelm Hocker to Mikhāyil Bishāra, Cairo, June 26, 1774, verso. By courtesy of the Moravian Archives, Herrnhut.





## The Ottoman Administration of Justice in Early Modern Travellers' Accounts\*

Felicita Tramontana

Since the second half of the twentieth century, and especially after the publication of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, numerous works have investigated European representational practices in travellers' accounts and in other genres of literature.

As far as early modern travelogues are concerned, not only has the way they described foreign lands been investigated,<sup>1</sup> their relationship with the Enlightenment<sup>2</sup> has also been analyzed. Research on the topic mainly went in two directions. Firstly, a comparison with eighteenth and nineteenth-century works has to an evaluation of the spread of the spirit of the Enlightenment and its influence on travellers' narrations.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, seventeenth-century travelogues have been analyzed as sources of the Enlightenment theories and representations of "otherness" and the East. In fact, in Early Modern Europe knowledge of foreign political and social institutions was mainly based on travellers' descriptions and observations.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, together with the works of political thinkers, essayists and historians, which offered second-hand knowledge, travelogues contributed to the construction of the Enlightenment's perception of the "Orient" and by and large of the idea of "East" and "West".

Recent research has challenged a definition of sixteenth and seventeenth-century travel literature as "Orientalistic", showing that Early Modern European attitudes towards the "Orient" were far more complex than previously stated.<sup>5</sup> During the eighteenth century travellers' experiences and observations were filtered through theories and abstractions and the image of Ottoman institutions became

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Grosrichard, *Structure*.

<sup>2</sup> Damiani, *Observers*.

<sup>3</sup> Hafid-Martin, *Voyage et connaissance*; Deane, *Virtue*; McMin, *Hottentots*; Jager, *Comment peut-on être Arabe?*.

<sup>4</sup> Hafid-Martin, *Relations*. On scientists' and political thinkers' use of data from travelogues during the 17<sup>th</sup> century, see Frantz, *English Traveller*.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Suranyi, *Genius*, on p. 21 the author states that an accurate reading of 17<sup>th</sup> century travelogues "demonstrates that they manifested an imperialist and nationalistic ethos from the beginning". See also Viktus, *Orientalism*.

rigid and negative.<sup>6</sup> Middle Eastern and Asian countries were described in travelogues as an undifferentiated geographical space.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand in the seventeenth century the image of the Ottoman Empire, as depicted by travel literature, was incoherent and fluctuant, influenced by personal experiences and shaped by casual and circumstantial observations.<sup>8</sup>

This paper focuses on travellers' accounts about the functioning of justice in the realm of the Sultan. Despite the abundance of works on Early Modern representation of the "otherness" of the Ottomans, seventeenth-century travellers' descriptions of their legal system have never been the subject of specific studies. Analysis of these descriptions not only confirms the variety of opinions and images that has already been highlighted by studies on travellers' representation of Ottoman government<sup>9</sup> but also shows that sometimes the descriptions of the Ottoman justice system give us a reasonably accurate idea of its concrete functioning.

### **Ottoman justice as seen through travellers' eyes**

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Seventeenth-century travelogues do not give a uniform description of the Empire in general and its legal system in particular. First of all the large number of descriptions, observations and comments on the topic must be considered. In the Early Modern period travellers paid a lot of attention to the administration of justice in foreign lands. Travelogues, moreover, express a wide range of opinions on the subject.

Some descriptions were influenced by the author's hostility toward the "Orient", such as the ones furnished by the diplomat Sir Paul Rycaut (1629-1700). He expressed a negative opinion about the Ottoman justice system in accordance with his general disdain for Ottoman institutions. Rycaut was the leading authority of his day concerning the Ottoman Empire. In 1661 he was sent to Turkey where he spent seventeen years as secretary in the English embassy and then as the English consul in Smyrna, the most important centre of English trade in the Eastern Mediterranean. His most important work, *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire*, is largely based upon his own observations. The work, in three volumes, was printed in 1668. It contains descriptions and information on Turkish politics and institutions, on the Ottoman army and on Islam. The main focus

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<sup>6</sup> Çırakman, *Terror*, 106; *eadem*, *Tyranny*, 63.

<sup>7</sup> Parker, *Tales*, introduction.

<sup>8</sup> Çırakman, *Terror*, 37-41.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem* and Çırakman, *Tyranny*, *passim*.

of the book, however, is on his consulship at Smyrna. In his work Rycaut depicts the Ottoman administration of justice as a corrupt system dominated by bribery:

“So that the justice in its common course is set to sale, and it is very rare when any Law-Suit is in hand, but Bargains are made for the sentence, and he hath most right who hath most Money to make him *rectus in curia*, and advance his cause. And it is the common course for both parties at difference, before they appear together in the presence of the judge to apply themselves singly to him, and try whose donative and present hath the most in it of temptation.”<sup>10</sup>

Rycaut also furnishes the reader with a sort of explanation for his statements:

“And it is not wonder that if corrupt Men exercise this kind of Trade in Trafficking with justice; for having before bought the Office, of consequence they must sell the truth.”<sup>11</sup>

According to him, moreover, giving false testimony was not sanctioned severely in the Ottoman Empire, especially if it happened in a lawsuit involving Muslims and Christians. He concludes:

“So that I believe that in no part of the World can justice run more out of the current and stream than in *Turkey*,<sup>12</sup> where such Maxims and considerations corrupt both the Judge and Witnesses.”

Many of Rycaut’s observations not only were wrong and obviously copied from previous works, but they were also influenced by the British domestic debate. Through his criticism of the Ottoman Empire he may have supported the restored Stuart monarchy against the Puritans and the republican government of Cromwell.<sup>13</sup> That does not mean that Rycaut did not have an eye for certain details of Ottoman legal practice. For example he mentions the fees that were due by court users,<sup>14</sup> an observation unusual in contemporary literature, indicating a certain familiarity with the Ottoman courts.

Other travellers, such as the French Jean de Thévenot (1633-67) and Joseph Pitton de Tournefort (1656-1708), demonstrated a certain degree of knowledge of the Ottoman justice and had more positives to report than Rycaut. Leaving France in 1652, de Thévenot first visited England, Holland, Germany and Italy. In May 1655 he sailed from Rome to Malta and then to Constantinople. His stay in the Middle East lasted until 1659. He spent more than one year in Egypt and visited also places of pilgrimage in Palestine. His second journey started in No-

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<sup>10</sup> Rycaut, *History*, ch. 17, 140-1.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>12</sup> Emphasis by author.

<sup>13</sup> Thomson, *L’Europe*, 264-5.

<sup>14</sup> Rycaut, *History*, ch. 17, 142.

vember 1663 and he again sailed for the East, calling at Alexandria and Sidon. From Sidon he proceeded to Damascus, Aleppo, and then through Mesopotamia to Mosul and Bagdad. He also visited Persia and India. An accomplished linguist, de Thévenot was skilled in Turkish, Arabic and Persian, and was also a curious and diligent observer. He was also well versed in the natural sciences. The account of his first journey (*Relation d'un voyage fait au Levant*) was published in Paris in 1665. The second and third parts of his work were posthumously published in 1674 and 1684.

Joseph Pitton de Tournefort was a French botanist and physician. He travelled repeatedly through Western Europe, exploring particularly the region of the Pyrenees. In 1700-12 he visited Greece and the Orient, collecting 1356 species of plants. The account of this journey, *Relation d'un voyage du Levant*, was published after his death in Paris 1717.

Both, de Thévenot and Tournefort, mentioned that the Imperial divan functioned as a second instance tribunal.<sup>15</sup> On the subject, Tournefort said “et il ne faut pas craindre qu’il s’y passé quelque injustice” because the Sultan controlled the divan’s work, thanks to a window in the wall of the room where the Imperial divan meet.<sup>16</sup> Describing the function of the Imperial divan, moreover, Tournefort highlighted an important characteristic of the Ottoman administration of justice: the privileges enjoyed by the military *élite* (*askerî*),<sup>17</sup> to whom special laws applied.<sup>18</sup>

Thévenot also appreciated a certain neutrality of treatment in the Imperial divan that he describes as follows: “chacun y est écouté, de quelque condition, nation et religion qu’il soit.”<sup>19</sup> Tournefort underlines this observation:

“C’est à ce Tribunal où le dernier home de l’Empire a la consolation de tirer raison des plus grands Seigneurs du pays; le pauvre a la liberté de demander justice; les Musulmans, les Chrêtiens, les Juifs y sont également écouêtez: on n’y entend point mugir la chicane en furie, on n’y voit ni Avocats ni Procureurs.”<sup>20</sup>

In Early Modern travelogues comments on the equity of the system toward non-Muslims were strictly linked to the topic of Ottoman tolerance, which was widespread in works and commentaries on the Ottoman Empire. However, these

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<sup>15</sup> Thévenot, *Voyage*, 180-3.

<sup>16</sup> Tournefort, *Rélation*, 259.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, 260.

<sup>18</sup> See Akarlı, Law, 250; Imber, *Ottoman Empire*, 245.

<sup>19</sup> Thévenot, *Voyage*, 181.

<sup>20</sup> Tournefort, *Rélation*, vol. II, 258.

observations were correct and the fairness of the justice system toward religious minorities is confirmed by recent research based on court records.<sup>21</sup>

Tournefort also described the role played by the mufti in the interpretation of the law:

“Le *Moufti* qui est à la tête des gens de Loi, est le Chef de la religion & l’interprete de l’Al-coran. Le Sultan le nomme & ne le dépose gueres [...] Par ce choix il devient l’Officier le plus respecté de l’Empire; c’est l’Oracle du pays, & l’on s’en tient à toutes ses décisions.”<sup>22</sup>

The French traveller, moreover, wrote that “une affaire de conscience, il consulte le Moufti par un petit billet où il expose l’état de la question sans nommer personne.”<sup>23</sup> This seems to be a good description of the shape of a *fatwā*.

Travellers praised the speed of the Ottoman juridical system and the simplicity of the procedure. According to Tournefort, “le créancier amène les témoins & l’argent est compté sur le champ, ou le débiteur est condamné à recevoir un certain nombre de coups de bâton.” And: “Si c’est une question de fait, deux ou trois témoins en font la décision à l’heure même; de quelque nature que soit une affaire, elle ne traîne jamais plus de sept ou huit jours.”<sup>24</sup> The fastness and the simplicity of court procedures were also remarked on by Jean de Thévénôt:

“Et toutes ces choses se font avec tant de diligence, qu’une affaire est tout aussitôt proposée, consultée, jugée et exécutée, et un procès ne sera jamais plus de quatre ou cinq jours sans avoir sentence.”<sup>25</sup>

The English traveller Henry Blount (1602-82) shared the same appreciation: “the second point in wherein their justice excels” – he affirmed – “is the quicke dispatch”.<sup>26</sup> Blount travelled extensively in Europe and the Levant and was the author of *Voyage into the Levant* published in London in 1634. His interest in the administration of justice was probably strengthened by the fact that he had stud-

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Cohen, *Jewish Life*; Gradeva, Christians.

<sup>22</sup> Tournefort, *Rélation*, vol. II, 334. Answers in fact were usually short. On the topic see Imber, *Ebu’ s-su’ud*, 13-15, 55-7.

<sup>23</sup> Tournefort, *Rélation*, vol. II, 299.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, 258.

<sup>25</sup> Thévénôt, *Voyage*, 182. The fact that all the travellers note these features could suggest that they copied from each other, however it must be considered that these characteristics of Ottoman justice were evident and remarkable compared to European justice. Ottoman judicial procedure followed Islamic jurisprudence. Action was usually initiated by the plaintiff on whom the burden of proof was placed. The claim of the plaintiff was followed by the defendants’ denial. Because of the absence of lawyers, the defendants were their own advocates; see Schacht, *Introduzione*, 197-206.

<sup>26</sup> Blount, *Voyage*, 165.

ied law in England. By and large he expressed a positive opinion of and open admiration towards the Ottoman justice system. His work contains many observations on the subject and most of his comments were not much different from the French travellers' ones. He described the main features of Ottoman justice, which was "Severe speedy and Arbitrary".<sup>27</sup> Blount praised the efficiency of the procedure.

Blount and Thévenot compared Ottoman justice with that of their own country. The former praised the – alleged – exclusive use of oral testimony to prove ownership:

"In such cases, possession and modern right conveys it, without that odious course of looking too farre back-word into the time past. This expedition avoids confusion and clears the court."<sup>28</sup>

Talking about the speed of the Imperial divan's judgment, Thévenot says "et ainsi les parties ne sont point obligés de manger tout leur bien à plaider, comme on fait autre part."<sup>29</sup>

Blount's description of the Ottoman justice system also contains wrong statements. For example, as did other travellers, he stated that there were no fixed laws. Prejudices played an important role in his description of the Ottoman system as arbitrary. He also erroneously stated that judgments were based on the Quran. This observation might have been rooted in part in the complexity of the Ottoman legal system, which was based on a plurality of legal sources: *fatāwā*,<sup>30</sup> *qānūn*,<sup>31</sup> *sharī'a*, and customary law.<sup>32</sup>

As in Blount's work, admiring comments and sharp criticism are often expressed side by side in the same travelogue. For example, in a passage of his book, Tournefort<sup>33</sup> praised the work of the imperial divan.<sup>34</sup> However, when talking about the daily administration of justice in regular courts, he stated that the

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, 89-90. On the travels of Blount see MacLean, *The Rise*, 115-76.

<sup>28</sup> Blount, *Voyage*, 165.

<sup>29</sup> Thévenot, *Voyage*, 182.

<sup>30</sup> Legal opinions, issued by Islamic scholars.

<sup>31</sup> Law issued by the Sultan. It regulated areas where the provision of the sacred law was either missing or not applicable.

<sup>32</sup> On the topic, see Peirce, *Morality Tales*, 119-20.

<sup>33</sup> See below.

<sup>34</sup> Akarlı, *Law*, 245-69.

judges committed terrible abuses.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, sometimes the same authors made contradictory statements.<sup>36</sup>

Undoubtedly travellers' descriptions of Ottoman justice often show a lack of deep knowledge and understanding of the Ottoman justice system. It must be kept in mind, however, that the topic has a technical side difficult to understand even for locals, unless they have special juridical knowledge. Even when travellers furnished wrong information, in many cases these cannot be related to prejudices and to an Orientalistic attitude toward Ottoman institutions. On the opposite, wrong descriptions seem to be linked to a superficial knowledge. For example, in a passage of his work Blount said:

“If it be matter of title or right, the parties name of their witnesses who shall presently be forced to come in, for they have no old deeds or any other reckonings, beyond the memory of a man.”

This observation is not correct. Archival documents clearly show that contracts and notarial deeds were registered in Ottoman courts. Nevertheless, written documents were not accepted as evidence in every court.<sup>37</sup> Following the prescriptions of the Hanafi legal school,<sup>38</sup> oral testimony – whenever available – was always preferred. Thus, even a careful observer could have thought that only oral testimony was used.

The travellers' wrong observations might also have resulted from the fact that they mostly referred to prescriptions of Islamic and Ottoman law but did not consider – because they were probably not aware of it – the justice system's concrete functioning. Therefore, for example, when many of them, such as Blount, remarked on the cruelty of criminal law, they referred to the punishments prescribed by Islamic law but not to courts' daily practice. Recent works based on court records demonstrate that in many cases the judge's rule was aimed at avoiding conflicts inside the community and re-establishing social equity, rather

<sup>35</sup> Tournefort, *Rélation*, 337; see below.

<sup>36</sup> Tournefort, for example, on p. 337 states that in the Ottoman legal system there is no second instance, while on p. 259 he says the opposite.

<sup>37</sup> Works on Islamic court records in different parts of the Ottoman Empire clearly show that the use of documents drafted by the court as evidence changes from place to place. According to Ergene (Document Use, 101) the low level of literacy among the court users explains, for example, the lack of employment of written evidence in the court of Çankırı and Kastamonu. In Cyprus, on the other hand, between the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century there was extensive use of written documents and not only among the most wealthy and educated part of the population. Ronald Jennings (*Christians*, 87-91) reported a few examples of court proceedings in which written documents – drafted by the court – played a role in the evidentiary phase of the judicial process.

<sup>38</sup> Wakin, *Function*, 1-11. Among the four schools of law (sing. *madhhab*) within Sunni Islam the Hanafi was adopted as the official *madhhab* of the Ottoman Empire.



than condemning and punishing.<sup>39</sup> According to Leslie Pierce, although law books prescribed a wide range of penalties, it seems that fines were preferred for routine crimes, as they provided revenues for the state.<sup>40</sup>

### **Real experiences: travellers before the *qāḍī***

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Early modern travelogues contain many descriptions of the Ottoman justice system, but there are only a small number of first-hand experiences from law courts. This may be due to the fact that travellers usually (and fortunately) had no opportunity to attend a trial. On the other hand, foreigners who settled within the borders of the Ottoman Empire for trade, diplomacy or other reasons were obliged to interact with a wide range of local institutions including local courts. These interactions took place within a coherent legal framework of duties and rights. Firstly, foreigners were forced to use the courts to settle any disputes with the local population or with Ottoman officials. Moreover, according to agreements between Istanbul and the European powers, foreign merchants were supposed to record all their economic transactions with the court.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, foreigners who were just visiting, only rarely had to interact with local institutions. Even though travelogues were often written by merchants and diplomats, they usually described their travels and the visit to Ottoman lands rather than their business. Descriptions and observations moreover were considered more valuable than accounts of first hand experiences. The few travellers' descriptions of first hand experiences in law courts are not concerned with details of a trial and the procedure of the court; the aim of these stories was rather to provide the reader with an adventurous event of a journey, not to describe the actual functioning of the local justice. This is true, for example, for an episode narrated by John Covel, who was the English chaplain in Constantinople for seven years (1670-7). He was arrested in Bursa, and his arrest was obviously related to the death of another foreigner. It is not clear from the account what happened in the court and how or why he was freed.<sup>42</sup>

More detailed accounts are given by the English traveller and merchant John Sanderson (1560-1627?). Sanderson was an officer of the Levant Company, served the British ambassadors and travelled in the Levant from 1584 to 1602. An account of his journey was published in 1931 by the Hakluyt Society with the title *The Travels of John Sanderson in the Levant, 1584-1602*.

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<sup>39</sup> Peirce, *Morality Tales*, 111-12; *eadem*, *New Judge*, 88.

<sup>40</sup> Peirce, *Morality Tales*, 118.

<sup>41</sup> Boogert, *Capitulations*, 44-5.

<sup>42</sup> Covel, *Voyage*, 171-2.

Sanderson arrived in Jerusalem on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1601. When he tried to enter the Holy Sepulcher, he was accused by Franciscan friars of being a Jew:

“I had paid these nine sequins and had by the Turks the church door opened for me, was within and entering the sepulcher, when the Roman Friars and others fell in an uproar, saying that I was a Jew. The Turks bade me go in in despite of them, but the babble was so terrible that I returned to the cadie with the friars. The padre guardiano sent his dragoman and accused me to be a Jew because I came in the company of Jews. Divers Turks followed to hear the matter. One old Turk came and earnestly exhorted me to become a Musselman in the presence of the cadie. I gave him the hearing, and told him that I was a Christian and no Jew. Then he said, in the hearing of all the Jews, Turks, and Christians: ‘Let him be searched.’ But the cadie before whom we were, being a very discreet man, did reprove the Turk and also the dragoman and the Friars, my accusers, and so did dismiss me. But, as I was afterwards told, it cost my adversaries above two hundred sequins.”<sup>43</sup>

Another interesting case happened in Jerusalem. The traveller involved was Henry Timberlacke (1570-1625), a prosperous ship captain who travelled the Mediterranean at the beginning of the seventeenth century. He stopped in Algiers, Tunis and Alexandria. The account of his travels, *A True and Strange Discourse*, was first published in 1603 and soon became very popular. It was reprinted numerous times. Timberlacke entered the Holy City in March 1601. In fact, travellers visiting Jerusalem, whatever the purpose of their visit, all had to follow the rules that regulated the pilgrimage. These were strictly based on the visitors’ religious affiliation. For example, the Greek patriarchate was in charge of hosting and assisting the Greek Orthodox pilgrims, the Armenian authorities of assisting the Armenian pilgrims and so on. When he and his companion John Burrel arrived at the gates, they were asked by the guards about their religion. As there were no Protestant religious delegations in the city, Mr. Burrel declared he was a Greek and suggested Timberlacke to do the same. Timberlacke, however, preferred to declare that he was an Englishman, claiming he did not want to betray either his religion or his country.<sup>44</sup> While his companion was admitted, Timberlacke suffered a different fate:

“I was seized on and cast into prison before I had stayed a full hour at the gate; for the Turks flatly denied that they had ever heard of either my queen [Elizabeth] or country or that she paid any tribute.”<sup>45</sup>

The situation was solved by a Muslim who had met him before and went to the governor (“pasha”) of the town to take an oath that Sanderson was a mariner of a

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<sup>43</sup> Sanderson, *Travels*, 107. Jews were not allowed to enter in the Holy Sepulcher.

<sup>44</sup> Timberlacke, *Two Journeys*, 25.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibidem*.

ship which brought 250-300 Turks to Northern Africa.<sup>46</sup> In fact, over a period of several years he ferried both Christians and Muslim pilgrims to Alexandria, Egypt.

Even travellers that paid a lot of attention to the administration of justice in their works might not have been interested in describing the trials in which they were involved in detail. This is the case of Henry Blount. The English traveller twice reported his court experiences and used them as evidence for his opinion that Ottoman justice was “honorable to strangers”. While in Bosnia he was

“forced to Justice by a Christian whom I had fore wounded, for threatening to buy me for slave; when the cause was declared by two Turkes my companions; the judge not only freed me with words and gesture very respective, but fined my adversaries.”<sup>47</sup>

The second court episode took place in Adrianopole, after Blount was caught with a group of drunken Muslims. When the *qāḍī* found out that Blount was not drunk, he was freed and wondered whether he had been freed because he was reputed to be abstemious by the judge or because he was a foreigner.<sup>48</sup>

Although his descriptions of Ottoman justice are accurate and his comments are perceptive, nevertheless the account of the trials he was involved in is rather short and lacks attention toward the procedure followed by the court. In addition to this, it is clear that Blount did not understand the dynamics that underlie the *qāḍī*'s rule.

Even though first-hand experiences were not aimed at advancing the readers' knowledge of the justice system – these accounts influenced the image of Ottoman justice that circulated in Early Modern Europe and contributed to the idea that under Ottoman rule justice was fast and fair. At the same time, the lack of understanding of the motivation underlying the *qāḍī*'s rules and the lack of a clear description of the procedures might have corroborated the idea that Ottoman justice was arbitrary.

Those travellers who actually had contact with the local institutions of justice, as mentioned above, recorded rather good experiences. This is consistent with Ottoman sources. In Jerusalem's Islamic court records, for example, there is a claim brought before the court in 1655 by Christian pilgrims. They protested that the governor of Jerusalem had charged them more than usual for the passage over the river Jordan and threatened that pilgrims would not be able to visit this place any

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>47</sup> Blount, *Voyage*, 92.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*, 92-3.

more. The *qāḍī* ruled in favour of the Christian pilgrims.<sup>49</sup> Not only that are the travellers' rights were upheld is interesting, but also the fact that the pilgrims went before the court at all. It shows their positive disposition towards local justice. They were aware of their rights, of the way the legal system worked, and they trusted it.

## Conclusion

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The analysis of travel accounts showed that the image of Ottoman justice is fluctuant as a consequence of the variety of opinions and comments expressed. There are recurrent topics in travellers' observations, like the cruelty of the punishments and the arbitrariness of the judgments. Some features of the Islamic procedure – such as its simplicity, the speed of the judgment and the lack of lawyers – are always mentioned and admired by travellers. Information and descriptions are sometimes correct whereas sometimes they are definitely wrong. This depended on many different factors: travellers' experiences on the ground, their prejudices and the degree of insight into local daily life, the time they spent in these countries and the languages they spoke. Some of their comments, such as Rycaut's, are indubitably shaped by a general disdain for Ottoman institutions. However in many cases observations that at first glance seem to be effected by the traveller's hostility, when looked at more closely turn out to be shaped rather by the lack of a deep knowledge and understanding. In certain respects the image of the Ottoman administration of justice shaped by travelogues is not too far from reality, or at least from the way it must have appeared at first glance. As far as first-hand experiences are concerned, even though they did not furnish detailed descriptions of court procedure, they contributed in shaping the image of the Ottoman justice system as fast and simple, fair with foreigners, but arbitrary. To sum up, in spite of the presence of prejudices, most of the work cannot be defined Orientalistic, as different attitudes often coexist in the same travelogues and travellers' attitude toward Ottoman justice is ambiguous.

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<sup>49</sup> Peri, *Christianity*, 195-6. In Ottoman sources, it is not uncommon to find evidence of intervention by the authorities to avoid irregularities in the collection of the protection fees, *ghafār* "kafara". In 1555, for example, an order was sent to the governor of Damascus from Istanbul. It complained about the illegal taxes that were being collected from Christian pilgrims at the entrance of the Holy Sepulcher and stated that "The pilgrims must not be forced to pay more taxes than it was customary in the past and laid down in the Cadastral Register," see Heyd, *Documents*, 182-3.

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