

pledge his two leading Mamluks to mutual loyalty. Afterwards, however, Qawṣūn succeeded in manipulating the ineffectual new sultan in order to eliminate his rival. Only when he thus overplayed his hand did the other amirs rally around the newly influential Aydughmish and topple Qawṣūn, with the term "Qawṣūnī" going down in popular parlance as an insult.

If Kortantamer's sources are already well-known to specialists, her selection of passages certainly captures much of the intrigue of "the Mamluk phenomenon." As a pioneering work in the arena of Turkish-language Mamluk studies, Kortantamer's contribution should do much to spark further interest and research.

SHAI HAR-EL, *Struggle for Domination in the Middle East: The Ottoman-Mamluk War, 1485-1491* (Leiden, New York, and Cologne: E. J. Brill, 1995) Pp. 238.

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More than twenty years ago Andrew Hess challenged us to think of the early sixteenth/tenth century Mediterranean world not as geographically unitary but, rather, culturally differentiated. Hess believed his post-Braudelian "new segregation" of Mediterranean life could best be discerned at the fringe of its most antagonistic cultural zone—Ottoman-Habsburg North Africa. Fueling cultural segregation along this "archetypal" frontier was a mid-fifteenth/ninth century convergence of technological and political change into a military revolution benefiting Iberian expansion into the Western Islamic lands. Beset by structural bottlenecks, Andalusian and Maghribian states proved unable to replicate Iberian advantages in administrative centralization and military specialization. Even the Sa'dian dynasty, after a credible start, failed ultimately to harness the "unique combination of firepower, mobility and political unity" which made the Ottomans so competitive in the struggle for leadership within the Maghrib—just as it had made them in the Levant. For like the North African Sa'dians, the Levantine Mamluks had seemingly also failed to master the "new style of warfare." Despite its segregated, post-tribal, urban-based, institutional structure, the early sixteenth/tenth century Mamluk state was unmistakably "in the throes of its own decline," according to Hess, owing to its failure to "restructure [its] armies to fit the new (gunpowder) technology."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Andrew C. Hess, *The Forgotten Frontier: A History of the Sixteenth-Century Ibero-African Frontier*. (Chicago and London, 1978); idem, "Firearms and the Decline of Ibn Khaldun's Military Elite," *Archivum Ottomanicum* (1973): 173-200.

Despite its rather obvious importance, Islamicists have been generally reticent about Hess's revisionism. Typically perhaps, while the author of the book under review, Shai Har-El, affects some knowledge of Hess's work, he addresses it only tangentially in the end. This is all the more regrettable as his own thesis about the "defensive strategic principles" driving late Mamluk foreign policy largely parallels Hess's belief about the decline of Mamluk political and military power over the course of the fifteenth/ninth century. What analysis Har-El does provide of this decline constitutes little more than a potted summary of David Ayalon's traditional views on the systemic collapse of Mamluk civilization. Concerning the role of Hess's "new technology" in Mamluk decline, Har-El acknowledges only that there existed within the late Mamluk military an "insufficient use of firearms and new methods of warfare" (pp. 28, 54-55). Indeed, from Har-El's narrative of the decisive frontier battle at Ağa-Çayırı (1488/893) one infers that Mamluk victory was based less on their non-use of the "new technology" than their ability simply to frustrate Ottoman tactical deployment of their own. Despite its apparent validation of *furūsīyah*, Ağa-Çayırı was nevertheless a "hard lesson" to some in Cairo about the shortfall in Mamluk military preparedness, including Sultan Qāytbāy, who in its aftermath began inducting the arquebus formally into the Mamluk military arsenal (pp. 201-2).

While much of Har-El's book is filled expectably by traditional military-diplomatic narration, it is not entirely the kind of *l'histoire événementielle* about which Braudel liked so much to fret. At the outset Har-El attempts to center the usual story of Mamluk-Ottoman relations in a novel heuristic framework of interlocking regional "subordinate system[s]." Already embedded in a "Mediterranean subordinate system," the Mamluk and Ottoman states found themselves, according to Har-El, unavoidably entangled in the struggle for control of an Anatolian "subordinate frontier system" adrift since the collapse of Mongol authority in west Asia. Despite the successful evolution of a "balance of power system," which employed "shifting alliances" to limit "the amount of violence," traditional statecraft could not ultimately overcome regional centrifugal tendencies. The final collapse of the Anatolian frontier system into a post-Aqquyunlu "power vacuum" coincided with a sudden waning of Mamluk and waxing of Ottoman military capabilities. The concomitant differentiation between Cairo's "status quo" policy and Istanbul's increasingly "imperialist" one engendered an uncontrollable conflict that would achieve denouement not on the plains of Cilicia but in the Nile river valley itself. Thus was sown at Ağa-Çayırı (1488/893), Har-El seems to be intimating, the crop bitterly reaped at Raydānīyah (1517/923).

Indeed, the effectiveness of Har-El's study of the 1488/893 campaign cannot be divorced from his fine, antecedent geo-political analysis of Cairo's "status quo" policy. Briefly, in an effort to consolidate their post-Mongol strategic-commercial

position in the Near East, the Mamluks absorbed in 1375/776 the Little Armenian kingdom of Cilicia, inaugurating a "new epoch" which was to bring Cairo "into a confrontation with the growing power of the Ottomans." To forestall this inevitable conflict, the Mamluks assembled an elaborate "defense-in-depth system" anchored by natural defensive barriers, i.e. the Anti-Taurus and Amanus mountains, as well as man-made ones, i.e. historic "frontline" (*thughūr*) and "rearline" (*'awāṣim*) military infrastructures. Layered into these relatively stable geo-strategic echelons were more frangible political sub-systems, i.e. "outer" buffer-client principalities (Karaman and Kadi Burhan al-Din) as well as "inner" ones (Ramadan and Dulkadir). While the Mamluks themselves guaranteed "basic security" against theater invasion, the Turkman buffer-clients were tasked to deal with border provocations. It was a break-down in this "current security" mission on the "inner" frontier after 1464/868 that would effectively doom the classical Mamluk state.

In general Har-El's taxonomy helps to impose a certain meaningful order on the jumble of military-diplomatic events characteristic of this period. Some concepts, though, appear to have greater integrative value than others. His "buffer-client system," for instance, seems a less affected and more dynamic heuristic structure than his quasi-stable, inter-regional "subordinate systems." Har-El has furthermore an effective grasp of regional geography. Particularly valuable is his terrain overview of the Cilician campaign, giving readers a good feel for the operational problems confronting both Mamluk and Ottoman war planners. Ağa-Çayırı, by the way, is "a plain roughly mid-way between Adana and Tarsus." Har-El has moreover sensibly buttressed his written descriptions with a variety of maps, an important inclusion too often omitted by scholars.<sup>2</sup>

A significant if somewhat undeveloped subplot in Har-El's story of terrestrial conflict in Cilicia is that of maritime warfare, particularly the risky Ottoman projection of naval power onto the Mamluk littoral. Har-El draws attention principally to an important contemporary Ottoman naval *deft̄er*, not much studied over the last half century, which lists the naval armament employed in the Ottoman flotilla.<sup>3</sup>

The *deft̄er* notes intriguingly what appear to be two large, heavily-gunned, carrack-rigged sailing vessels—*bârças* (*barza*). But aside from associating these vessels with the Ottoman sea-*ghāzī*, Burak Reis, who a decade later at the battle of Zonchio would command another of these experimental sailing warships, Har-El

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<sup>2</sup>While the book can rightly be praised for its map production, the same cannot be said for editorial control over errata, of which there is a great deal.

<sup>3</sup>Haydar Alpagut, *Denizde Türkiye* (Istanbul, 1937), 627; İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Merkez ve Bahriye Teşkilâtı* (Ankara, 1948), 512-13.

adds little to the historical appreciation of his own document.<sup>4</sup> This is not wholly surprising as his own secondary sources, while venerable, are quite dated. Absent, for instance, is Svat Soucek's seminal, modern study of late medieval Ottoman naval terminology.<sup>5</sup>

And while any organized discussion of contemporary Ottoman sea-going artillery is difficult to discern in the secondary literature, Har-El's own characterizations seem unaccountably problematic. The *prangi*, for instance, which figures prominently as the most numerous type of gun counted in the *defter*, is described by Har-El merely as "certain firearms." In fact the *prangi* was a small-caliber swivel gun and a standard piece of Ottoman secondary naval armament. Har-El also defines the somewhat larger caliber swivel guns, *zarbazans*, as "mortars," a confusing appellation. Is he perhaps conflating the term with the smaller Spanish bow swivel gun (*mortereite*) or with a siege mortar-bombard, or does he mean to suggest that the Ottomans had successfully mounted sea-going mortars on their warships two centuries before the accepted advent of a dedicated bomb vessel? Har-El's own illustration of the Ottoman flotilla (p. 182) is a curious pastiche of round-bottomed, oared, single-masted, and square-rigged ship types, none visibly mounting, by the way, any of the guns listed in the *defter*. Har-El might have done better simply to re-read John Guilmartin, who not only describes but correctly *illustrates* some of these Ottoman gun tubes (pp. 158-72; 301-2).

While perhaps technical, the issue of naval artillery is not entirely scholastic. As a purpose-built, sailing gun-platform, the *pârça* did not long survive the fifteenth/ninth century to provide the Ottomans a possible blue-print for their own version of the "fast and maneuverable carriers of *artillery*" they would soon face in the Atlantic-style galleons.<sup>6</sup> We possess, then, in this contemporary naval *defter* a rare snapshot of an evolutionary dead-end in Ottoman naval development, one which was to have momentous historical repercussions for the Ottoman retention of strategic control of the early modern Mediterranean. While Har-El's evaluation of both the operational and tactical significance of the Ottoman flotilla in the overall Cilician campaign is satisfactory, he might have brought greater historic insight to this important puzzle.

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<sup>4</sup>Har-El, *Struggle*, 173-74; John Francis Guilmartin, *Gunpowder and Galleys: Changing Technology and Mediterranean Warfare in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1974), 86-88; see also Andrew C. Hess, "The Evolution of the Ottoman Seaborne Empire in the Age of the Oceanic Discoveries, 1453-1525," *American Historical Review* 75 no. 7 (1970): 1905, who notes Burak Reis's appearance in Ottoman service somewhat later than Har-El.

<sup>5</sup>Svat Soucek, "Certain Types of Ships in Ottoman-Turkish Terminology," *Turcica* 7 (1975): 233-49.

<sup>6</sup>Guilmartin, *Gunpowder*, 158-72, 301-2; see also idem, "The Early Provision of Artillery on Mediterranean War Galleys," *Mariner's Mirror* 50 (1973): 257-80; Soucek, "Certain," 244.

Concerning the demise of the Ottoman fleet off Cilicia, its foundering and partial capture in August 1488/Ramāḍan 893 after a sudden storm—possibly a seasonal *khamṣin*—Har-El's short account (pp. 181-83) fails to appreciate fully the special characteristics of the local maritime environment. It is curious that his close attention to the geographical does not seem to extend "offshore," as it were, to the hydrological or meteorological. Ottoman naval planners would almost certainly have known that Cilician waters posed a serious natural obstacle. Counter-clockwise currents, high waves, and katabatic squalls descending the Taurus range made even the summer months unfavorable, even dangerous, for sea-borne operations.<sup>7</sup>

It is sometimes claimed conveniently by Ottomanists, including Har-El (p. 192), that the unsuccessful campaign of 1488/893 was a token military gesture. Yet, how likely is it that Ottoman war planners would have jeopardized such a large, well-equipped fleet, including expensive "capital" ships (*pârças*) in such a high-risk maritime environment and at such extreme operational range without serious expectation of strategic dividends? Upon reflection, Bayezid II's naval descent on Ayas (1488/893) seems no more whimsical than his father's (Mehmed II) sea-borne gambit at Otranto (1481/885).

From the Mamluk maritime perspective, one transcendent question emerges: Where was the Mamluk navy in 1488/893? Cilicia was still within operational range of Mamluk flotillas well into the early sixteenth/tenth century. Even the Ottoman naval force commander (*kapudan*) (and Sultan Bayezid's son-in-law), Hersek-oğlu Ahmed Paşa, feared a Mamluk amphibious landing in Cilicia (pp. 177-78). Moreover, the fifteenth/ninth century had already witnessed the highly competent exercise of Mamluk *Seemacht* in the eastern Mediterranean, one which would be extended just a few years later into the Indian Ocean. Unfortunately, the mystery of the Mamluks and their relationship with firearms is surpassed in Har-El's scholarship only by the puzzle of their relationship with naval vessels. And, as with firearms, Har-El is content to invoke *ipse dixit* David Ayalon's rambling commentary on Mamluk naval history as answer (pp. 58-9).

Finally, the generally positive results of Har-El's campaign study are somewhat spoiled by his over-calculated historical summation. His claim, for instance, that the aftermath of Ağa-Çayırı, including the peace treaty of 1491/896, somehow "saved [Sultan Bayezid's] prestige" and gave the Ottomans "a symbolic victory" (p. 212) is unconvincing. Certainly, it diverges in sum and substance from the

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<sup>7</sup>See for instance John H. Pryor, *Geography, Technology and War: Studies in the Maritime History of the Mediterranean 649-1571* (Cambridge, 1988); idem, "Winds, waves, and rocks: the routes and the perils along them," *Maritime Aspects of Migration* (1989): 71-85; Victor Goldsmith and Stan Sofer, "Wave climatology of the Southeastern Mediterranean," *Israel Journal of Earth Sciences* 32 (1983): 1-51.

interpretation given recently by Carl Petry, whose biography of Sultan Qāyrbāy Har-El seems to have entirely overlooked.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, Har-El's contention that the subsequent Mamluk "shift from neutrality in [the] Ottoman-Safavid conflict" led to an actual "military alliance" between Cairo and Tabriz after 1514/920 also does not jibe. Though preliminary strategic talks were held, Mamluk-Safavid summitry ultimately derailed on their mutual struggle for symbolic diplomatic precedence.<sup>9</sup>

This all suggests a certain *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy underpinning Har-El's basic historical reasoning. Despite the generally sensible integration of geo-politics into his study, there lingers a faint reductionist whiff of Turnerian physiography-as-history in his stress on the inevitability of some final reckoning between the proximal Mamluk and Ottoman states. Clearly, Har-El has unsuccessfully eluded the historicist embrace of Turkish nationalist scholarship, which has long held a belief in the mythic expansion of the frontier march (*uc*) as a primary source of Ottoman values and institutions. Yet, the violence of Ottoman-Mamluk encounters after Ağa-Çayırı, notably at Raydānīyah, should be interpreted as neither redemptive by Ottomanists nor apocalyptic by Mamlukists.

MUḤAMMAD 'ABD AL-GHANĪ AL-ASHQAR, *Tujjār al-Tawābil fī Miṣr fī al-'Aṣr al-Mamlūkī* (Cairo: al-Ḥay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1999), Pp. 571.

REVIEWED BY HAYRETTIN YUCESOY, The University of Chicago

This study was originally a doctoral dissertation submitted to Ayn Shams University in Egypt. It treats the emergence, development, and demise of the spice trade in Egypt known as Kārimī. It comprises seven chapters, an introduction, a conclusion, and appendices (a list of Kārimī merchants during the Mamluk period, maps showing the trade routes and major centers, and charts depicting the family trees of two prominent Kārimī merchants).

As one may expect, al-Ashqar begins his study with a consideration of two central issues: the origins and etymology of the name Kārimī, and the circumstances of the rise of Kārimī commercial activity. His discussion of the first problem, in

<sup>8</sup>Carl F. Petry, *Twilight of Majesty: The Reigns of the Mamluk Sultans al-Ashraf Qāyrbāy and Qansūh al-Ghawrī in Egypt* (Seattle and London, 1993), especially 88-103.

<sup>9</sup>W. W. Clifford, "Some Observations on the Course of Mamluk-Safavi Relations (1502-1516/908-922): I & II," *Der Islam* 70 no. 2 (1994): 272-74.